

Róbert Mátyási

Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto

170 St. George Street, Toronto, ON M5R 2M8

robbie.matyasi@mail.utoronto.ca

Research Areas

Areas of specialization: 17th and 18th Century Philosophy, Metaphysics

Areas of competence: Epistemology, Philosophy of Mind, Ethics, Early Analytic Philosophy

Education

PhD, Philosophy, University of Toronto, expected completion 2021

- Dissertation topic: Spinoza's metaphysics of the finite: composition, essence, modality
- Dissertation committee: Karolina Hübner (supervisor), Nick Stang, Marleen Rozemond
- Dissertation abstract:

My dissertation is about Spinoza's metaphysics of ordinary objects, organisms, and persons. I focus on three topics: mereological composition, essence and universals, and the nature of contingency. First I argue that Spinoza is an anti-realist about composition because he is a perspectivalist. That is, for Spinoza, expressions such as 'x is a part of y' or 'x is a whole composed of some ys' convey abstract judgments from a limited perspective. Then I turn to Spinoza's famous *conatus doctrine* which says that the actual essence of an individual is their striving for survival. I argue that it is important for Spinoza that this striving belongs to a natural kind: for example, humans and horses are essentially different. I show that the scope of Spinoza's alleged nominalist commitments don't rule out the existence of a limited set of properties—i.e., universals *in the things* as opposed to Platonic forms. Lastly, I argue that Spinoza holds *modal compatibilism*, the view that some things are both necessary and contingent. I argue that this interpretation allows us to clarify Spinoza's necessitarianism. Second, this reading leads to a new take on answering the acosmist critique of Spinoza.

Visiting assistant in research, Yale University, 2019

- Advisor: Michael Della Rocca

MA, Philosophy, Central European University, 2014

BA, Philosophy, University of Pécs, 2012

Publications

Articles

"Spinoza on Composition, Monism and Beings of Reason", *Journal of Modern Philosophy*, 2(1). 2020.

<http://doi.org/10.32881/jomp.74>

Reviews

(with Karolina Hübner) *Reconceiving Spinoza*, by Samuel Newlands, *Mind*, 129(513): 307-314. 2020.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fz015>

Talks and Conference Papers

(* = refereed, # = invited)

Spinoza on Essence and Determination

- NYC Early Modern WIP Workshop, New York University, April 20, 2019
- #International Workshop on Early Modern Philosophy, Harvard University, September 29, 2018, Commentator: Sebastian Bender

Spinoza on Composition

- SEMPY, Yale University, March 5, 2019

Spinoza on Objective Being and Modality

- *8th Margaret Wilson conference, University of Buffalo, June 16, 2018
- *Canadian Philosophical Association Congress, Université du Québec à Montréal, June 7, 2018
- *Finnish-Hungarian Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, Central European University, 28 May, 2018

Moore on the Unreality of Agent Relative Value (with Damian Melamedoff)

- *Canadian Philosophical Association Congress, University of British Columbia, June 4, 2019 (winner of the English Student Essay Prize), commentator: Graham Moore

Spinoza's Two Concepts of Parthood

- *Collegium Spinozanum II, University of Groningen, July 7, 2017
- History of Modern Philosophy Research Group talk, University of Toronto, March 23, 2017

Need Recurrence be Eternal? (with James Davies)

- *Canadian Philosophers Association Congress, Ryerson University, May 27, 2017

Spinoza on Expression

- #Early Modern Symposium, Research Group for the History and Philosophy of Science, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, August 3, 2016
- (with Karolina Hübner) History of Modern Philosophy Research Group talk, University of Toronto, April 25, 2016

Causal Eliminativism and Ordinary Objects (titles may vary)

- *Sixth Conference of the Dutch-Flemish Association for Analytic Philosophy (VAF 2014); University of Groningen, January 29-31, 2014
- 6th In-house Graduate Philosophy Conference; Central European University, October 11, 2013
- #Logic and Philosophy of Mathematics seminar (LaPoM). The student and faculty seminar of the Department of Logic, Eötvös Lóránd University, October 14, 2011

Episztemikus lázadók és a szkepticizmus kihívása ("Epistemic Renegades and the Challenge of Skepticism")

- *Megértés és magyarázat ("Understanding and explanation") | Analytic Philosophy and Phenomenology Conference Series; University of Kaposvár, January 18, 2013

Metametafizika mint még több metafizika ("Metametaphysics as More Metaphysics")

- *Realizmus a fenomenológiában és az analitikus filozófiában ("Realism in phenomenology and analytic philosophy") | Analytic philosophy and Phenomenology Conference Series, University of Kaposvár, January 15, 2012

Hogyan értsük a Hume-diktumot, és miért érdemes alkalmaznunk a kortárs metafizikában? ("How to Understand Hume's Dictum, and Why It's worth Using in Contemporary Metaphysics?")

