

## Society for Applied Philosophy

### Annual Conference 2026

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**Aas, Sean** (Georgetown University)

*Manipulation, and Mental Integrity*

*Keywords:* mental integrity; manipulation; sales; business ethics]

The human mind is not a closed system – information comes in, and goes out, all the time, as we reason and persuade and influence and interpret one another. Philosophers have tended to think of the ethics of this traffic piecemeal: in terms of particular wrongs like deception, coercion, and manipulation. The purpose of this paper is to argue that we cannot explain everything we need to explain about mental morality by appeal to these more familiar wrongs alone. Rather, we need to posit a sui generis right to the mind, a right to mental integrity that would protect us against mental boundary-crossings not appropriately authorized by consent or morally authoritative social conventions. The argument is by example: there are forms of manipulative persuasion, in sales in particular, which are morally problematic, but for no other reason than their infringement of this right. Following a recent line of argument due to Sophie Gibert, I argue that it is not always wrong to bypass reasoning, or even to undermine the quality of it. At least where we have adequate defenses against these maneuvers, they are simply part of life in a sharp-elbowed, competitive, society. Nor are all instances of wrongful manipulation wrongful simply because they are deceptive, coercive, or harmful. Some instances of unethical high-pressure sales tactics either lack these features, or have them, only, because they are already wrongful in other ways. What goes wrong in these cases is simply that salespeople are able to induce beliefs and desires in us in ways that overawe our mental defenses. Much, then, as we need socially instituted right against bodily incursions, to protect us where we cannot protect ourselves, so too do we need the kind of protection against mental incursions afforded by a right to mental integrity.

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**Addleman, Cara** (University of Oxford)

*Republicanism and Hidden Injustice: The Challenge from Adaptive Preferences*

*[Keywords:* Adaptive preferences; patriarchy; social norms; domination; neo-republicanism.]

Neo-republican political philosophy has received much recent attention for its radical potential. However, a significant threat to this potential has hitherto been overlooked. 'Adaptive preferences', such as women's preferences for sexual subordination under patriarchy, or workers' consumerist preferences under capitalism, conceal injustices that are hidden from republicanism's view. What's more, until it can recognise these injustices, republicanism will be unable to support political movements that challenge the status quo. As such, it will be a conservative, not a radical,

political theory. I first outline how the challenge from adaptive preferences bites for both perfectionist versions of republicanism – which appeal to a conception of the good life in defining non-domination – and political versions, which eschew any such appeal. Political republicanism fails to recognise injustice in cases of adaptive preferences at all. Perfectionist republicanism does so only at the cost of collapsing the concept of domination into that of harm. Thus, a new version of republicanism is needed if it is to retain its radical promise. In this paper, I take on this challenge. I develop a Kantian version of republicanism, which captures the injustice involved in adaptive preferences through the concept of ‘second-order’ domination. Second-order domination obtains insofar as some social groups have disproportionate influence over the formation of adaptive preferences. The domination of these groups is comparable to that of a benevolent monarch, who eradicates private domination between citizens but herself dominates in virtue of her unilateral power to do so. In resolving the challenge from adaptive preferences, Kantian republicanism meets two desiderata for progressive political philosophy. First, it can capture and explain feminist objections to the disproportionate constructive power afforded to men under the patriarchy. And second, it can move beyond conservative, immanent critique, and support the radical transformations in social norms that justice demands.

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**Ahissar, Shira** (LSE)

*Freedom of Information Choice*

[Keywords: Digital ethics, freedom, autonomy]

The existing body of literature on freedom of choice has concentrated on choices among various actions or commodity bundles. This paper, however, explores a distinct aspect of freedom of choice, which I term “freedom of information choice”, which is required for autonomous judgment formation. I claim this is the freedom one lacks in many contemporary epistemic environments, including online. I elucidate two key characteristics that set freedom of information choice apart from other forms of freedom of choice. First, as the purpose of information option sets is to shape evaluative judgments, the freedom they provide cannot be primarily measured based on pre-existing individual evaluative judgments. Additionally, as cognitive limitations are the most crucial constraints in processing information, I suggest that instead of the monetary budget set that is common in the evaluation of economic freedom, we should primarily consider a cognitive “budget set”. I clarify why these distinctions render various prominent suggestions for enhancing freedom of choice problematic for measuring freedom of information choice. For these reasons prominent accounts cannot explain why when an option set is designed so that one receives recommendations of similar materials or is in constant danger of falling down a rabbit whole, they have less freedom of choice. Subsequently, I propose one way of enhancing freedom of information choice, which is to increase the intra-bundle diversity of options, i.e., enhancing the diversity of information within a co-possible bundle of information options, as opposed to diversifying between mutually exclusive options. I claim that improving freedom of information choice requires that such intra-diversity falls within the limits of one’s cognitive budget, given known cognitive limitations. I then illustrate how this can be achieved with a particular curation of information online.

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**Aitchison, Guy** (Loughborough University)

*The Right to Liveability*

[Keywords: Ethics, Suicide, Rights, Mental Health]

There has been a steady rise in the number of suicide deaths in England. An unprecedented number of people are reporting anxiety, depression and other mental health problems amid a broader mental health ‘crisis’, as described by the World Health Organisation. The reasons are complex and multifaceted. But there is broad agreement among scholars that suicide and mental distress are concentrated among those suffering various kinds of disadvantage, such as poverty,

economic precarity and discrimination. To date, very little has been written on the ethical question of how government and other powerful agents should respond. At the level of policy, suicide is treated primarily as a clinical matter and there is an absence of clear and enforceable standards that address prevention. This paper will provide the first systematic philosophical account of a just, society-wide response to suicide. It develops the highly original theoretical proposal of a 'right to liveability' initially hypothesised as a moral claim to be free from social conditions conducive to suicide, affording individuals adequate opportunities to live a life they see as valuable. The right to liveability plausibly requires a minimum floor of material security, but also restrictions on the distinctive psychological harms of institutional power, such as opaque decisions and social deprivation. The project clarifies a core set of enforceable duties for government and other agents (e.g. minimum human contact in service provision) and provides a potent moral vocabulary with which to condemn contemporary practices that predictably generate hopelessness. In so doing, it offers a timely and significant contribution to political philosophy and the multi-disciplinary study of suicide that can transform academic and public understandings of our collective responsibilities.

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**An, Dong** (Zhejiang University)

*Moral Bitterness Reconsidered*

[Keywords: Moral Bitterness; Moral Anger; Hope; Blaming; Communicative Force]

While moral anger has been extensively discussed in feminist ethics, a closely related emotion, moral bitterness, has received little explicit attention. The few extant theories characterize it with the disappointment of important hopes, helpless anger, or helplessness. I show that each captures part of the phenomenon but none explains its unique psychological structure and moral significance. Contrary to views that treat bitterness as unresolved anger, I argue that bitterness differs from anger in its communicative orientation. Anger is a second-personal reactive attitude that addresses the wrongdoer, demands uptake, and aims at moral repair. By contrast, bitterness renounces this second-personal address. It expresses blame not by demanding reconciliation or apology but by seeking sympathy or recognition, typically from third parties or from oneself. Recognizing bitterness as a distinct non-second-personal blaming emotion expands our understanding of the reactive attitudes and challenges the assumption that all morally significant blame must be addressed to wrongdoers. This distinction is further illuminated through the framework of moral repair. Reactive attitudes presuppose hopeful trust in the possibility of restoring moral relationships. Bitterness arises precisely when such hopeful trust is lost. The bitter person continues to judge the wrong as morally significant but no longer aims at resolution. This conceptualization allows bitterness to be understood as an intelligible and coherent response to injustice rather than a psychological defect. Based on this, I argue that bitterness can be both prudentially and morally appropriate. In contexts of systemic interpersonal injustice, where repair is impossible or prohibitively costly, continuing to feel anger may be psychologically damaging. Bitterness can function as an emotional self-protection. While anger can be admirable for its commitment to moral repair, individuals are not morally obligated to bear its burdens indefinitely. In some cases, withdrawing into bitterness is morally justified.

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**Andrieux, Guillaume** (University of Glasgow)

*Against Enabling Reasons for Belief*

[Keywords: Pragmatism, Reasons for belief, Epistemic standards]

A longstanding objection to Pragmatism is the motivational challenge, according to which there are no normative practical reasons for belief because we are unable to form beliefs on the basis of practical considerations. There has been recent attempts (Leary 2017, Quanbeck and Worsnip 2025) to defuse this challenge by identifying practical reasons for belief which enable agents to believe by modulating their responsiveness to the evidence. In this paper, I argue that these enabling cases do not vindicate Pragmatism, but the more moderate claim that there are practical

reasons to adopt certain epistemic standards. First, I distinguish two kinds of enabling reasons: reasons which are too weak to motivate belief alone, and auxiliary reasons which fail to motivate belief regardless of their strength. I argue that Leary's argument is unsuccessful because she relies on a structural analogy between auxiliary and non-auxiliary reasons. This also leads me to propose a modified Motivational Constraint on normative reasons excluding practical enabling reasons for belief, independently supported by our conception of higher-order evidence. Second, I challenge Quanbeck and Worsnip's view that practical reasons to adopt evidential thresholds can be reasons for belief. Even if we can account for having an evidential threshold in terms of dispositions to believe, voluntarily adopting an evidential threshold for practical reasons more plausibly consists in performing certain voluntary mental actions which then cause belief. Third, I argue that adopting epistemic standards for practical reasons often is a more rational method of instrumental belief management compared to other strategies for causing oneself to believe, like direct belief manipulation or evidence manipulation. In permissive cases, adjusting standards is epistemically permissible; in non-permissive cases, the failure is comparatively mild. Even if there are no enabling practical reasons for belief, practical considerations can rationally guide our epistemic policies.

