



Relations – their nature, their types, their existence

workshop in Ligerz, 22nd to 25th of September, 2016

As part of its [Swiss Doctoral Programme in Philosophy](#), the Centre for the Philosophy and Theology of Being at the University of Lucerne: οὐσία, is organising a small and informal workshop in beautiful Ligerz.

For all questions and inquiries, please write to the workshop organiser, philipp.blum@philosophie.ch.

CfP. In recent years, the problem of relations has received a lot of attention. Especially in the wake of Kit Fine's "Neutral Relations", the natures of relations and relational entities have been investigated from a number of angles. At the same time, relations have been bestowed with important roles, in theories as different as structural realisms, power ontologies, relationalist theories of colours and of perception in general. At this 4-day conference in beautiful Ligerz on the shore of the lake of Biemme, we will question again their existence and fundamentality, examine anew their nature and cast a fresh look at their typology (grounded / ungrounded; fixed and varied adicity; internal / external; intentional / 'worldly' etc.).

Participants. Participants should arrive by Wednesday evening and stay at least until Sunday noon. They should commit to have a first draft / extended abstract of their paper ready by 23th of April, read at least some of those of the others in advance and make an effort at reading some of the other material suggested by the other participants. They should commit to staying in Ligerz for the whole duration of the conference, except of course for the joint excursions to the regions' vineyards and the shores of the lake of Biel/Bienne.

Location. The conference takes place in the beautifully located bilingual village of Ligerz / Gléresse, on the shores of the lake of Biel/Bienne (also bilingual):



Talks and meals are at the Aarbergerhaus, where a beamer and facilities to print out handouts are available. Participants stay at the so-called "Louis Haus", where there's also a small bar for late-night drinks. When you get out of the train arriving either from Neuchâtel or from Biel/Bienne, and you face the mountain and the church (turning your back to the lake), the Aarbergerhaus is to your right (in the direction of Biel), about 150 m along the main road. You reach it after passing by the hotel "Kreuz" and by going through a garden door located at your left (facing Biel), just before there is a street for cars on your right going over a small bridge (in the direction of the lake). Please come there when you arrive. (The Louis-Haus, in contrast, is to your left, about 50m through the pedestrian street, on your right just before the fountain).

Participants and presentations. The following have definitely confirmed their presence at the conference:

- Lorenzo Azzano (Pisa) will present a paper about the directionality of dispositions. He also has a paper on Cover Hawthorne on Leibniz on his academia website.
- Elle Benjamin (Univ. of Massachussets) will present a paper entitled “In Defense of A Positionalist Theory of Relations”, developping positionalism for partially symmetric relations.
- Philipp Blum (Lucerne) will present parts of his book manuscript “Fundamentally, there are no relations”.
- Andrea Bottani (Bergamo) will give a talk “Relationalism about Quantities” about relations, relationalism vs. absolutism about quantities, and quality space.
- François Clementz (Aix-en-Provence) will present recent work developping themes of his paper “Asymétrie, ordre et direction: la notion de “sens” d’une relation”.
- Peter Fritz (Oslo) will present a paper (“Predication and Existence”, extended abstract in the dropbox folder) and lead a discussion on “How fine-grained is reality”, about the search for informative conditions for the identity of relations (and properties and propositions), sketching some assumptions to constrain the project, and a number of important questions in the area, in particular discussing the work of Jeremy Goodman, Cian Dorr and himself.
- Damian Luty (Adam Mickiewicz University) will present a paper entitled “Physical relevance as an indicator of ontology based on ungrounded relations” on ontic structural realism.
- Fraser MacBride (Manchester) will participate, but has not yet said what he will talk about.
- Francesco Orilia (Macerata) will develop themes of “Positions, Ordering Relations and O-Roles”.
- Jan Plate (Neuchâtel) will participate and chair a discussion on his recent Phil Imprint paper.
- Giovanni Merlo and Michael Clark (Hamburg) will participate on Thursday and Friday.

