***Strawson on sounds, 65 years since the publication of* Individuals**

**For the panel “The Philosophy of P. F. Strawson”**

**ABSTRACT**

In 1959, P. F. Strawson launched in *Individuals*, his *opus magnum*, a big project of a general understanding of the world, which he entitled ‘descriptive metaphysics’. His system was able to account for a wide range of things including particulars not only as spatiotemporal bodies but also particulars of which we can ascribe psychological predicates, namely, persons. In his system, which was somewhat coherent with his theory of reference, there was an aspect that intrigued Strawson to a big extent: sound.

What kind of particular was sound if it was a particular at all? How can we attribute spatial features to sound?

In this talk, I want to evaluate Strawson’s approach to sounds and his famous thought experiment of an aspatial —namely non-spatial— world according to the renewed philosophical discussion on sounds. A discussion, which, in fact, was brought about by Strawson himself sixty years ago.

In the assessment *per ser* of Strawson’s argument I want to query the place sounds have within his project of descriptive metaphysics; the problems sound possess in relation to his theory of reference; his criticism concerning the apparent conflation of the terms “objective” and “spatial”; and the puzzles it raises about subjectivity. For this, I will also consider Gareth Evans’ (1985) reading of Strawson’s text.

In the new terms of the philosophical discussion about sound, the radicalisation of Strawson’s thought experiment has derived in something called the “a-spatial” view of sound.

For Casati & Dokic (1994, 2014), the question about the location of sound is just as important as that concerning the type of entity sounds are (are they particulars? are they properties? Strawson was inquiring this as well). According to them, there are four views possible:

a) Proximal theories, according to which sounds are in or at the hearer, a psychological (and maybe psychologistic) common viewpoint.

b) Medial theories, according to which sounds are between the hearer and the source or sounding object, a physics and, more concisely, acoustics viewpoint.

c) Distal theories, according to which sounds are at the sounding object, event, or source.

d) Aspatial theories, according to which sounds do not have intrinsic spatial features.

Therefore, another matter for assessment is that concerning the pertinence of such category and Strawson’s adherence to it.

In particular, I am concerned with the fact that sounds can report on space but, if the argument holds, they are not spatial themselves. For such, inquiry, I am in company of those investigating the nature of the spatial content of auditory experience (Nudds 2008, O’Callaghan 2014).

*Jorge Luis Méndez-Martinez*

*School of Philosophy, International Laboratory of Logics and Linguistics*

*National Research University- “Higher School of Economics”*

*Moscow, Russian Federation*