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**Asker, Andrea** (Stockholm University)

### *Collective Harm and Individual Wrongful Acts*

[*Keywords:* Collective harm; Moral reasons; Difference-making; Opression]

In collective harm situations, many individual acts together bring about a harmful outcome, but no individual act seems to make any significant difference. Examples include greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate harms and meat purchases contributing to animal suffering in meat industries. Although it seems the outcome will be no more or less severe give or take any one act, we think these harmful outcomes give each individual moral reason to refrain from acts such as going for a pleasure drive in a gas-guzzling car or buying a steak for dinner. However, if no individual act makes a morally relevant difference, it is unclear why we have moral reason to refrain from acting. This is the so-called problem of collective harm (Kagan, 2011; Kingston & Sinnott-Armstrong, 2018; Nefsky, 2019). Previous research on the problem of collective harm has been concerned with identifying moral reasons for individual action where it is unclear what these reasons are. For example, a single drive in a gas-driven car seems morally innocuous considered on its own, and we need to appeal to the collective harm context to see what is morally problematic about this type of act. In this paper, I argue that insofar as there are moral reasons for individual action in collective harm situations, this is also true for acts that are clearly wrongful considered on their own but are also part of a collective harm situation. Hence, the idea that there are moral reasons for individual action in collective harm situations has important implications for morally evaluating individual wrongful acts. I demonstrate these implications by showing how this idea can explain the particular wrongfulness of individual acts that are part of the oppression of a social group.

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**Azaizes, Alexandros** (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

### *Not All Errors Are Alike: Moral Failure, Responsibility, and Normative Response in Applied Contexts*

[*Keywords:* Moral error; Responsibility; Normative failure; Applied ethics; Institutional response]

This paper argues that contemporary applied ethics relies on an overly undifferentiated conception of moral error. Moral failures arising in practical contexts—such as policy decisions, institutional practices, or algorithmic systems—are often treated as variations of a single phenomenon, primarily relevant for determining degrees of individual responsibility or blame. The paper challenges this “flat” approach, contending that different kinds of moral error correspond to failures at distinct normative levels and therefore require different forms of moral and institutional

response. The paper develops a normative typology distinguishing epistemic, technical, normative, and agential errors. Epistemic errors involve failures of information or evidence and often point toward institutional responsibility rather than individual fault. Technical errors arise from flawed system design or procedures and call for structural reform. Normative errors concern problematic value judgments and require moral deliberation rather than mere correction. Agential errors, by contrast, involve failures of individual practical reasoning and remain the primary locus of responsibility attribution and blame. By showing how these different forms of error are frequently conflated in applied ethics, the paper explains why responsibility is sometimes over-attributed to individuals and, in other cases, inadequately assigned. The framework is illustrated through the example of algorithmic decision-making, treated not as a technical domain but as a paradigmatic applied context in which distinct normative failures produce similar outcomes. The paper concludes that applied ethics should move beyond a one-size-fits-all model of moral error and adopt a differentiated approach that aligns types of failure with appropriate normative responses. Doing so promises greater conceptual clarity, fairer responsibility attribution, and more effective ethical guidance in complex practical domains.

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**Bazargan-Forward, Saba** (University of California, San Diego) and **Yuan, Yuan** (University of California, San Diego)

### *Moral Exploitation*

[Keywords: exploitation; coercion; fairness]

We explicate an under-theorized but pervasive moral wrong, which we call “moral exploitation”. Moral exploitation occurs when one agent’s culpable moral failure imposes moral obligations on another agent which the latter would not have otherwise had. We distinguish two paradigmatic forms of moral exploitation: cases in which an agent fails to take up her fair share of an obligation, thereby shifting additional burdens onto others, and cases in which an agent’s failure to discharge a moral duty gives rise to distinct, on-shareable obligations for others, as when marginalized agents are required to educate the privileged about injustice. In both kinds of cases, we argue, the wrongdoer does not merely wrong the primary victims of neglect but also wrongs those burdened with new obligations. We argue that moral exploitation constitutes a distinctive moral wrong. Unlike harms that bypass agency, moral exploitation operates through the victim’s agency, and unlike standard forms of exploitation, it specifically relies on the victim’s responsiveness to moral reasons rather than to self-interest. In this way, moral exploitation exploits moral conscience itself and cannot be reduced to failures of fair play. We situate moral exploitation in relation to moral coercion; though both involve leveraging moral agency, they differ structurally: moral coercion relies on active threats to induce action, whereas moral exploitation arises from passive moral failure that shifts or creates obligations. Finally, we assess the normative implications for victims, arguing that while moral exploitation does not typically justify noncompliance with the newly imposed obligations, it can mitigate wrongfulness and reduce blameworthiness under conditions of increasing burden.

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**Björnsson, Gunnar** (Stockholm University)

### *Accountability Proportionality*

[Keywords: Accountability; proportionality; moral repair; blame; apology]

Accountability practices—blaming, punishing, apologizing, making amends—are sensitive to proportionality. They can be insufficient or excessive, depending on the seriousness of the culpable wrongdoing. What explains this? Some existing accounts fall short. Guilt-focused views hold that what the blameworthy deserve is proportionate suffering of guilt. But two identically culpable wrongdoers might have received their due while suffering very differently, depending on what they have done to set things right. More promising is the idea that accountability practices aim at relationship repair (Bennett 2008; Radzik 2009). But the relevant damage cannot be

understood as eroded trust or expectations. Penance is called for even when the victim is unaware of the wrong—as when someone is violated while unconscious—and thus has no altered trust or expectations. If a relationship has been damaged, it is a moral relationship. I propose that what needs repairing is an imbalance in how the wrongdoer has distributed their agency towards different persons. To distribute agency towards someone is to prioritize their interests and point of view in directing one's attention, deliberation, and action. When imbalances arise—even justifiably—there is moral pressure to rebalance. Culpable wrongdoing creates a particularly serious imbalance: the perpetrator deprioritizes not only the victim's first-order interests but also their interest in being treated as morality requires. Sincere apology and making amends directly correct this imbalance by prioritizing the victim's perspective and interests over the perpetrator's own. Because they constitute rebalancing rather than merely causing reconciliation, what is owed does not depend on whether reconciliation will result. This account explains both dimensions of proportionality: the limit beyond which further self-sacrifice ceases to improve the situation, and the variation in strength of claims depending on the seriousness of the wrong. It also illuminates how responses by perpetrators, victims, and third parties are related.

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**Brandenburg, Daphne** (University of Groningen)

*What Children Teach Us About Responsibility*

[Keywords: responsibility; ethics of care; pedagogy; new technology; social safety]

Philosophical and legal theory often presents human beings as autonomous and accountable adults. Feminist philosophy and cognitive science have long challenged this picture, emphasizing that sociomoral agency is developed, sustained through care, and far more fragile and scaffolded than traditional theories assume. I argue that many philosophical responses to these insights remain structured by what I call the culpability–exculpation binary. According to this binary, when a person fails to live up to an important sociomoral norm, either they were sufficiently able to comply and are therefore culpable and blameworthy, or they lacked the relevant abilities and are exculpated from responsibility altogether. This framework underwrites influential theories of moral and legal responsibility and structures everyday practices of moral appraisal. Focusing on childhood as a paradigmatic case, I show that this binary fails to capture our best caregiving and pedagogical practices. Children frequently fail to meet sociomoral expectations, yet educational research strongly cautions against responding with blame, punishment, or withdrawals of regard. At the same time, children are not treated as exempt from responsibility. They are asked to explain themselves, attend to the effects of their actions on others, repair harm, and engage in reasoning about norms. Rather than being punished, pedagogical approaches suggest attaching non-punitive consequences, which are intelligible responses aimed at learning, repair, and norm internalization. To make sense of this, I propose a nurturing stance: a way of holding persons responsible as developing agents. The nurturing stance attributes a standing responsibility to engage with and learn from one's own sociomoral misalignments, without grounding that responsibility in culpability or blame. I conclude by suggesting that the nurturing stance offers a more just and practically useful framework for responding to harm in contexts of imperfect and evolving agency, including debates about responsibility gaps in new technologies and social safety practices.

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**Brandt, Reuven** (UC San Diego)

*Enough is Enough in Parenting*

[Keywords: parenthood, obligations to children, procreative beneficence, reproduction]

What kind of life prospects must parents provide for their children? According to one extreme view, parents have a significant moral obligation to optimize their children's prospects. On another extreme view, so long as children have lives worth living parents have done enough. As I will show, both these views have consequences that render them implausible. A more middle ground

position holds that so long as children's prospects are good enough, parents have fulfilled their obligations. Call this the satisficing view. While the satisficing view is intuitively attractive, it has yet to be developed and given a theoretical justification. In this paper I argue that any reasonable articulation will require a strong contextual component. While this contextual component might initially appear arbitrary, it can be grounded in Ross' duty of justice. And indeed the duty of justice provides a theoretical basis for the satisficing view in general, and can explain why parents do wrong when they demonstrate excessive partiality towards their children. Taken together, this provides strong reason for accepting the satisficing view.

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**Braun, Esther** (University of Oxford)

*Why healthcare providers should not offer assisted dying to patients*

[Keywords: medical ethics; bioethics; assisted suicide; voluntariness; stigma]

While assisted dying is now legal in an increasing number of jurisdictions, policies on whether assisted dying may be offered to patients vary widely. In some jurisdictions, physicians are legally prohibited from bringing up assisted dying to patients, while others permit initiating discussions about assisted dying to patients who would be eligible, or even frame this as a "professional obligation". In this paper, I argue that physicians and other healthcare professionals should not offer assisted dying to patients who have not made an explicit request. I begin by noting that those who would be most likely to receive such offers are people with irremediable illnesses or disabilities, since they are the only patients considered eligible under most existing legal frameworks. I argue that routinely offering assisted dying to such patients risks harm in several ways. First, patients could experience such offers as disrespectful or as expressing the stigmatising judgment that their lives are not worth living. This could cause direct psychological harm and potentially undermine trust in healthcare. Second, offers for assisted dying could impact voluntariness by creating potentially coercive pressure to choose assisted dying. I argue that such pressure is a relevant concern even if professionals do not intend pressuring patients into assisted dying. Third, routinely offering assisted dying could lead to its normalisation under certain circumstances, which may cause social pressure to choose assisted dying on these patient groups. I then consider and reject the objections that healthcare professionals have a general duty to inform patients of all available medical options, and that refraining from offering assisted dying unjustifiably restricts patients' access to information, and hence, patient autonomy. I conclude that given the potential harms on an individual and structural level, healthcare professionals should not offer assisted dying to patients absent an explicit request.