- *David Hume évszázadai ("Centuries of David Hume"), Eötvös Lóránd University, September 30, 2011

Invited Comments

Torin Doppelt, “‘A Sadness Born of a Fact’: a Study of Spinoza’s Humility”, Canadian Philosophical Association Congress, Université du Québec à Montréal, June 7, 2018

Teaching

Course Instructor

- 17th and 18th century philosophy, 200-level, University of Toronto St. George, Summer, 2020
- Knowledge and Reality, 200-level, University of Toronto St. George, Summer, 2019
- Knowledge and Reality, 200-level, University of Toronto St. George, Summer, 2018

Tutorial Leader

- 17-18th Century Philosophy, 200-level, University of Toronto Mississauga, Fall/Spring 2017– 2018
- Knowledge and Reality, 200-level, University of Toronto St. George, Summer 2017
- 17-18th Century Philosophy, 200-level, University of Toronto St. George, Fall/Spring 2016 – 2017

Teaching Assistant

- Critical reasoning, 100-level, University of Toronto Mississauga, Summer 2016
- Modern Symbolic Logic, 200-level, University of Toronto St. George, Spring 2016
- Minds and Machines, 300-level, University of Toronto St. George, Fall 2015
- Ethics, 300-level, University of Toronto St. George, Summer 2015
- Puzzles and paradoxes, University of Toronto Scarborough, Spring 2015

Guest Lectures

- Spinoza’s Metaphysics and Philosophy of Mind, 2019 Summer, University of Toronto, St. George, Graduate course
- Advanced Topics in Rationalism: Minds, Thinking, and Idealism, 300-level, University of Toronto, Scarborough, 2017 Spring
- Topics in 17th and 18th Century Philosophy, 300-level, University of Toronto Mississauga, Fall 2017

Other Academic Contributions

Philosophy for General Audience

I am a frequent contributor to the *Kiskaté* column in the Hungarian journal *Műút*. In *Kiskaté* we write short introductions explaining philosophical debates—especially ones that have little or no discussion available in Hungarian—on the occasion of discussing a recent major publication.

So far I wrote pieces on the following:

- Michael O. Hardimon: Rethinking Race
- Timothy Williamson: Modal Logic as Metaphysics
- Herman Cappelen: Philosophy without Intuitions (with Tibor Bárány)
- Daniel Z. Korman: Objects: Nothing out of the Ordinary
- Diana Raffman: Unruly Words

Our essays (until 2017) are also published as a collection:

Kiskaté. Kortárs filozófiai kiskönyvtár. Tibor Bárány, László Jenei (editors), Műút Könyvek, Miskolc, 2017

Reviews in Hungarian (fiction, political philosophy)

“Bagi Zsolt: Helyi Arcok, Egyetemes Tekintetek. Facies Localis Universi”, Jelenkor 56:7-8, 2013

“Paul Verhaeghen: Omega Minor”, Jelenkor 55:3, 2012

Summer Schools

Humanist and Scholastic Roots of Early Modern Philosophy, Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome March 12-19, 2018

Collegium Spinozanum II, University of Groningen, July 4-7, 2017

Spinoza and German Idealism, University of Toronto, May 16-19, 2016

Ontology and Metaontology, Central European University, July 13-24, 2015

Awards and Grants

Canadian Philosophical Association Student Essay Prize, 2019

School of Graduate Studies Doctoral Fellowship, University of Toronto, 2014 – 2020

Balzan Travel Fellowship, Department of Philosophy University of Toronto, 2015; 2018

Department of Philosophy Graduate Travel Grant, University of Toronto, 2016; 2017; 2018

Full CEU Fellowship, Central European University, 2012 – 2014

University of Pécs, Faculty of Humanities, Institutional, Professional, and Scientific Scholarship, 2010 – 2012

Service

Board member of the Spinoza Society of Canada, 2016 – present

Editor of the Philpapers entry “Spinoza: Teleology”, 2016 – present

Conference organizing:

- “Spinoza: Method, Metaphysics, & Morality” (with the Spinoza Society of Canada), American Philosophical Association Central Meeting, February 21, 2018
- “Spinoza: New Directions of Research” (with Karolina Hübner) at the University of Toronto, September 9-10, 2017.

Research languages

Latin, German

Last updated July, 2020