Questions. Here are some questions of interest to some participants:

1. If particulars and universals, or at least their distinction or difference, is an abstraction from underlying processes and states, what status for relations?
2. What is the distinction between correlatives and relations? Are correlatives relational properties, or conjunctions of implications? Were Aristotle and the medievals right to construe relations as essentially comparative? Are relations ‘more’ mind-dependent than properties?
3. What is the relation between a relation and its corresponding relational properties? Grounding? But is there token/token grounding at all? Or is it token dependence?
4. What about identity and non-identity, and formal relations in general?
5. Is there a distinction between internal/intrinsic and ‘grounded’ relations; may there be (intentional?) relations that are one-sided, grounded in just one relatum?
6. What are ‘generative’ relations in Goodman’s sense – are they ontologically productive? How could they be, if they first have to hold before they can produce anything?
7. Incongruent counterparts / weak discernibility / handedness and orientation: business for a theory of relation? what’s the difference, in general and in this respect, between connectives and relations?
8. Can relations be perceived? Are internal and external relations perceived differently, do they have a different epistemological status?
9. What informative conditions govern the identity of relations (and properties and propositions)?
10. How should we regiment talk of relations in logic? In particular, should we use first-order or higher-order quantifiers?

Discussion sessions. Discussion sessions should be introduced by the moderator (5-25 min.) and then also chaired by that person.

Program:

time	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
9-10.30	Blum, talk	Orilia, talk	Bottani, talk	Blum, talk
10.45-11.45	Azzano, talk	Benjamin, talk	Fritz, talk	relations and change
12-13	extrinsic entities	numbers	identity/difference	summing-up
14-15.30	MacBride, talk	Clementz, talk		free
15.45-16.45	Fritz, talk	free	Russell & Bradley	free
17-18	relations and simplicity	free	Luty, talk	free

Thurs, 9-10.30 Philipp Blum, “Fundamentally, there are no relations”.

Thurs, 10.45-11.45 Lorenzo Azzano, Relation(s) between powers and their manifestations.

Abstract. Cf. dropbox folder.

Suggested reading: Bird, Potency and Modality.

Thurs, 12-13 “Extrinsic entities”, ‘animated’ by Philipp Blum.

Thurs, 14-15.30 Fraser MacBride, “The Origins of Order”.

Suggested reading: Fraser MacBride, “On the Origins of Order: non-symmetric or only symmetric relations?”, From *The Problem of Universals in Contemporary Philosophy*, edited by G. Galluzzo & M.J. Loux (CUP, 2015), pp. 173-94.

Thurs, 15.45-16.45 Peter Fritz, “Predication and Existence”.

Abstract. Let contingentism be the view that it is contingent what individuals there are. Contingentists face the following question: is it possible for relations to relate individuals there could be, but there aren’t? Let higher-order contingentism be the view that it is contingent what relations, properties and propositions there are, where such talk is regimented using a hierarchy of higher-order quantifiers. Higher-order contingentists face a further question: is it possible for relations to relate lower-level relations, properties or propositions there could be, but there aren’t? I first argue that higher-order contingentists should answer both questions positively: relations relate not only what there is, but also what there could be. I then show that higher-order contingentists have ways of talking about relations, properties and propositions which there could not possibly be, namely by constructing them out of relations, properties and propositions there could be. E.g., we can sensibly ask whether there could be a proposition *p* such that there could be a proposition *q* such that there could not be the conjunction of *p* and *q*. I argue that such possibilities open up a further question: is it possible for relations to relate lower-level relations, properties or propositions there could not possibly be? I argue that higher-order contingentists should also answer this questions positively: relations relate not only what there is and what there could be, but also what there couldn’t be.

Suggested reading: “Higher-Order Contingentism, Part 1” and “Counting Impossibles”. The first two sections of the first of these is an informal introduction to higher-order contingentism, which would be useful background reading for the talk. I will also briefly discuss themes relating to the second paper.

Thurs, 17-18 “Relations and logical simplicity”, ‘animated’ by Jan Plate.

Suggested reading: Jan Plate, “Logically Simple Properties and Relations”, Phil. Imprint.

Fri, 9-10.30 Francesco Orilia, “O-Roles Theory: Open Problems”.

Abstract. Cf. dropbox.

Suggested reading: The dialectica paper and the SEP entry on properties.

Fri, 10.45-11.45 Elle Benjamin, “In Defense of A Positionalist Theory of Relations”.

Abstract. Cf dropbox.

Fri, 12-13 “Numbers and arithmetical relations”, ‘animated’ by Philipp Blum.

Fri, 14-15.30 François Clementz, “Connections vs. relations: a distinction without (so much of) a difference”.