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**Brione, Rebecca** (King's College London)

*Reasons, requests and requests for permission*

[Keywords: Moral philosophy; ethics; requests; refusal; consent]

We perform requests for permission all the time. However, there is little philosophical analysis about what we are doing when we request permission – are we generating reasons for the respondee to grant our request? If so, how do these reasons play into the requestee's reasoning about how to respond to our request? In contrast there is plentiful analysis, although considerable disagreement, over what we do when we perform a simple request such as a request to pass the salt. This is strikingly because, whilst simple requests are commonplace in everyday life, so are requests for permission. And in many ways, requests for permission are more consequential in the social world. Think, for example, of the rich part requests for permission play in ongoing debates about consent, refusal and the conditions for autonomy in people's – particularly women's – lives. We have good reason therefore to have a clear normative characterisation of requests for permission. This paper offers such a characterisation. First, it argues that we can learn about requests for permission by extrapolating from our understanding of simple requests, showing that – as is rarely acknowledged – many simple requests ask the requestee to perform a normative act – something that requests for permission also do. The paper also complicates the picture of authority relations inherent in simple and requests for permission, showing that requests for permission can be usefully thought of as on a broad continuum with simple requests. Second, the paper argues that simple requests can best be understood as generating (new) reasons for the respondee to act, rather than triggering or providing epistemic evidence for existing reasons. It characterises the non-neutral 'push' towards acceptance which these reasons offer, and shows how this analysis is apt for conceptualising requests for permission. Finally, the paper considers implications for our understanding of refusal and consent.

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**Cassam, Quassim** (University of Warwick)

*The New Extremism*

Old school extremism has a political, religious, or ideological motivation, and violent old school extremists don't see violence as an end in itself. In their eyes, violence advances their cause and, in this sense, has a grander purpose. New extremism lacks an ideological motivation, and sees destructive violence as an end in itself. The FBI calls it Nihilistic Violent Extremism (NVE) but still represents it as ideological and thereby misses what makes it truly distinctive. NVE is extremism without an ideological motivation, without a grander purpose, and without a cause. It is defined by a distinctive evaluative stance towards violence and is better understood as a form of value extremism than as a limiting case of ideological extremism. Using real world examples, including the Columbine High School massacre and the 2024 Southport attack, this lecture contrasts no-cause extremism with novel cause extremism, where there is an ideological cause, but one that is novel or unusual. No-cause and novel cause extremism represent trends in extremism that are hard to understand and even harder to counter.

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**Cavaliere, Giulia** (UCL Philosophy)

*Fertility interventions: Should the state pay?*

[Keywords: procreation; infertility; resource egalitarianism; public goods]

Should the costs of fertility interventions be shared among citizens through taxation, or internalised by people who experience infertility and wish to have biological children? Most philosophical discussions of this question answer in favour of cost-internalisation. Fertility interventions do not address genuine medical needs and therefore should not be prioritised over other medical interventions under conditions of scarcity; moreover, when alternative routes to

parenthood such as adoption are available, biological parenthood can plausibly be characterised as an expensive ambition whose costs egalitarian justice does not require others to bear. This paper accepts the core insights of both challenges while rejecting the conclusion that they rule out the public funding of fertility interventions. First, I argue that priority-setting considerations show that fertility interventions should not be funded as healthcare or prioritised over urgent medical needs, rather than that they should not be publicly funded at all. Second, I argue that even if biological parenthood is correctly characterised as an expensive ambition in the presence of alternatives, this does not foreclose alternative justifications of cost-sharing. The paper then develops a positive, non-perfectionist justification for socialising the costs of fertility interventions. The central claim is that, in the context of population decline and ageing, the interest in biological parenthood is prudentially worth facilitating because its satisfaction is vulnerable to market failures and conducive to the production and sustainment of public goods. However conceived, children generate non-excludable benefits that underpin social institutions such as welfare systems, healthcare, and pensions. When the costs of producing these benefits are borne almost entirely by a subset of citizens, while others benefit at little or no cost, the resulting distributive pattern raises fairness-based concerns.

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**Celentano, Denise** (University of Montreal)

*Ghost Work: Conceptual and Normative Concerns*

[Keywords: philosophy of work; Michael Walzer; care work; digital labor; free time]

In the past few decades, a tendency to extend the domain of what counts as “work” has emerged. Feminist critiques, theories of digital labor, theories of emotional labor, and others, have prompted us in different ways to reconsider the boundaries of what we understand as work. The stakes of this recognition are high. Given that, in our society, work mediates access to valuable goods, such as income and recognition, recognizing an activity as “work” means granting its entitlement, to variable degrees, to such goods. Conversely, refusing to recognize the nature of “work” to certain activities entails the refusal of claims of to such goods. In this paper, I explore the possibility that these heterogeneous views may have something in common that could be appropriately captured by a unified concept. I explore whether the category of “ghost work” could appropriately be mobilized to capture them as an umbrella term. More precisely, I aim to explore the conceptual and normative concerns raised by the “ghost work” carried out behind the scenes of paid work, Artificial Intelligence, and consumer practices. Ghost work seems to describe a double dynamic: the extension of the domain of profitability toward greater chunks of free time (or workification of free time), and the invisibilisation of the nature of work of certain activities (or ghostification of work). First, I conceptualize ghost work and provide a preliminary taxonomy. Second, I mobilize Michael Walzer’s theory of justice. By considering “work” and “free time” as social goods belonging to separate spheres, I identify the key properties of the shared meanings attached to them. This allows me to explore the possibility that “ghost work” may stem from the lack of appropriate boundaries between the two spheres, whose respective meanings end up dominating the distribution of the other. In other words, according to this reading, “ghost work” occurs when the social meaning appropriate to the sphere of work dictates the distribution of the sphere of leisure. To restore the “relative autonomy” of the spheres of work and leisure, I consider the strategies of “widening the sphere,” and “boundary-making.”

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**Cholbi, Michael** (University of Edinburgh)

*Grief and Voluntary Assisted Dying*

[Keywords: assisted dying; suicide; grief; practical identity]

Philosophical debates about voluntary assisted dying (VAD) usually focus on conflicts between the rights or interests of individual patients and the moral demands of medicine. Such debates thereby neglect the impact of VAD on third parties. Recent research has begun to bring one aspect of this

impact into clearer view, namely, the impact of VAD on the grief or bereavement of the family and loved ones of the VAD recipient. This research consistently paints post-VAD grief in a positive light — as less prolonged, difficult, or traumatic. This presentation aims to provide a philosophical explanation of these findings: What is it, in other words, about the nature or value of grief that would account for post-VAD grief being unexpectedly desirable qua grief? A plausible answer emerges (I propose) first by juxtaposing post-VAD grief with grief as it typically occurs in standard cases of suicide, and second, by analyzing these contrasts in terms of how grief involves a disruption and subsequent reconstruction of an individual's practical identity. Post-suicide grief is often psychologically trying, characterized by guilt, anger, or confusion, as well as being more prone to lead to mental illness. Some post-suicide bereaved blame themselves for the suicide death or feel abandoned by the suicidal person. The suicidal individual seems to repudiate the bereaved's 'way of being'. In contrast, post-VAD grief, because the death is planned, more collaborative, etc., is less likely to be prolonged, difficult, or traumatic. VAD also allows the dying person to play a 'dying role' and to make their death more ceremonial. These factors result in post-VAD griever having fewer doubts about their relationship with the deceased and being better situated to reconstruct their relationship with the deceased (and their own practical identity) on the new terms established by the fact of their death.

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**Christie, Lars** (Inland University Norway)

*Injustice and equal chances in humanitarian aid.*

[Keywords: Fairness; moral coercion; lottery; effective altruism]

Two important questions related to the ethics of rescue have traditionally been discussed in isolation. The first concerns whether, in situations where we do not have enough resources to save everyone and where some are costlier to save than others, we have a duty to save the greatest number or whether fairness requires a more equitable distribution. The other question is whether, when choosing between saving victims of misfortune or victims of injustice, we have reasons to give preference to the latter group. In this article, I use cases from humanitarian aid to connect the two debates. I argue that whether we are required to distribute limited resources fairly or save the greater number depends on the reason some victims are costlier to save than others. This argument does not rely on the claim that individual victims of injustice deserve greater moral consideration than victims of misfortune. However, it suggests that the relative importance of fairness in the distribution of rescue resources increases if one party is made costly to save due to man-made injustice. I distinguish this idea from the nearby views that we should avoid benefitting from injustice and resist moral coercion.

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**Cormier, Andrée-Anne** (École nationale d'administration publique, Université du Québec (Montréal))

*AI in Higher Education: On the Ethics of Automated Grading*

[Keywords: Educational Ethics, Philosophy of Education, Grades, Grading, AI, Higher Education.]

Since the introduction of large language models such as ChatGPT, university administrators and teachers have expressed concern that students' use of generative AI may undermine learning and make cheating increasingly difficult to detect. Comparatively less attention has been paid to teachers' own use of AI systems to fulfill professional duties, most notably grading and assessment. Yet, advanced AI-powered grading systems are now widely available, rapidly improving, and proliferating within a booming multi-billion-dollar market for AI in education. This paper examines the moral permissibility of automated grading in higher education. Drawing on recent work in behavioral economics and the psychology of judgment, I present what I take to be the most compelling arguments in its favour: the argument from improved accuracy relative to human grading and the argument from bias and "noise" reduction. While these arguments are important, I argue that they are not sufficient to justify the general permissibility of automated

grading. Even where accuracy and noise-reduction gains are plausible, automated grading can undermine pedagogically important features of teacher-student relationships, in particular opportunities for personalized engagement with students' work and the students' sense of the teacher's investment in their learning. I defend the view that, in these cases, automated grading is morally problematic, and I explore alternative grading practices and more desirable uses of AI.

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**Costella, Annalisa** (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

*Of Green Frequent Flyers and Wealthy Socialists: A Defence of Apparent Hypocrisy*

[Keywords: Hypocrisy, Collective Action, Individual Moral Obligations]

This paper addresses the moral puzzle of individuals supporting collective, state-led solutions to collective action problems (e.g., climate change policies) while refusing equivalent personal action (e.g., high-emission consumption). The paper defends the Asymmetry Thesis: a person can genuinely commit to an ideal and comply with institutionally 'scaffolded' actions without a moral obligation to perform the same actions privately when institutions are absent. The argument departs from existing literature by rejecting causal inefficacy and the absence of a 'blanket duty' to political activism as the main reasons for refraining from performing individual action. Instead, it distinguishes between Easy Problems (simple link between individual action and outcome) and Complex Problems (empirically and epistemically complex). And it argues that personal action is only morally required if two conditions are met. The first is the Epistemic Condition, which states that there must be a sufficiently justified belief that the action actually helps achieve the goal. In complex systems, intuitions on what actions can best lead to the desired outcome can backfire. The second is the Instrumental Condition is met: the action is 'fitting,' and a part of a set of 'jointly sufficient' actions for the desired outcome. The paper concludes that pressing real-life issues, such as famine relief and climate change, are Complex Problems where these conditions are not satisfied, thus rendering personal action morally optional.

