Issues on the (Im)Possible IV
August 30-31 2016, Bratislava

In August 30-31, 2016, the Institute of Philosophy of Slovak Academy of Sciences, metaphysics.sk research group and Slovak Philosophical Association hosted the fourth instalment of Modal Metaphysics: Issues on the (Im)Possible conference. As in the previous years, this year's session brought together researchers and graduate students from all around the world to discuss contemporary moves in analytic metaphysics in general, modal logic, metaphysics and epistemology in particular. A specific feature of this conference is that accepted and presented papers were assigned commentators who read the papers in advance and provided critical comments on them. Invited speakers were Gideon Rosen (Princeton University) and Richard Woodward (University of Hamburg).

The conference commenced with two parallel sessions with talks given by Robert Michels (University of Geneva) (commented by Nathan Wildman) and Zsófia Zvolenszky. In his "Is 'Metaphysical Necessity' Ambiguous?", Michels argued that the correct conceivability-based definition of metaphysical possibility is equivalent to a sort of essentialism. The goal of Zvolenszky's talk entitled "Fictional Names, Rigidity, and the Inverse-Sinatra Principle" (commented by Vladislav Terekhovich) was to answer the question as 'how exactly Kripkean views on proper name reference are supposed to extend to the fictional names like "Holmes"?'. The next pair of talks consisted of "Counterfactuals as Property Relations" by Meagan Phillips (Northern Illinois University) (commented by Lorenzo Azzano) and "Explaining Essence and Modality" by Jakob Schieder (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) (commented by Antonella Mallozzi). In the former, Phillips explored the possibility of an analysis of counterfactuals that she extrapolated from Jubien's analysis of modality. In the latter, Schieder argued that essence can be fruitfully explained in terms of what it takes to be the referent of a representation. Zuzanna Gnatek's (Trinity College Dublin) "Object Dependency in Timothy Williamson's Deductive Argument for Necessitism" (commented by Alexander Roberts) focused on one premise of necessitists' argument which states that necessarily, if the proposition that Socrates is nothing is something then Socrates is something and "Exploring the Contingent Fundamentality Thesis" by Nathan Wildman (University of Hamburg) (featuring Joachim Horvath as a commentator) responded to four objections to the contingent fundamentality thesis, as well as examined how it interacts with

various claims about the modal existential status of the fundamentalia themselves. Alexander Roberts (University of Oxford) in "Modal Expansionism" proposed a novel conception of metaphysical modality, according to which it fails to be the maximal objective modality. Alex Steinberg's (University of Zurich) "Saving Strict Adequacy" argued against the idea that Lewis's scheme is not strictly adequate. To do so, he provided new translations for the allegedly problematic extraordinary modal sentences. The last parallel session of the first day ended up with "Aristotle's Modal Ontology – Overcoming Potentiality-Actuality Reading" by Kei Chiba (Hokkaido University) and "More Than Impossible: Negative and Complex Probabilities and Their Interpretation" given by Vasil Penchev (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences). While the purpose of the latter was to introduce negative and complex probability relevant to special and general relativity, the former investigated Aristotle's modal ontology by distinguishing and relating each of his three modal notions the power-ability (dunamis), the completeness (entelecheia) and the at-work-ness (energeia). The last talk of the day—the keynote address— was given by Gideon Rosen (Princeton University). Entitled "Modality in the Metaphysics of Ethics", the talk argued that pure moral principles are best to be understood as modalized generalizations of the form 'It is normatively necessary that whatever is PHI is F' (where PHI is non-normative and F is normative), though not every such fact is a principle; and that given plausible assumptions, most such principles are metaphysically contingent.

The second day of the conference started with Alex Kaiserman's (University of Oxford) "A Real Definition of Token Physicalism" (commented by Jakob Schieder) and "Dispositional Arrays" by Lorenzo Azzano (Scuola Normale Superiore) followed by Meagan Phillips's comments. Kaiserman suggested a different approach to token physicalism, one which appeals to the essentialist concept of 'real definition'. On this approach, token physicalism turns out to be a much more substantive and interesting view than previously thought. The core idea behind Azzano's talk was that opposition between powers approach and possible worlds approach is unwarranted. Namely, he presented a power-based ontology of possible worlds, which in turn offers a power-based applied possible worlds semantics for modal discourse. In her "Conceivability, Possibility, and the Inconsistent Triad. The Kripkean Challenge to Modal Rationalism" (commented by Alex Kaiserman), Antonella Mallozzi (CUNY – The Graduate Center) showed that Chalmers's Modal Rationalism involves an inconsistent triad composed of (1) Two-Dimensionalism, (2) Modal Monism, and (3) a Kripkean Metaphysics. As she demonstrated, only two of those can be true at a time, while the project needs all of them in order to succeed. Dirk Franken's (University of Marburg) "In Defence of Modal Monism" (commented by Zuzanna Gnatek) made a claim that the Modal Monist is

in the better position to block her opponents master argument than the Modal Dualist. "Possible Worlds and Substances" (commented by Vasil Penchev) by Vladislav Terekhovich (Saint-Petersburg State University) concluded that the activity of substances changes from the possible modality of being to the actual modality of being in a form of existence of the worlds. Joachim Horvath (University of Cologne) presented "Philosophical Analysis: The Concept Grounding View" (commented by Frances Heather Fairbairn) in which he proposed the concept grounding view as a promising account which meets the challenge that the success conditions of philosophical analysis are unclear. Cristina Nencha (Northwest Italy Consortium) asked a question "Was David Lewis a Necessitist?", investigating what she took to be Williamson's main reason for saying that Lewis is a necessitist (followed by David Mark Kovacs's comments). Frances Heather Fairbairn (Cornell University) re-opened "The Problem of Advanced Modalizing" (commented by Robert Michels) and suggested a solution that leaves genuine modal realism, its translation schema, and its ontology intact. The last talk in a parallel session was given by Philipp Berghofer (University of Graz). In his "Unknowable Truths and Limits of Knowledge: What Conclusions Can We Draw from Fitch's Paradox of Knowability?" (commented by Robin Neiman), Berghofer discussed the impact of Fitch's argument on the question of whether there are limits to (human) knowledge and showed that there is no impact at all. The conference ended up with the second keynote address entitled "The Questions of Ontology". In it, Richard Woodward aimed to defend a broadly Quinean picture of ontology by arguing that both Fine's criticisms of Quine, and the conception of ontological inquiry that Fine subsequently develops, are problematic.

Issues on the (Im)Possible series keeps attracting researchers from all around the world(s). And although it has been a while we started organising the event, we still feel an optimism to continue in this activity. It is partly due to the fact that problems of modality are not limited to a narrowly conceived analytic metaphysics. They occur also in other branches of philosophy. Partly, it is the very community which makes the conference both intellectually intensive, yet essentially relaxed.

(Video of *Gideon Rosen's talk* is available at: http://archive.tp.cvtisr.sk? 9158683.)

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