

“Keeping the Public Safe” A Workshop on Public Safety

June 14, 2018

Division of Philosophy, KTH Royal Institute of Technology

Program

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| 9.00-9.15 | Introduction |
| 9.15-10.15 | Richard Endörfer: <i>“It was not My Fault” – Consumer Debt and Impermissible Contributions to Financial Crises</i> |
| 10.45-11.45 | Linda Schenk: <i>Chemicals Safety Assessment</i> |
| | <i>Lunch at Syster O Bror (on campus)</i> |
| 13.00-14.00 | Kalle Grill: Tobacco vs. E-Cigarettes: A Long-Term Perspective |
| 14.15-15.15 | Henok Girma: Arguments against Vision Zero: A Review |
| 15.45-16.45 | Sabine Roeser: The Role of Emotions and Art for Moral Reflection on Risky Technologies |
| 16.45- | Discussion |
| 18.30- | Dinner at restaurant TBA |

Richard Endörfer

Gothenburg University

“It was not My Fault” – Consumer Debt and Impermissible Contributions to Financial Crises

ABSTRACT: Public debates about who should shoulder the moral blame for causing financial crises often focus on financial institutions’ and regulators’ failures. In fact, such complex events are often caused by a host of factors, involving a myriad of agents. Banks and loan originators tend to deflect the blame by arguing that they have merely satisfied the market demand for high risk loans. In turn, they claim that individual borrowers have to assume their own share of responsibility for contributing to the Financial Crisis of 2008. Granted that individual borrowers are often causally implicated in the build-up phases of financial crises, e.g. the US subprime bubble, this article explores whether this assumption implies that they have to assume moral responsibility for the consequences of financial crises, as lenders argue.

In this talk, I discuss four justifications that borrowers can employ in order to be excused for their contributions to financial crises. The first justification states that individual borrowers’ contributions were sufficiently small to be considered morally negligible. According to the second justification, no individual borrower is morally responsible for their contribution to a financial crisis, since financial crises are overdetermined outcomes resulting from collective borrowing activities. The third excuse points to the fact that some borrowers involuntarily contribute to financial crises, since they have no other means to satisfy their basic needs than taking out high risk consumption loans. The final justification states that borrowers do not have a moral obligation to acquire the relevant epistemic insights to be morally responsible for the consequences of a financial crisis. I conclude that the first and second justification is invalid and the third justification is partially valid. The fourth justification ultimately alleviates borrowers from assuming moral responsibility for their causal implication in financial crises.

Linda Schenk

Karolinska Institute

Chemicals Safety Assessment

ABSTRACT: The chemicals industry is one of Europe's largest manufacturing sectors and almost 22 000 chemical agents are manufactured or imported in quantities exceeding 1 tonne per year on the European market. At the same time, exposure to chemicals is associated with, often very small, probabilities of causing negative health effects. The nature and severity of these effects depend on the inherent properties of the substances and the exposure situation. In order to assess the risks with chemicals various kinds of data are used from which safe levels for humans are extrapolated. The talk will give a brief overview of chemical risks and how they are regulated. The main focus will be on safety/risk assessment, i.e. how data on chemicals' hazardous properties are compiled and evaluated in order to determine safe exposures for humans. Exemplifying with occupational exposure limits, we will discuss the process of safety assessment and policy choices that are made explicitly and implicitly throughout this process.

Kalle Grill

Umeå University

Tobacco vs. E-Cigarettes: a Long Term Perspective

ABSTRACT: Proponents of the e-cigarette argue that it has the potential to replace combustible cigarettes, which are much more harmful to users. Opponents argue that the e-cigarette may attract new users and that vaping, though less harmful than smoking, is not harmless and that the precise health effects are largely unknown. I will identify some empirical controversies and then move on to compare two scenarios: 1) traditional tobacco control and a strict policy against e-cigarettes resulting in a tobacco-free society within a few decades, and 2) comprehensive promotion of e-cigarettes resulting in a vaping but non-smoking society somewhat sooner. These scenarios are both optimistic and mostly relevant for rich countries. However, comparing them can help us identify the sort of moral trade-offs that we now face in global tobacco policy.

Henok Girma,

KTH

Arguments against Vision Zero: A Review

ABSTRACT: The adoption of the Swedish Vision Zero (“Nollvisionen”) in 1997 heralded the replacement of a traditional approach to traffic safety that not only involved a reductionist account of responsibility that solely blamed the individual road user, but also emphasized a utilitarian cost-benefit analysis in the formulation and adoption of safety measures. Vision Zero, in contrast, advanced a shared view of responsibility and clearly prioritized safety over mobility. Contrary to traditional cost-benefit calculation, it calls for the adoption of the best available measures to promote safety. Moreover, it is based on the principle that it is morally unacceptable that people die and get seriously injured due to preventable crashes. Despite Vision Zero’s moral appeal and its expansion to different parts of the world, important philosophical concerns related to the adoption and implementation of the vision remain to be addressed. Moreover, the vision zero approach has been criticized on different grounds. For the vision zero approach to succeed even more, it is important that issues and criticisms of philosophical nature associated with it are identified and critically dealt with.

In this workshop the emphasis of my presentation will be on ‘criticisms against vision zero’, more specifically criticisms of philosophical nature. Based on a literature review of some articles an attempt has been made to identify arguments that have been put forward against vision zero. The purpose is to give a general overview of the arguments, rather than giving a detailed analysis of a specific argument.

Sabine Roeser,

TU Delft

The Role of Emotions and Art for Moral Reflection on Risky Technologies

ABSTRACT: Public debates about risky technologies such as biotechnology, ICTs and energy technologies are frequently heated and end up in stalemates, due to the scientific and moral complexities of these risks. In my lecture I will argue that emotions are crucial to debates about technological risks, because emotions can point out what morally matters. I will also examine the role that works of art can play in this. Recently, artists have become involved with risky technologies. I will argue that such artworks can contribute to emotional-moral reflection and public deliberation on risky technologies by making abstract problems more concrete, letting us broaden narrow personal perspectives, exploring new scenarios, and challenging our imagination.