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**Davies, Ben** (University of Sheffield)

*What's 'basic' about basic needs?*

[Keywords: need; moral urgency; obligation]

People often appeal to 'basic needs' as a politically salient concept. Some theorists argue for the moral and political urgency of basic needs by making one or more of four claims, namely that basic needs are objective; universal; unavoidable; and/or fundamental. To ground the moral urgency of basic needs, three things need to be true. First, these features should not over-include by applying to cases which are widely agreed not to be basic needs. This talk focuses especially on the problem of theories applying to ordinary desires, and to means-end needs. Second, the features should not under-include by excluding central cases cited as basic needs by basic needs theorists, and which have strong intuitive appeal as basic needs; this talk focuses on cases such as survival, avoidance of severe harm, and social agency. These two conditions can together be termed the 'not-too-surprising' condition: while a theory of a concept may throw up some surprises, there is a limit to how much a theory can do this while still retaining its usefulness. Finally, these features need to explain the moral urgency of basic needs; if a theory applies to central cases, and not to too many wider cases, but does not explain why we should treat basic needs differently, then it fails as a moral theory of basic needs. This talk argues that each of these four features fails on one or more of these grounds.

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**De Biasio, Virginia** (King's College London)

## *The Wrongs of Tourism: Defending the Place-Based Rights of Residents*

[Keywords: tourism; territorial rights; right to the city; occupancy rights; urban governance]

Tourism is becoming an increasingly politicised issue, often acting as a catalyser for conflicts and contestations at the level of local communities. Recent years have seen an increase in anti-tourism protests in many urban contexts where residents demand stricter constraints and regulations for tourism growth and management. This article addresses the wrongs of tourism from the perspective of normative political theory. I argue that tourism, and particularly overtourism, is problematic insofar as it violates the rights of residents over the city. I articulate an account of the rights of residents to the urban space of the city by drawing from the insights of theorists of territorial rights and their recognition of relevant place-based rights. I argue that residents have legitimate place-based rights to their city, conceived as occupancy rights that entitle them to inhabit and control the urban space where their life plans and activities unfold. I then explain how tourism violates these rights, by contributing to the displacement and alienation of the residents from the city. If we agree about the importance of residents' place-based rights to the city, tourism should be constrained up to the point where the rights of residents are respected. Although this does not entail halting tourist flows altogether, more stringent regulations and limitations on tourism should be devised and implemented. I discuss different measures that could help address the negative impacts of tourism growth on the urban space and its residents, including restricting tourist flows, introducing quotas and tourist taxes, introducing zoning laws and subsidising local retailers. I conclude the paper by addressing a powerful objection to my argument, based on the right on freedom of movement that tourists can claim to access the urban space.

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**Dixon, Jonathan** (Wake Forest University) and **Hupfer, Elizabeth** (High Point University)

### *What are Moral Panics?*

[Keywords: Moral Panic; Social Phenomena; Collective Belief; Collective Epistemology; Political Epistemology; Social and Political Philosophy; Applied Ethics]

What are moral panics and what distinguishes them from other social phenomena? While behavioral and social scientists (in particular, sociologists) have widely discussed moral panics, to our knowledge there has been no philosophical discussion of such perennial, and often momentarily consequential, collective concerns and actions. The primary aim of this paper is to offer a philosophical understanding of the ethical and epistemological complexities of moral panics often ignored in the descriptive sociological literature. The secondary aim of this paper is to improve on the existing literature by providing a more precise definition of 'moral panic.' In doing so we will explain how our definition has an underlying structure which can clearly distinguish and illuminate other related social phenomena, including the ability to identify, explain, and defend some neglected social phenomenon: safety panics as well as "good" and "bad" moral panics. These aims reflect the fact that this paper is designed to start the philosophical discussion of moral panics, not to be the final word.

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**Fornaroli, Giulio** (Jagellonian University in Krakow)

### *Privilege, Structural Wrongs, and Interpersonal Duties*

[Keywords: Privilege; corrective duties; distributive duties; structural injustice.]

Although public discourse often assumes that privilege imposes moral demands on the privileged, philosophical work has not offered a systematic examination of this assumption. In this paper, I begin by developing a three-part account of privilege as involving access to goods or opportunities that enable secure functioning in key domains of life, a distribution skewed in favor of some individuals, and a lack of justification for that distribution. On this basis, I ask whether privilege

constitutes an interpersonal wrong that could ground corrective duties. I argue that, for privilege in general, this inference does not hold. Benefiting innocently from unfairness does not amount to wronging specific others and therefore does not generate the historical accountability required for directed corrective obligations or for the fittingness of blame, resentment, or guilt. Treating privilege solely as a distributive injustice also fails to generate specific interpersonal duties in contexts where no institution assigns entitlements or obligations. I then turn to a narrower class of cases: extreme economic privilege. Here, I claim that retaining or wasting excess wealth, rather than deploying it for social benefit, expresses disregard for those who lack sufficient resources and for those who meet their needs only through demanding trade-offs. This constitutes a genuine interpersonal wrong. Yet even here, the corresponding corrective duties are difficult to specify. Moreover, the argument cannot be extended to non-economic forms of privilege. Focusing on epistemic privilege specifically, I show that beneficiaries of privilege are at least sometimes morally entitled to retain their benefit. I conclude that privilege rarely gives rise to interpersonal obligations. Instead, a normative response to privilege is probably to be found in institutional obligations alone.

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**Frowe, Helen** (Stockholm University)

### *Military Conscription and the Duty to Rescue*

[Keywords: Military Conscription; Duty to Rescue; Ethics of War]

I argue elsewhere that the duty to rescue is a duty to use oneself as a means for the sake of preventing harm to others. I also argue one may make costly, nonconsensual use of a person only when she has a duty to make such use of herself, or would have such a duty were she so able. Call this claim Parity. This paper explores what follows from Parity for the justification of military conscription. According to Parity, conscription is justified only if those who are forced to enlist have duties to enlist. I defend this view against claims that infringing right the right not to be conscripted can be justified as the lesser evil or by providing compensation. I then explore whether a duty of rescue could ground a duty to enlist in any actual war. My (tentative) claim is that it could. The main objection to such a duty is the risks of enlisting exceed those that can be demanded by the duty to rescue. I consider whether one can be required to incur a chance of being conscripted even if one is not initially required to incur the direct risks of conscription. If so, then the bar for justified conscription via a fair lottery will be much lower than that for enacting directly risky rescues. One can also have a secondary duty to enact an ordinarily supererogatory rescue, if the risks of not rescuing are sufficiently similar. Even if only direct risks matter, and even if these exceed the usual limit on our duties to rescue, there might still be scope for justifying conscription via a 'catastrophe clause' that attaches to the duty to rescue.

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**Giavazzi, Michele** (Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich)

### *Making Excuses for Political Incompetence*

[Keywords: political competence; democracy; political epistemology; epistemic responsibility]

Democracy is said to require a competent citizenry. An extensive amount of evidence from political sciences casts doubts on the extent to which this requirement is met. Far from being informed and thoughtful adjudicators of matters of public concern, citizens appear to approach their role as political decision-makers in rather approximative manners. They seem to exhibit strikingly low levels of political competence. Democratic theorists and political epistemologists respond to this evidence in various ways, but we can group most existing views under two broad labels. On the one hand, we have realist responses, which see the political incompetence of citizens as a deep-seated feature of democratic politics, something that should make us wary of the expectations that democratic ideals place on citizens. On the other hand, we have optimistic responses, which see the problem of the public's incompetence as either overstated or as the result of contingent systemic dysfunctions within the public sphere. As divergent as they appear

at first glance, both responses share a common unsatisfactory feature, or so I will argue. Namely, they both carry apologetic implications. They both implicate a lenient stance towards democratic citizens, one that ultimately lets them 'off the hook' for their epistemic shortcomings as public decision-makers. Realist responses do so by treating political incompetence as an insurmountable natural phenomenon, effectively implying that most citizens are bound to be politically incompetent and cannot be expected to do any better. Optimistic responses acknowledge the contingent nature of the problem, but they either patronise citizens by downplaying the competence required by democracy or victimise them by offloading all responsibility for incompetence onto the political system. In both cases, the result is the promotion of an impoverished conception of the standards of epistemic conduct to which any sustainable democratic ethos should be able to hold citizens.

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**Hamlett, Claire** (University of Roehampton)

*Animals as home-makers: a non-anthropocentric account of home and its ethical implications*

[Keywords: home; non-human animals; urban design; building; home-making]

The concept of home is deeply significant in the lives of humans. Home tends to be the site of family life, a place where identity is both formed and expressed, and strongly associated with security, comfort, and familiarity. But the academic discourse on home is notably anthropocentric, mostly assuming home to be made and valued by humans alone. In this paper, I aim to address this bias by showing that non-human animals also make homes and, as agents, have significant interests in homes and home-making practices. Furthermore, I argue that this has important practical and ethical implications for humans in contexts including urban design, captivity, and conservation. My argument proceeds as follows. First, I claim that animals display behaviours and relationships to environments that strongly resemble how humans make and inhabit homes. A likely objection to this claim is that, in animals, such behaviours are merely instinctive. The second part of my argument is to defend my claim that against this objection by arguing that there are essential capacities required for an individual to be a home-maker – subjective experience and agency – and that many animals possess these capacities. I provide several empirical examples of animals acting as agents when they decide where to live, who to live with, and how to live in their chosen environments. Third, I argue that animals have strong interests in engaging in home-making practices, as these fulfil important physical, social, and psychological needs. These interests ground two ethical duties in humans: 1) to protect animal homes from destruction, and 2) to refrain from limiting animals' opportunities to make homes. I explore the practical implications of these duties for urban design, due to its impact on animal homes, with a focus on animal building (e.g. nests, burrows) as a significant, tangible home-making practice.

