

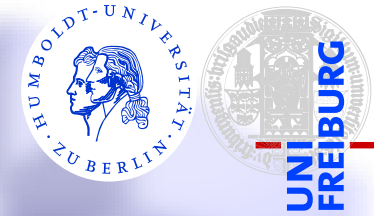
Location

TOPOI Haus Mitte
Humboldt-University Berlin
Hannoversche Straße 6
10099 Berlin

Conference Office

Humboldt University
Main building
Room 3034/36
Tel.: +49 (0)30 2093 2590

Vernünftiger Umgang
mit unscharfen Grenzen



Organisation

Geert Keil (HU Berlin)
geert.keil@hu-berlin.de

Matthias Kiesselbach (HU Berlin)
kiesselm@hu-berlin.de

Ralf Poscher (Universität Freiburg)
Ralf.Poscher@jura.uni-freiburg.de

Registration

Registration is free, but space is limited. If you wish to attend, please send an e-mail to rehsu@hu-berlin.de.

sponsored by



Vagueness, Ontology and Natural Kinds in Law and Philosophy

- A TOPOI Haus Mitte (conference venue)
- B Hotel Albrechtshof
- C Bahnhof Friedrichstraße
- D Humboldt University Main Building

11/12 Dec 2010
Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

Vagueness, Ontology, and Natural Kinds in Philosophy and Law

The conference aims at exploring the interrelations between three ongoing debates in philosophy and legal theory:

(1) Vagueness and ontology

Is vagueness a purely semantic phenomenon, or can objects themselves be vague? Recently, the role of sortality for the debate about ontic vagueness has been recognized. It seems that wondering about an object's spatiotemporal boundaries only makes sense within a sortal ontology where ordinary objects belong to certain (natural) kinds. Material contents of spacetime regions, not being countable, have neither precise nor vague boundaries. But what exactly can we take home from this insight? Does it render sortal ontologies invariably vague, or does it merely say that non-sortal ontologies are not vague?

(2) Vagueness and natural kinds

Plato's metaphor has it that natural kind terms carve nature at its joints. If this implies that they leave no room for semantic vagueness, then sorites reasoning with natural kind terms should be impossible. But this does not seem to be the case. Tigers have gradually evolved from animals with a different DNA; the phenomenon of genetic mutation provides an unailing source for little-by-little arguments. How, then, do natural kinds, and the related externalist semantics as proposed by Kripke and Putnam, put constraints on our carvings of nature, if not by excluding vagueness for natural kind terms?

(3) Natural kinds and legal theory

The semantic vagueness of legal terms has been widely recognized as one of the major sources of legal indeterminacy. In the hope of reining in at least part of this indeterminacy, some philosophers have proposed to extend the externalist semantics to legal terms. However, as Dworkin has famously remarked, justice has no DNA. This being granted, philosophers of law have recently begun to explore varieties of externalism beyond *natural* kinds. Are the analogies between functional kinds, social kinds and natural kinds strong enough to support legal realism by yielding right answers in hard cases?

Saturday, 11 December 2010

10.00-10.15	Geert Keil & Ralf Poscher: <i>Introduction</i>
10.15-10.45	Thomas Sattig: <i>Vagueness, Ontology and Sortal Concepts</i>
10.45-11.15	Plenary Discussion Coffee Break
11.45-12.30	Michael Moore: <i>Semantics, Metaphysics and Objectivity in Law</i>
12.30-12.45	Ralf Poscher: Commentary
12.45-13.15	Plenary Discussion Lunch Break
15.00-15.45	Nicos Stavropoulos: <i>Kripke and the Law: What was the Lesson?</i>
15.45-16.15	Plenary Discussion Coffee Break
16.45-17.30	Dennis Patterson: <i>The Implausibility of Natural Kinds in Law</i>
17.30-18.00	Plenary Discussion

Sunday, 12 December 2010

9.30-10.15	Katherine Hawley: <i>What are Natural Kinds?</i>
10.15-10.30	Christian Nimtz: Commentary
10.30-11.00	Plenary Discussion Coffee Break
11.30-12.15	Roy Sorensen: <i>How Vagueness Makes Judges Lie</i>
12.15-12.30	Daniel Gruschke: Commentary
12.30-13.00	Plenary Discussion Lunch Break
14.30-15.15	Dietmar von der Pfordten: <i>On the Plurality of Types of Legal Concepts</i>
15.15-15.45	Plenary Discussion