Abstract. Are relations – or, more accurately, are all relations – genuine connections between their relata? Or do connections, as opposed to relations, belong to a distinct ontological sub-category of “links” (or “ties”)? And, if so, is a connection some kind of hyper-relation, or, on the contrary, an infra-relation – or whatever else? In order to throw at least some light upon these tricky questions, I suggest that should be in turn revisited both the very idea of a genuine relation and such more or less traditional notions as those of «external», “internal” and, finally, “formal” relations. Are relations – or, more accurately, are all relations – genuine connections between their relata? Or do connections, as opposed to relations, belong to a distinct ontological sub-category of “links” (or “ties”) ? And, if so, is a connection some kind of hyper-relation, or, on the contrary, an infra-relation – or whatever else? In order to throw at least some light upon these tricky questions, I suggest that should be in turn revisited both the very idea of a genuine relation and such more or less traditional notions as those of «external», “internal” and, finally, “formal” relations.

Suggested reading: “Internal, formal and thin relations” and “Asymétrie, ordre et direction: la notion de “sens” d’une relation”.

Sat, 9-10.30 Andrea Bottani, “Mass properties, Mass Relations and Quality Space”.

Suggested reading: D. M. Armstrong, “Are Quantities Relations? A reply to Bigelow and Pargetter” (This is sufficiently self-contained to be fully transparent even without knowing Bigelow and Pargetter’s paper, that can be read too, if one wants), S. Dasgupta “Absolutism vs. Comparativism about Quantities”. Some general knowledge of P. Gardenfors’ book *Conceptual Spaces*, MIT Press 2004 might also be useful. And a general knowledge of “Determinables”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Phil.* by R. Sanford would also be preferable.

Sat, 10.45-11.45 “How fine-grained is reality?”, ‘animated’ by Peter Fritz.

Abstract. I propose to direct attention to the following question: What informative conditions govern the identity of relations, properties and propositions? E.g., is every proposition identical to the negation of its negation? The question is to be understood metaphysically, rather than semantically; no assumption is made that the relations, properties and propositions at issue here serve as compositional semantic values of corresponding types of expressions. To constrain the project, I propose to regiment talk of relations, properties and propositions using higher-order logic. Thus we can understand properties and propositions as unary and nullary relations, respectively. On the one hand, I take the Russell-Myhill argument to show that reality cannot be structured: the structure of the terms we use to express relations is not reflected in the relations themselves. On the other hand, I take Kripke’s arguments for the intelligibility of metaphysical notions of necessity to show that relations are not extensional: some relations agree on what they relate without doing so necessarily, and so are distinct. Speaking metaphorically, we can sum this up by saying that relations must be of intermediate grain: more fine-grained than extensions but more coarse-grained than expressions. To illustrate the general project, I sketch a few proposed answers of fundamentally different character, drawing on work in progress by Jeremy Goodman, Cian Dorr and myself.

Suggested reading: Jeremy Goodman’s “Reality is not structured”, in which one can find a discussion of implications of the Russell-Myhill argument.

Sat, 12-13 “Identity and difference”, ‘animated’ by Lorenzo Azzano.

Abstract. Cf. dropbox.

Suggested reading: Wehmeier, ‘How to live without identity and why’.

Sat, 14-15 . “The relation relations have with their relational properties”, animated by Elle Benjamin.

Sat, 15.15-16.15 “Mixtures and hylomorphism”, ‘animated’ by Philipp Blum.

Sat, 16.30-17.30 Damian Luty, “Physical relevance as an indicator of ontology based on ungrounded relations”.

Sun, 9-10.30 Philipp Blum, “Structural properties and incongruent counterparts”.

Sun, 10.45-11.45 “Relations and change”, animated by Philipp Blum.

Sun, 12-13 Summing-up.