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**Hernández González, Tania** (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid)

*Unbounded Desire, Ordinary Pain, and the Ethics of Limits under Contemporary Capitalism*

[Keywords: Unbounded desire; Ordinary suffering; Autonomy and responsibility; Capitalist constraints; Ethics of the good life]

This paper addresses a practical ethical problem widely experienced in contemporary capitalist societies: the persistent sense that one must continuously strive for a "better life" —better work, better relationships, better use of time— while rarely feeling that one has arrived anywhere. Despite unprecedented access to goods, information, and opportunities, many individuals report anxiety, exhaustion, and dissatisfaction rather than fulfilment. The paper argues that this condition cannot be adequately understood as a failure of individual self-control or poor decision-making, but must instead be analysed as the result of structurally produced forms of unbounded desire. Using examples drawn from everyday practices—such as precarious employment, self-optimization cultures, romantic aspirations under conditions of instability, and the monetization of attention and leisure—the paper shows how capitalism simultaneously encourages limitless

aspiration and enforces strict material, temporal, and affective limits. Individuals are urged to “want more” while being structurally prevented from securing stability, rest, or sufficiency. This contradiction produces forms of ordinary suffering that are normalized, ongoing, and ethically significant. The paper contributes to applied philosophy by examining how this condition challenges standard ethical frameworks centred on autonomy, responsibility, and the good life. Drawing on moral and political philosophy as well as contemporary critical theory (including Lauren Berlant’s concept of cruel optimism), it asks whether ethical responses should focus on individual moderation and resilience, or whether they require a collective rethinking of limits, sufficiency, and temporal norms. The aim is to clarify how applied philosophy can meaningfully engage with structural sources of pain embedded in everyday practices of desire, work, and living.

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**Ivanković, Viktor** (Institute of Philosophy, Zagreb), and **Calboli, Stefano** (Sant’Anna School of Advanced Studies, Pisa)

*Agentic AI, Nudges, and the Limits of Outsourcing Autonomous Agency*

[Keywords: AI; nudges; autonomy; agency; outsourcing]

Recent advances in artificial intelligence have raised the following controversy: to what extent can decision-making be outsourced without thereby undermining autonomy? Our presentation addresses agentic AIs, systems capable of independently formulating goals, selecting means, and realising outcomes on behalf of human agents. While such systems promise significant efficiency gains and cognitive relief, they raise concerns that delegating decisions wholesale may undermine capacities associated with autonomous agency. The presentation advances two claims. First, autonomous agency is compatible with substantial, though not unlimited outsourcing of decision-making. Drawing on accounts of autonomy by Christman (1988, 1991a, 1991b), Valdman (2010), and Double (1992), we argue that autonomy requires self-governance – the ability to shape one’s life in accordance with one’s values, commitments, and preferred “management style” – but not constant, hands-on deliberation. On this view, autonomous agents may outsource many decisions, provided they retain evaluative control over the structures and processes that govern those decisions. Autonomy, however, is not fully outsourceable: wholesale delegation severs the link between outcomes and an agent’s evaluative standpoint, thus undermining agency. Second, we assess whether agentic AI satisfies these conditions. While agentic AI could in principle support autonomy by conserving cognitive resources and handling low-stakes decisions, we argue that it faces structural risks not faced by a well-studied form of decision-making support: nudges. Nudges preserve agency more reliably because they involve at least minimal participation of agents in the pursuit of their values, and because they allow for resistance when value assessments misfire. Agentic AI, by contrast, typically relies on outsourced value inference, which can fail, but without offering opportunities for correction at the point of decision. The presentation concludes by suggesting a cautious but optimistic path forward: a hybrid approach that combines agentic AI and nudges, tailored to different management styles and sensitive to the limits of outsourcing autonomous agency.

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**Izatt, Alyssa** (University of British Columbia)

*Anti-girlism & Adolescence*

[Keywords: anti-girlism; philosophy of childhood; adolescence; feminist philosophy; moral philosophy]

Girls, including adolescent girls, are vulnerable. They are young, meaning they are most often legally, financially, and developmentally dependent on others to meet their needs. They also have a feminine gender, which marks them as targets for sexist discrimination. This vulnerability is obvious and morally urgent: economists have calculated that there are 126 million “missing women” in the world due to sex-selective abortion and the neglect of girl infants (Bongaarts & Guilimoto, 2015). 1 in 5 girls are married before the age of 18, and child marriage is six times more common among girls than boys (UNICEF, 2023). The moral and social issues at this intersection

are worth exploring more closely, to better understand and address the rights, needs, and interests of girls. A term has recently been coined to address the injustice which exists at the intersection of youth and feminine gender: antigirlism (Izatt & Brownlee, 2026; Brownlee, 2025). 'Antigirlism' captures something important about the circumstance of girls. However, the term "girl", just like the term "child" is arguably ambiguous when it applies to adolescents, who are agents with nascent autonomy. While adolescent girls, like younger girls, might be harmed by being adultified and prematurely forced to take on the burdens of adulthood and womanhood, they are likewise harmed by being infantilized and denied rightful domains of agency. Exploring sexism, or antigirlism, as it uniquely impacts adolescent girls is a worthwhile pursuit. This paper explores how antigirlism operates against adolescents, in contrast to younger girls. In particular, it argues that adolescence should be treated as a distinct life-stage with broader, though still limited, domains of autonomy than earlier childhood. A key concern here is balancing developing autonomy with antigirlist pressure to forsake adolescent girls' final protected, burden-free years. While Izatt & Brownlee offer a compelling analysis when it comes to the condition of girls, the term "girl", just like the term "child" is arguably ambiguous when it applies to adolescents, who are agents with nascent autonomy. While adolescent girls, like younger girls, might be harmed by being adultified and prematurely forced to take on the burdens of adulthood and womanhood, they are likewise harmed by being "baby-ified" and denied rightful domains of agency. Nonetheless, exploring sexism, or anti-girlism, as it uniquely impacts adolescent girls is a worthwhile pursuit. This paper explores how anti-girlism operates against adolescents, in contrast to younger girls. In particular, it argues that adolescence should be treated as a distinct life-stage with broader domains of autonomy than earlier childhood. A key concern here is balancing developing autonomy with anti-girlist pressure to forsake adolescent girls' final protected, burden-free years.

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**Jennings, Katerina** (University of Oxford)

*The Three Different Types of Fairness in Sport & Their Bearing on Transgender Inclusion*

[Keywords: Sport; Gender; Fairness; Transgender; Inclusion]

Debates about fairness in sport often rely on an imprecise and overextended notion of fairness. This paper argues that many such debates are confused because they fail to distinguish between distinct kinds of fairness that operate within sporting practices. I develop and defend a tripartite account of fairness in sport, distinguishing procedural fairness, internal fairness, and external fairness, and show how each tracks a different normative concern. Procedural fairness concerns rule compliance and underwrites the value of winning: victories lose their significance when achieved through cheating. Internal fairness concerns whether a sport's competitive structure reliably rewards the skills it is designed to test. Crucially, I argue that internal unfairness arises only when two conditions are jointly met: (i) the sport rewards a non-constitutive skill (an internal suboptimality), and (ii) that suboptimality is unevenly distributed, so that only some competitors can exploit it. External fairness, by contrast, concerns how eligibility rules and participation structures align with broader fairness-relevant social values, such as equality, inclusion, and the just distribution of opportunity and recognition. These considerations are supplementary to sport's internal logic and explain why eligibility categories, nationality restrictions, entry caps, and so forth exist. Applying this framework to transgender inclusion in elite sport, I argue that common objections misclassify the issue as one of unfairness. Trans women competing under established eligibility criteria are not committing a procedural unfairness (cheating), nor does their inclusion violate internal fairness, since no irrelevant suboptimality is being differentially exploited and no pattern of systematic outcome distortion exists. What remain are disagreements grounded in external values or preferences about the social meaning of sport. Clarifying these distinctions demoralises the debate and shows that fairness, properly understood, does not oppose transgender inclusion; rather, the real question concerns which external values should guide the future of sport.

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**Jiao, Liyuan** (Department of Philosophy, Durham University, Durham, UK)

*Gender, Causal Inference, and the Rubin Causal Model: Mechanisms, Analogy, and Warrant*

[Keywords: Gender; Rubin Causal Model; Causal Inference; Analogical Reasoning; Gender Mechanisms]

Gender is frequently treated as a causal factor in explanations of unequal outcomes across domains such as employment, evaluation, health, and exposure to harm. At the same time, contemporary causal inference, particularly within the Rubin Causal Model (RCM), requires that causal variables be represented as well-defined treatments. This generates a persistent tension. Gender appears causally indispensable in applied contexts, yet it is ill suited to function as a treatment variable within the RCM. This paper argues that a common response to this tension, namely the shift from gender to gender mechanisms, rests on an implicit but largely unexamined analogical inference. Researchers operationalize mechanisms such as gender perception cues, interactional recognition, or institutional procedures, and then draw conclusions about the causal significance of gender itself. The paper's central claim is that this strategy succeeds, when it does, because these mechanisms are causally analogous to gender in a specific and non trivial sense. The paper first explains why gender cannot be included as a treatment variable without violating the Stable Unit Treatment Value Assumption. Gender is not an intrinsic attribute of individuals, but a socially constituted identity operating through relations of recognition, norms, and institutional practices. Interference between units and multiple versions of treatment are therefore constitutive features of gendered causation. The paper then outlines a mechanism based strategy that preserves the formal structure of the RCM. Gender mechanisms are understood as pathways through which gendered relations generate differential outcomes and can be represented as treatments. Finally, the paper clarifies the warrant of the analogy from gender mechanisms to gender. Gender exerts causal influence largely through how others perceive and respond to individuals, even when such judgments are inaccurate. Making this analogical structure explicit clarifies both the scope and the limits of causal claims about gender in applied causal inference.

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**Kipke, Roland** (Bielefeld University)

*Human Dignity and Meaning in Life*

[Keywords: human dignity; human rights; meaning in life;]

The status of human dignity is precarious. On the one hand, it plays a central role in moral and political thought, and in several national constitutions and international covenants. On the other hand, the concept has been heavily criticised from a philosophical perspective. In this talk, I will present a new account of human dignity: one which aims to incorporate previous accounts' important insights while avoiding their shortcomings. This account is based on the concept of meaning in life: specifically, an objectivist conception according to which a meaningful life consists of self-transcendent, positive, and appropriate connections as a person with intrinsically valuable things. Although meaning in life may initially seem an uncertain basis for human dignity, it can serve this purpose very well. First, since meaning in life is what ultimately makes a life worth living, the ability to live meaningfully provides a robust transcendental justification for human beings' fundamental value, forming the core of human dignity. This value can easily be extended towards a moral status and a moral claim. Second, since living meaningfully is possible (at least in simple forms) throughout one's entire life, it can ground truly universal human dignity, possessed by all human beings. Third, as autonomy is a key way in which normally developed adults connect meaningfully to the world, but others – including young children – can live meaningfully in non-autonomous ways, this approach recognises the pivotal role of autonomy without using it to justify human dignity. It thus avoids excluding individuals who are unable to act autonomously.

