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| **Meeting title:** Thought Experiments and Metaphilosophy: Can You Picture That? |
| **Date:** 27.6.2025.  |
| **Time:** 12.00 |
| **Place:** Faculty of Philosophy, University of Rijeka |
| **Zoom link:** Filozofija Doktorski is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.Join Zoom Meeting[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87948305563?pwd=bptGHHf62IljZ8ouOUirMGxluT29La.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87948305563?pwd=bptGHHf62IljZ8ouOUirMGxluT29La.1" \o "https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87948305563?pwd=bptGHHf62IljZ8ouOUirMGxluT29La.1" \t "_blank)Meeting ID: 879 4830 5563Passcode: 535338 |
| **Duration:** 1 hour and 15 minutes |
| **Participants:** Boran Berčić, Marko Jurjako, Luca Malatesti, Yanni Ratajczik, Ema Luna Lalic, Tamara Crnko, Aleksandar Božić, Vito Balorda, Filip Čeč, Andrej Jandrić |
| **Agenda:**1. Jennifer Whyte delivered the talk “Thought Experiments and Metaphilosophy: Can You Picture That?”
2. Discussion, questions and comments
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| **Meeting summary:** On Friday 27.6.2024. the MetPhil project team gathered to attend a visiting lecture. The topic of the visiting lecture was a talk given by Jennifer Whyte titled “Thought Experiments and Metaphilosophy: Can You Picture That?”. In the first part of the workshop Whyte delivered her talk in which she reflected on the nature of thought experiments and their role in science and philosophy. The second part of the talk was dedicated to a Q&A session where the audience presented their questions and comments to the author. |
| **Talk summary:**Thought experiments have a distinguished history. Many of the world’s most eminent scientists (such as Einstein) frequently relied on the method of thought experiments while conducting their work. Right of the bat we can ask ourselves the following question: if scientists can make use of thought experiments, why shouldn’t philosophers be able to do the same thing? Moreover, Wyhte claims that the similarity between philosophy and the sciences in their use of thought experiments can also be traced back to the history of the term ‘thought experiment’, which actually comes to philosophy from the sciences.There is a tension that arises if we try to situate thought experiments within the framework of the sciences. This tension is captured in the so-called Classic Problem. The Classic Problem can bi illustrated via the following propositions:1. Thought experiments are omnipresent throughout the history of science.
2. Science is empirical.
3. Thought experiments are not empirical

To justify and make sense of the use of thought experiments in science we must reject one of these three propositions.To evaluate some existing views about thought experiments Whyte presents a famous thought example which will serve as an explanandum: namely, that of Galileo and the falling stones. The three paths we might take to explain the role of thought experiments in science are the following:1. Thought experiments provide *a priori* knowledge about the world.
2. Thought experiments provide *a posteriori* knowledge about the world.
3. Thought experiments do not provide knowledge.

There is also a “secret” fourth option:1. Thought experiments provide knowledge about *something that isn’t the world*.

Whyte endorses this fourth option, claiming that thought experiments provide us with knowledge of our models of the world (specifically, they test for the coherence of the model). In this way, “…a thought experiment is not an experiment *in* thought, but an experiment *on* thought” (PowerPoint presentation).Questions and Comments**Berčić*** Some thought experiments truly seem to be about the world, not like the coherence of models. What do we do in these cases?
* It looks like there can be some general logical structure to thought experiments.
* Is it incoherence or undesirable consequences that we judge to be present in thought experiments?
* Is there a single account that covers all thought experiments, or are there different kinds of thought experiments?
* It looks like the method of reflective equilibrium is relevant to the framework proposed by Whyte.
* He thinks that thought experiments are just counterfactual reasoning. Does Whyte think that this view is true?

**Čeč*** What about some thought experiments that are being done in metaphysics that tell us something about ontology but are untestable? For example Max Black’s two spheres thought experiment. Does this open up the way to a pluralism regarding thought experiment?
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| **Jurjako*** If a thought experiment lead us to a contradiction, does this mean that anything validly follows from this?
* How dismissive is Whyte about the heuristics view?

**Ema*** The mental model, as far as she understood Miščević, wasn’t completely visual. The mental modelling does not force us to visualize.
* It looks like open ended thought experiments don’t take the form of an argument.

**Malatesti*** It looks like Frank Jackson’s thought experiment says something of import regarding ontology. Is this compatible with the framework of Whyte?
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