Required reading. Participants should have some knowledge of the following:

- MacBride, Fraser, 2016. “Relations”. in Zalta, Edward N. (editor) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford, California: The Metaphysics Research Lab, Center for the Study of Language and Information. Version of February 8, 2016
- Fine, Kit, 2000. “Neutral Relations”. *The Philosophical Review* 109(1): 1–33
- Orilia, Francesco, 2014. “Positions, Ordering Relations and O-Roles”. *Dialectica* 68(2): 283–303
- Armstrong, David M., 1988. “Are Quantities Relations?: A Reply to Bigelow & Pargetter (1988)”. *Philosophical Studies* 54(3): 305–316
- Clementz, François, 2011. “Internal, formal and thin relations”. in Reboul, Anne (editor) *Philosophical Papers Dedicated to Kevin Mulligan*. Genève: Département de philosophie, Université de Genève. URL <http://www.philosophie.ch/kevin/festschrift/>. Reprinted in Reboul (2014: 207–224)
- Clementz, François, 2012. “Asymétrie, ordre et direction: la notion de “sens” d’une relation”. in Guay, Alexandre (editor) *Autour des Principia Mathematica de Russell and Whitehead*, pp. 59–82. Histoire et Philosophie des Sciences, Dijon: Presses Universitaires de Dijon

Suggested reading. It would be good if participants could have a look at at least some of the following:

- Bird, Alexander, 2006. “Potency and Modality”. *Synthese* 149(3): 447–452
- Blumson, Ben, 2016. “Similarity Spaces”. Unpublished manuscript
- Dasgupta, Shamik, 2013. “Absolutism vs Comparativism about Quantity”. in Bennett, Karen & Dean W. Zimmerman (editors) *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, volume VIII, pp. 105–149. New York: Oxford University Press
- Donnelly, Maureen, 2016. “Positionalism Revisited”. in Marmodoro, Anna & David Yates (editors) *The Metaphysics of Relations*, pp. 80–99. Mind Association Occasional Series, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Fritz, Peter & Jeremy Goodman, 2016a. “Counterfactuals and Propositional Contingentism”. Unpublished manuscript, dated February 7, 2016
- Fritz, Peter & Jeremy Goodman, 2016b. “Higher-Order Contingentism, Part 1: Closure and Generation”. *The Journal of Philosophical Logic* 45(6): 645–695

- Gärdenfors, Peter, 2000. *Conceptual Spaces: The Geometry of Thought*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press
- Goodman, Jeremy, forthcoming. “Reality is not structured”. *Analysis*
- Hochberg, Herbert, 1987. “Russell’s Early Analysis of Relational Predication and the Asymmetry of the Predication Relation”. *Philosophia: Philosophical Quarterly of Israel* 17(4): 439–459
- MacBride, Fraser, 2015. “On the Origins of Order: non-symmetric or only symmetric relations?” in Galluzzo, Gabrielle & Michael J. Loux (editors) *The Problem of Universals in Contemporary Philosophy*, pp. 173–194. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Orilia, Francesco & Chris Swoyer, 2016. “Properties”. in Zalta, Edward N. (editor) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford, California: The Metaphysics Research Lab, Center for the Study of Language and Information. Substantive revision, February 17, 2016, of [Swoyer & Orilia \(2011\)](#)
- Orilia, Francesco, 2008. “Basic Ontology, Multiple Realizability and Mental Causation”. in Gozzano, Simone & Francesco Orilia (editors) *Tropes, Universals and the Philosophy of Mind. Essays at the Boundary of Ontology and Philosophical Psychology*, pp. 57–100. number 24 in *Philosophische Analyse / Philosophical Analysis*, Heusenstamm b. Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag
- Orilia, Francesco, 2011. “Relational Order and Onto-Thematic Roles”. *Metaphysica* 12(1): 1–18
- Paolini Paoletti, Michele, forthcoming. “How Powers Emerge from Relations”. *Axiomathes*
- Plate, Jan, 2016. “Logically Simple Properties and Relations”. *Philosophers’ Imprint* 16(1)
- Russell, Bertrand Arthur William, 1903. *The Principles of Mathematics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2nd edition: [Russell \(1937\)](#)
- Russell, Bertrand Arthur William, 1984. *Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript*. number 7 in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, The McMaster University Edition*, London: George Allen & Unwin. Edited by Elizabeth Ramsden Eames in collaboration with Kenneth Blackwell
- Sanford, David H., 2011. “Determinates vs. Determinables”. in Zalta, Edward N. (editor) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford, California: The Metaphysics Research Lab, Center for the Study of Language and Information. Revision, February 22, 2011, of the version of April 26, 2002
- Wehmeier, Kai Frederick, 2012. “How to Live Without Identity – And Why”. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 90(4): 761–777