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**Lang, Gerald** (University of Leeds)

*Torturous Defence*

[Keywords: Self-defence; torture; defensive liability; moral taint]

One of the most secure exemptions made for violence in our ordinary moral thought is defence: it is permissible to defend ourselves and others from aggression, in at least some circumstances. One of the least secure exemptions for violence, by contrast, is interrogational torture. For many people, this option is completely off the table, even if torture aims to save innocent lives or prevent some other evil. It is therefore surprising, and potentially disturbing, that there is a well-trodden justificatory path which links ordinary cases of self-defence to torture: we can travel all the way from self-defence to characteristic cases of torture using only a small number of cases. The crucial move in this 'Defensive Argument' is to claim that, if I am permitted to kill you to prevent you from injecting me with deadly poison, then I am also permitted to torture you to get you to give me the antidote to the deadly poison which you have just injected into me. If defensive violence is permissible, then so is defensive torture. The justificatory circuit can be broken. Strictly speaking, any violence deployed to get hold of the antidote is not encompassed by a defensive justification. Yet defensive considerations do hover in the vicinity: you still pose a threat to me which has not yet run its course, and you are still under a duty to bear costs to prevent yourself from violating your duty not to kill me. I will suggest that my permission to torture you in this case, if it exists, is explained by defence-adjacent or quasi-defensive considerations rather than purely defensive considerations. And this gives us some much needed flexibility in dealing with other cases that might tempt us into thinking that there can be a secure defensive moral case for torture.

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**Lippert-Rasmussen, Kasper** (Aarhus University) and **Christensen, James** (Essex University)

*Defusing Ticking Bombs through Imposition of Pleasure: On the Nature of the Special Wrongness of Interrogational Torture*

[Keywords: Agency; Dominance; Personhood; Respect; The ethics of torture.]

Defusing Ticking Bombs through Imposition of Pleasure: On the Nature of the Special Wrongness of Interrogational Torture Assuming that there is something specially wrong about interrogational torture of wrongdoers posing a threat, i.e., directly affecting the wrongdoer's deliberations by creating a strong desire in them to avoid the strong pain that one will otherwise continue to impose on them to obtain the information that they refuse to divulge, we need an account of what makes this specially wrong. After all, the tortured wrongdoer has wrongfully created the threat one needs information about to deflect, and they wrongfully refuse to reveal it even though they have a moral duty to do so. To test such accounts, we introduce a positive correlate to interrogational torture – interrogational pleasorture – and show why three prominent accounts of the wrongness of torture apply to interrogational pleasorture as well. However, plausibly interrogational pleasorture is not specially wrong suggesting, as one possibility among others, that these accounts of the wrongness of interrogational torture are incorrect. In closing, we consider whether there is a right against the imposition of pleasure and, if so, how such a right would bear on the wrongness of interrogational torture.

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**Lopez-Cantero, Pilar** (University of Antwerp) and **Guillery, Daniel** (London School of Economics and Political Science)

*Carspreading and Inequality: The Affective Dimensions of Unjust Spatial Encroachment*

[Keywords: political philosophy, emotion, distribution, relational equality, spatial justice, spatial agency]

Cars are a fixture of city life, and they are becoming larger and heavier. The demand for SUVs and light trucks, which already dominate the US market, has increased considerably in areas like Europe or China, while regular sedan models are growing in size worldwide. Advocacy groups have coined the term 'carspreading' to highlight the noxious effects of oversized cars, which are more dangerous, more polluting, and take up more space than traditional passenger vehicles. Here, we argue that the use, commercialization, and failure to regulate oversized cars enable and

entrench unjust spatial inequality, given the affective harms caused by carspreading through space encroachment. We make this case in two parts, arguing that the use of large cars in public road space generates both distributive and relational inequalities. To begin, we motivate our focus on affective harms by explaining the notion of affective goods and a picture of oversized cars as hostile affective scaffolds. We argue that spatial encroachment caused by carspreading involves, first, an unjust re-distribution of affective opportunities, which is both unjust in itself, and aggravates existing disadvantage. Second, we argue that carspreading is additionally a source of relational inequality. Namely, spatial encroachment causes the marginalization of non-car users in two ways: their affective needs are given less or no consideration in the collective shaping of public road space, and restrictions to the use of space imposed by the prevalence of cars prevents them from participating in social life, thus depriving them of affective resources.

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**Maitra, Ishani** (University of Michigan)

*From Classrooms to Coffeeshops: Trust as a Micro-Climate*

It is a familiar thought that (successful) teaching requires trust, both between instructor and students, and among the students themselves. But what sort of trust is required? And what role(s) does that trust play? This paper explores these questions, arguing that pedagogical success often requires a novel sort of trust that is neither purely interpersonal, nor purely institutional, though importantly related to both. I dub this kind of trust 'trust as a micro-climate'. After developing the role of this trust in classrooms, this paper considers whether trust in this sense might also figure in other familiar spaces.

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**Mendelovici, Angela** (University of Western Ontario) and **Skelton, Anthony** (University of Western Ontario)

*Loving Control: The Permissibility of Peer Paternalism*

[Keywords: Paternalism; Interpersonal relationships; Autonomy; Love]

Contemporary moral and political thought places significant weight on individual autonomy, understood as the freedom to govern one's own decisions in light of one's own values. This emphasis on autonomy is often taken to conflict with paternalism, interference in others' decisions against their will for their (perceived) own good. Most discussions of paternalism focus on the ethics or politics of state paternalism (Mill 1859, Feinberg (1986), Quong 2010) or paternalism directed at those with diminished capacity, like children (Mullin 2014, Brighthouse and Swift 2014) or on paternalism in health care (Groll 2012, Beauchamp 1979). In this paper, we focus on a different kind of paternalism: paternalism between peers, such as paternalism between spouses, between adult children and their parents, or between close adult friends. Our paper has three aims: (1) to describe the phenomenon of peer paternalism, (2) to argue that peer paternalism is at least sometimes permissible, and (3) to offer a sketch of an account of the conditions under which peer paternalism is permissible.

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**Miccoli, Francesca** (University of Basel)

*Gender, Biology, and the Allocation of Parental Obligations*

[Keywords: Gender; Parenthood; Family ethics; Feminism; Care]

Italian family law offers a revealing case for examining the ethical foundations of parenthood. On the one hand, it allows women to give birth anonymously and to refuse legal motherhood, a regime justified by the protection of women's health and autonomy and by the aim of preventing unsafe abortions and harmful abandonments. On the other hand, it enables children to obtain

judicial recognition of paternity based on biological proof, with parental obligations arising automatically once paternity is established. This latter mechanism is formally grounded in the child's right to personal and familial identity, but is also informed by broader concerns about economic vulnerability and care, commonly framed in terms of the child's best interests. Taken together, these legal regimes generate a striking asymmetry. Biological and gestational involvement do not necessarily ground parental obligations when motherhood is at stake, whereas biological causation is treated as sufficient to impose duties when fatherhood is concerned, regardless of consent, intention, or the existence of a caregiving relationship. This asymmetry is not adequately explained by appeals to the child's best interests. By analysing a range of reproductive scenarios – from explicit mutual agreement to reproduce, to shared risk-taking, negligence, contraceptive failure, disagreement, and reproductive deception – the paper shows that morally relevant distinctions track consent, responsibility, and assumption of care, rather than gender or biology. Yet these distinctions are unevenly acknowledged by the law. The paper uses the Italian framework as a diagnostic tool for a broader question: Is there any moral reason to regulate the foundations, attribution, and social meaning of parenthood on the basis of gender? Drawing on feminist theory and care ethics, it argues that gendered and biological criteria function as contingent conventions rather than morally justified principles, and that a more coherent approach to parenthood should be grounded in consent, responsibility, and care.

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**Mikhaylovskaya, Anna** (University of Groningen) and **Roumeas, Elise** (University of Groningen)

*Liquid Democracy and the Problem of Inclusiveness*

[Keywords: Liquid Democracy; Citizen Participation; Democratic Innovations; Inclusiveness]

Liquid democracy (LD) is a hybrid model of political decision-making that combines direct participation with flexible, revocable and transitive delegation of votes. Often celebrated for its epistemic and egalitarian potential, it promises to overcome some of the limitations of both representative and direct democracy. However, LD's concrete implementation — particularly in digital platforms like LiquidFeedback — raises questions related to inclusiveness. Strategic delegation, unequal accumulation of voting power, and hierarchical pressures can compromise the very inclusiveness that liquid democracy is meant to enhance. This paper explores these tensions from a normative perspective, asking under what conditions liquid democracy can remain genuinely inclusive. By scrutinizing vote delegation, deliberation, and platform design, the paper aims to develop a set of criteria for assessing the inclusiveness of liquid democratic systems and to propose innovative design features.

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**Moraro, Piero** (Edith Cowan University)

*Ineffective, unnecessary, unjust: An argument against imprisoning lawbreakers*

[Keywords: punishment, retribution, deterrence, crime, abolitionism]

I contend that, while punishment may be morally defensible, the institution of imprisonment is not. Accordingly, the state bears a moral obligation to employ non-carceral forms of punishment in response to crime. This claim rests on a principle of necessity, which holds that state-imposed sanctions should restrict the basic liberties of offenders only to the extent required to achieve their underlying moral objectives. I then examine the main philosophical justifications for punishment—deterrence, retributivism, rehabilitation, and restorative justice—and argue that none entails or presupposes the use of incarceration. In other words, imprisonment is not necessary to achieve these theories' normative aims. The only plausible rationale for incarcerating lawbreakers is incapacitation; yet, this justification is tenable only within an abolitionist framework that regards prisons as morally problematic institutions. I thus conclude that the practice of incarceration lacks moral justification and ought to be replaced by non-carceral forms of punishment.

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**Nanni, Leonardo** (Università degli Studi di Bergamo)

*A New Argument Against Benign Carnivorism*

[Keywords: Benign carnivorousness; Utilitarianism; Animal ethics; Anti-speciesism; Merely potential beings.]

