

CFA Initial online workshop on the *Ethics of Conversation and Disagreement*

Organizers: Prof. Dr. Martine Prange (Tilburg University, The Netherlands) and Prof. Dr. Manuel Knoll (Turkish-German Istanbul, Turkey)

When and where? Friday June 18th and Saturday June 19th, 2021 (Zoom)

One of the essential features of any conversation, listening, seems to be rather absent in the current public debate. A public debate that is conducted more via memes and other imagery forms, and abbreviations rather than sentences, does not seem to appeal to the public's listening and reading abilities. How do current *style(s)* of the public debate affect its ethics and conduct? And what kind of ethics of conversation could help restore or re-organize the public debate such that the debate becomes a *debate* again about the improvement of public institutions rather than a means for more social disruption and division? Moreover, while the internet was foreseen to help the emancipation of minority groups (Mc Luhan, 1964; Pariser 2011), these groups seem to be again marginalized, discriminated and sidelined. This happens not only on social media but also verbally more vehemently than ever (Nagle 2019). How to amend these kind of undemocratic tendencies? More generally, how can we organize disagreement such, that it is productive rather than disruptive and how can we learn to become better listeners, readers, and more articulate writers (of social media messages) to ensure voices are (correctly) heard? In the pluralist world of today, which is characterized by manifold and widespread moral disagreements and value conflicts, an ethics of conversation and listening seem to be particularly relevant.

In this initial workshop on the Ethics of Conversation and Disagreement, we intend to explore these and related questions. Its goal is to address the public debate in post-truth times from a new ethical perspective, rather than the dominant political one. The workshop aims at bringing together scholars from different philosophical disciplines and the Humanities more broadly (political science, communication studies, media studies, literary studies, cultural studies, law) to explore and discuss issues such as:

1. The nature of online debating: how do social media affect the nature of public debates, e.g., through its use of images, memes and abbreviations rather than full sentences?
2. What does it mean to listen to another person and what can we learn from (philosophical) studies on the art of listening to music, birds and other animals?
3. Do we always need to express ourselves? What about the 'right not to express oneself' (Deleuze; Odell) as a form of resistance or as a right equal to the right to free speech and expression?
4. How can we organize forms of disagreement, agonism, and dissensus, so that they remain fruitful? To what extent is agonism indeed fertile for the public debate and when exactly does disagreement cross boundaries of decency? Should we tolerate insult? Should we tolerate lack of toleration? How to deal with 'deep' disagreements (Fogelin; Berlin; Weber), i.e., disagreements and value conflicts that cannot be rationally resolved?
5. What virtues (Toleration? Respect?) are to be expected from participants in the (intercultural) public debate? How can epistemic peers with diametrically opposed views connect, when rational arguments fail? Can an 'ethics of

disagreement' (Knoll) help out in cases like these, which seem so prevalent in current, divided society. Such an ethics should help us avoid 'epistemic arrogance' (Lynch) and neutralize unjustified feelings of superiority by encouraging us to take on an attitude of 'epistemic modesty', an attitude of asking questions and seeking dialogue rather than making claims and defending theses.

6. How to organize intercultural and inter-class communication?

Confirmed Invited Speakers: Robin Celikates (FU Berlin), Odile Heynders (Tilburg University), Daniele Lorenzini (University of Warwick), Michael P. Lynch (University of Connecticut), Diego E. Machuca (National Academy of Sciences of Buenos Aires), Folke Tersman (Uppsala University), Simon Truwant (KU Leuven)

There will be 16 talks (25 minutes, 20 Q&A) in total, so we are able to accept seven additional speakers. Please send an abstract (approx. 500 words) and a short CV to M.S.Prange@tilburgUniversity.edu and manuel.knoll@tau.edu.tr by April 22, 2021. Notification of acceptance: May 1, 2021.