Some animal ethicists argue that one can reject speciesism while maintaining that, in some cases, meat consumption is not wrong. Benign carnivorists, for example, argue that it is morally justifiable to create animals with pleasurable lives and to painlessly kill them for meat, if those animals wouldn't have been created otherwise. Since the benefit derived from being created is greater than the harm derived from being killed, and since the benefit and the harm are mutually dependent, benign carnivorists argue that their view benefits animals overall. Given a utilitarian framework, this conclusion seems difficult to resist. First, I show that there is a form of utilitarianism, namely prior-existence utilitarianism, that is incompatible with the argument defended by benign carnivorists. According to this view, potential beings cannot be benefited or harmed by being generated. Therefore, by generating animals we cannot produce any benefit that could compensate for the harm we produced by killing them. I then argue that, even admitting that it is possible to benefit a being by generating it, it does not follow that a utilitarian must accept the permissibility of benign carnivorousness. Indeed, many utilitarians argue that benign carnivorousness interferes with the anti-speciesist project of radically transforming our relationship with animals, and that this negative side effect is great enough to outweigh any benefits it produces. I strengthen this point by presenting a new argument based on the idea that we cannot compensate for an harm with a good that we already had a duty to produce. Since, according to total utilitarianism, we have a duty to maximize well-being also by generating as many happy animals as possible, the harm inflicted to an animal by killing it cannot be outweighed by the benefit provided by creating it. Finally, I discuss a potential objection to this argument.

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**Oberman, Kieran** (LSE)

*Nature vs Murder*

[Keywords: Injustice; Misfortune; Harm; Ethics of Rescue; Prioritization]

Should we prioritize saving people from injustice over saving people from mere misfortune? Call the view that we should prioritise injustice over misfortune "Priority". Philosophers argue that Priority, if true, would have significant practical implications. For instance, Göran Duus-Otterström and Edward A. Page argue that Priority could "change how we think of a range of moral and political debates such as international aid, humanitarian intervention, environmental protection, and health policy". But is Priority true? There are several philosophical accounts explaining why we should expect something like Priority to be true and yet most philosophers reject it. In their view, Priority is vulnerable to counterexamples. These counterexamples seek to model a conflict between saving two discreet groups of victims, one from misfortune and one from injustice. I shall term these examples "simple conflict cases". We can summarise the philosophical literature with two claims: 1. Priority, if true, would have significant practical implications. 2. Simple rescue cases constitute counterexamples to Priority. This article refutes both claims. Simple conflict cases fail as counterexamples to Priority because they fail to model the misfortune vs. injustice conflict they are supposed to model. The failure of these counterexamples, moreover, reveals that Priority, even if it were true, is of little practical significance. There are, in fact, few cases in which governments, charities and other agents in a position to assist must choose between saving people from injustice or saving people from misfortune.

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**Rensing, Johanna** (University of Basel)

## *Overlooking and Negotiating Co-Parenting Relationships*

[Keywords: co-parenting relationship; shared parenting responsibilities, within or outside of the nuclear family; commitment; negotiation]

The co-parenting relationship is the relationship between parents who share parenting responsibilities for a specific child. Co-parenting is a demanding and high-risk undertaking, based on which co-parents stand in a relationship with one another. While co-parenting is highly visible in public discourse, it remains significantly under-theorised within the academic moral discourse. Due to a prevailing focus on its form rather than the concrete duties within it, both discourses have overlooked the co-parenting relationship. This mis-focus stems from analysing co-parenting either within or outside the nuclear family framework—both of which, unfortunately, lead to an emphasis on form at the expense of normative content. This paper has two primary aims. First, I explain how this misfocus on form arises and why it is normatively problematic. Second, I argue for shifting our attention away from form and instead focusing on the specific duties co-parents have towards one another. In particular, I discuss mutual commitment, shared expectations, and the duty to (re)negotiate within a co-parenting relationship. I argue that co-parents have a primary duty to (re)negotiate the terms of their relationship, no matter whether the co-parents have a close personal relationship with each other or not. Overall, I show that co-parents, independently of the form their co-parenting relationship takes, have specific duties towards one another as co-parents. As long as we focus on form, we neglect the far more important normative debate about these duties.

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**Repetto, Elettra** (University of Piemonte Orientale)

### *The risk of being a white saviour*

[Keywords: activism, harm, disobedience, responsibility]

It has been argued that activism, in particular civil disobedience, may serve as a means of discharging other moral duties, such as the Samaritan duty or duty of rescue. On this view, citizens may permissibly, and sometimes obligatorily, act illegally to prevent serious harm. By contrast, comparatively little attention has been paid to the duties activists may have while protesting, or prior to protesting, toward those whose interests they claim to advance or whose lives they affect in the process. Surely Pasternak has recently discussed that protective harm caused by violent protests may be justifiable while falling on oppressed communities, but her analysis has specifically focused on violent protests. Thus, here I argue that activists, whether they are violent or illegal or not, must be prepared to satisfy two requirements as a way to account for the respect owed to those affected by activism. These requirements are grounded in the duty not to harm, which includes the prevention of harm, and in the respect people owe each other as ends. These are, first, a commitment to consulting affected communities and, second, a readiness to adjust expectations and change demands following the expressed needs of the affected communities. Together, these requirements aim to reduce the harm activism imposes on already disadvantaged groups, while also ensuring that activists reflect on their positionality and are accountable for the consequences their actions may have on others. Finally, this approach also responds to a common critique brought against activism, namely, that activists are careless or performative “radical chic” protesters who do not properly consider the interests of those they claim to defend.

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**Saul, Jennifer** (University of Waterloo)

### *When Norm Violations Come Out of the Shadows*

This talk will explore what happens to public discourse when previously restrictive norms against overt racism and blatant falsehood start to erode. Are there still efforts to conceal? Do new

mechanisms arise? What changes in audiences and communicative environments allow for these shifts, and how can one push back against them?

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**Segall, Shlomi** (The Hebrew University)

*The Good, the Bad, and the Neutral: On the Value of Human Existence*

[Keywords: Critical Level Utilitarianism; John Broome, Value of Existence; Repugnant Conclusion, Sadistic Conclusion]

Population ethics typically evaluates lives by the welfare they contain, treating existence itself as axiologically neutral. This paper challenges that view. I argue that existence has a conditional negative value. Human lives, I claim, come into the world with a 'debt' that is cancelled only once the life contains net positive welfare. Lives with overall negative welfare, and those with zero net welfare ('blank lives'), therefore have negative value. I motivate this view by first highlighting its intuitive appeal. Many find it implausible that the creation of a life entirely devoid of consciousness or welfare is neutral rather than a loss. Standard aggregative views, such as utilitarianism and prioritarianism, cannot capture this intuition and are indifferent to blank lives; worse, they can recommend creating such lives for trivial third-party benefits. Assigning a conditional negative value to existence avoids these implications. I then contrast my proposal with existing accounts that also condemn blank lives, focusing especially on critical-level utilitarianism and John Broome's "existence premium." While Broome's view offers important insights, it has been shown to be vulnerable to the Sadistic and Very Sadistic Conclusions, the Methuselah objection, and anti-natalist implications. My account avoids these pitfalls by rejecting the idea that existence carries an unconditional surcharge. Instead, I develop an analogy between existence and promise-making: promises that are neither kept nor broken plausibly make the world worse, but their negative value evaporates once fulfilled. Likewise, existence is bad only when it fails to realize any positive welfare. Finally, I address objections concerning threshold effects, neutrality ranges, and lives whose lifetime welfare sums to zero despite significant achievements. I argue that my view remains coherent, non-sadistic, natalist, and resilient to standard objections. If blank lives are indeed a loss to the universe, then human existence should be understood as conditionally bad.

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**Tollon, Fabio** (University of Edinburgh)

*Entangled Answerability: Taking Responsibility in the Absence of Fault*

[Keywords: responsibility taking, Bernard Williams, moral responsibility]

The literature on technological responsibility gaps (TRGs) has grown and matured over the years. TRGs cover cases where we have harms produced by technological systems, but unlike in cases of natural disasters, we expect that someone can and should be held responsible for these harms. More recently an interesting proposal has been advanced by a number of scholars in this literature: What if it was possible for (human) agents to take responsibility for the harms of autonomous AI-systems (Kiener, 2022; Conradie and Nagel, 2025; Kasar, 2025)? While promising, this line of inquiry remains underdeveloped. In this paper I explore the contours and reasonable limits of responsibility-taking as a solution to TRG. Drawing on Bernard Williams' account of agent-regret, I show that responsibility without fault is a familiar and normatively significant feature of our moral practices. I then consider Enoch's and Mason's contrasting accounts of responsibility-taking, arguing that neither fully captures the relational and normative contours required in technological contexts. To address this, I introduce the concept of entangled answerability, which combines Goetze's account of moral entanglement with Sliwa's theory of normative footprints. Moral entanglement explains which agents stand in the right relational position to appropriately take responsibility for AI harms, while normative footprints clarify what responsibility-taking consists in and why it matters for victims and moral communities. On this

view, responsibility-taking in TRG cases is neither mere voluntarism nor disguised liability; it is a substantive moral practice grounded in our shared moral lives.

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**Toop, Alison** (University of Leeds)

*Do we have a collective obligation to care for a fetus?*

[Keywords: abortion; collective obligations of care; feminism; caregiving]

If we, as a society, have collective obligations to care for dependents (such as the elderly, sick, and children), then do we have such an obligation towards a fetus? Schouten (2017) suggests we might. Likening an unwanted fetus to an orphan with no one to care for them, she claims that the needs of both generate collective obligations of care. As the only person able to fulfil this collective obligation, a pregnant person has an obligation to gestate an (even unwanted) fetus. Hartley and Lindsley-Kim (2025) disagree. There cannot be a collective obligation of care because a) the means of meeting a fetus's needs are not distributable (only the pregnant person can meet them); b) the fetus is not dependent in the same way as other dependents (it is invasive to the pregnant person); and c) pregnancy is not a form of caregiving (as it is not a purposeful social practice). I argue that on Hartley and Lindsley-Kim's view there is a point in pregnancy where a collective obligation to care for the fetus does arise: at the point of fetal viability (~24 weeks). This is because the means of meeting the fetus's needs becomes distributable; the fetus is dependent on medical intervention in a similar way to others; and (medical) caregiving is a means to meeting the fetus's needs. This leads to a puzzle: if pregnancy does not count as caregiving, then the pregnant person is unable to fulfil this collective duty through gestation. As this looks an odd conclusion I interrogate further the claim that pregnancy is not a form of caregiving and suggest ways in which it could be challenged. This does not challenge the claim that abortion is permissible before fetal viability – but may challenge its permissibility after this point.

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**Vargas, Manuel** (UC San Diego)

*The Agentic and the Artificial*

Technologists and philosophers have begun to grapple with the practical and theoretical significance of artificially intelligent agents. Many of those discussions rely on thinly theorized, frequently rudimentary notions of intelligence, agency, autonomy, and responsibility. There are contexts where simplistic construals of those things might serve an important purpose. However, if the practical and theoretical stakes of artificially intelligent agents really are as significant as many insist, then serious discussions require a better grip on notions like agency, intelligence, and responsibility. This talk is an attempt to move discussions about artificial agents in that direction, showing why a more careful understanding of these kinds of things makes a difference for how we understand the practical and theoretical ramifications of artificially intelligent agents.

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**Vince, Rosa** (University of Leeds)

*The Mythical Everywoman and The Invisible Stripper: who gets hurt in anti-sex-work feminism*

[Keywords: feminism; sex work; pornography; sexual ethics; gender]

Feminists care about harms to women, but which women? I argue that in feminist opposition to sex work, sex workers' interests are sidelined in two ways: (i) they are treated as merely symbolic of other women, (ii) they are left out of the group referred to when "women's" interests are raised. On all sides of feminist debates about sex work, key figures advocate focussing on harm. They also agree about the kinds of harm they care about. But agreeing on these things has not generated consensus on how to approach pornography, strip clubs, and other sex work. I argue

that a key reason for this is that many feminists are divided by who they care about harms to. I articulate two important ways that sex workers' interests are often neglected in feminist work. The Mythical Everywoman In much anti-pornography work, sex workers are treated as relevant only as an illustrative tool to motivate concern for other women. Writers position the on-screen woman as a symbol representing women in general. This situates 'everywoman' as the victim of on-screen events, while sidelining the interests of the actual woman on screen. The Invisible Stripper Campaigners against strip clubs claim that women don't want these clubs here, and women don't like walking past them. But many of the people walking to these clubs every day are also women, women who definitely do want these clubs to remain: the workers. For campaigners wanting to close strip clubs for the sake of "women," strippers don't count. I argue that in feminist theory and activism sex workers are too often excluded from the operative concept of "woman" in assertions of what women want and need. To combat this, when aiming to reduce harms to "women," feminists must examine who they mean and whose interests are being ignored.

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**Voorhoeve, Alex** (LSE) and **Sakamoto, Norihito** (Tokyo University of Science)

*Limited Aggregation: A New, Sufficientarian-Egalitarian Approach*

[Keywords: distributive ethics; distributive justice; limited aggregation; healthcare priority-setting]

Limited Aggregation is based on the compelling idea that we should both (i) prioritize saving one person from an early death over saving any number of people from a very minor harm and (ii) prioritize saving many people from a considerable harm that is less bad than an early death over saving one person from an early death. Limited Aggregation represents a challenge to standard theories of distributive ethics. It is straightforwardly incompatible with utilitarianism, prioritarianism, and the maximin principle. Moreover, an impossibility result by Fleurbaey, Tungodden, and Vallentyne has been taken to show that no plausible form of pluralist egalitarianism or sufficientarianism can accommodate it either. While some non-standard views, such as Voorhoeve's Aggregate Relevant Claims, can do so, they arguably violate principles of rational choice and are incompatible with the Anonymous Pareto principle. We propose a novel view of Limited Aggregation and that is grounded in the three aims of reducing deprivation, reducing inequality, and improving the general welfare. This view escapes the impossibility result by rejecting one of its axioms, known as Replication Invariance. It is also consistent with principles of rational choice and Anonymous Pareto.

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**Yost, Benjamin** (Cornell University)

*Parental Punishment and the Standard of Proof*

[Keywords: punishment; parental punishment; nonpunitive discipline; standard of proof; family ethics]

Pediatricians, psychologists, and public health officials strongly urge parents and caregivers to eschew spanking in favor of nonphysical punishments like time-outs and consequences. But this imprimatur should make us complacent. Being morally preferable to physical punishment does not guarantee that nonphysical punishment is morally permissible. Somewhat surprisingly, no philosopher has subjected noncorporal punishment to serious moral scrutiny. My talk fills part of that gap by assessing instrumentalist moral justifications of noncorporal punishment. Taking punitive time-outs as a test case, I conclude that punitive time-outs are almost always unjustified and usually morally impermissible on instrumentalist grounds.

Instrumentalist justifications of punitive time outs must show that punitive time-outs lead to better disciplinary consequences than nonpunitive disciplinary alternatives. My talk's main goal is to establish that the instrumentalist's evidence for this comparative claim must satisfy a clear and convincing standard of proof. To do so, I schematize the pragmatic and moral risks involved in parents' choice between punitive and nonpunitive discipline. I show that noncorporal punishment is more choiceworthy only when the probability of the evidence favoring noncorporal punishment

is .7. Interestingly, the clear and convincing evidence standard is usually understood to be met when a disputed proposition has a probability of .7. Because the standard of choiceworthiness and the clear and convincing evidence standard of proof converge, we have good reason to apply the clear and convincing standard to the controversy over noncorporal parental punishment.

Briefly canvassing the empirical research on the comparative benefits of punitive time-outs, I note that instrumentalists do not meet this standard, and so the instrumentalist justification fails. There is thus a moral presumption against noncorporally punishing children.

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## Panel Sessions

### ***Africana Philosophy in the UK***

Africana Philosophy is philosophy that engages with ‘the conditioning circumstances, motivations, modes, agendas, and importance of the philosophically articulate thought and aesthetic expressions of persons African and of African descent’ (Outlaw 2017). The intellectual traditions that Africana Philosophy examines and contributes to are carried forward in Africa as well as in all communities of the African diaspora, including Europe, the Americas, and the Caribbean. Although these traditions are not exclusive, they prioritize reflection on the conditions of life and traditions of thought of African and African-descended peoples, and as such, in the modern world, these traditions are of necessity philosophies ‘born of struggle’. In this sense, even when it is not addressed to specific issues of practical concern, all Africana philosophy is applied philosophy, because even to assert its existence and importance in world culture countermands colonial oppression and the myth of ‘the dark continent’ (Mudimbe 1988: 14-16).

The current panel highlights new work within Africana philosophy, showcasing its distinctiveness and power, and thereby contributes to the prominence of Africana philosophy in general. It also offers three interventions on particular important questions of applied philosophy. Starting with Prof Tommy Curry’s metaphilosophical call for an empirically informed and historically specific ‘Edinburgh School of Africana Philosophy’, Dr Patrice Haynes then assesses the feminist potential of the ‘dual-sex’ gender system of many pre-colonial African societies, and Dr Tareeq Jalloh considers the moral and political evaluation of drill rap as a response to a dilemma of double binds.

Panel coordinator: Avery Kolers (University of Tennessee)

**Curry, Tommy J.** (University of Edinburgh)

*The Edinburgh School of Africana Philosophy: Against the Mode of Under-Specialization within the Discipline of Philosophy*

Africana Philosophy names a tradition of inquiry centred on the historical, political, and social conditions of Black life across the African diaspora. While recent efforts to pluralize philosophy and the human sciences have expanded the visibility of Black thinkers, these initiatives frequently operate through a mode of under-specialization: Black philosophical traditions are absorbed into broad humanist, liberal, feminist, or diversity frameworks in ways that detach their concepts from the political and empirical conditions that produced them. As a result, Black philosophers are routinely expected to reinterpret or abandon the substantive conclusions of their own traditions in order to gain disciplinary legitimacy.

This presentation argues that this dynamic constitutes what I have elsewhere termed the derelictical crisis of Africana thought: the systematic erosion of conceptual integrity through integrationist and moral-universalist translation. In response, I propose the Edinburgh School of Africana Philosophy, a research program grounded in rigorous empiricism, historical specificity, and experiential verification. Rather than treating Africana thought as a normative supplement to

Eurocentric theory, the Edinburgh School treats Black intellectual traditions as autonomous theoretical systems whose claims must be evaluated on their own evidentiary and historical terms.

**Haynes, Patrice** (University of Nottingham)

*Thinking Sexual Difference in West African Indigenous Contexts*

In this presentation, I use pottery production in order to discuss what have been termed 'dual-sex' systems in many precolonial African societies. In such systems, women and men have separate areas of concern and power. For example, women work with clay as potters while men work with metals as blacksmiths. From the perspective of liberal, western feminist thought, dual-sex systems may seem oppressive insofar as men and women are locked into specific, stereotypically gendered, social identities, roles and expectations. Challenging such appraisals, I draw on the works of Nigerian decolonial feminists Nkiru Nzegwu and Ifi Amadiume, along with transnational feminist Serene Khader, to develop what I call 'heterarchical complementarianism' as one that discloses the decolonial and feminist prospects of dual-sex systems. More generally, I hope to show how that the concept of heterarchy enables transnational feminist analysis to track patterns of power relations and distributions in ways that avoid homogenising women's social status and situation.

Although I find African dual-sex systems understood in terms of heterarchical complementarianism promissory, I nevertheless go on to argue that they continue to harbour sexist oppression insofar as women's power is primarily based on a pronatalism that valorises biological reproduction and maternity. My concern is twofold. First, I worry that an overemphasis on biological motherhood tethers the dual-sex system to the biological body, thereby betraying the putative fluidity of the West African sexed social identities I discuss. Second, I am particularly troubled by the social status of involuntarily childless women who have long faced social stigmatisation and marginalisation in their communities. To address my concerns, I return once more to the creative enterprise of pottery to foreground the notion of 'communal mothering', the condition of which is the materiality and vitality of the earth as it seeks expression in women's hands.

**Jalloh, Tareeq** (University of Oxford)

*Violence, Rhymes and Double Binds*

There has been recent philosophical interest in the way drill rap music is criminalised by the police and judicial system. Whilst philosophers have pushed back against drill's criminalisation by reaffirming it as an artform, there has been little investigation into whether drill music's content glamorises immorality, and if so whether we ought to condemn these representations. For example, should we be concerned with how drill rappers exploit stereotypes about black criminality for financial gain?

Whilst we might criticise drill for its immoral content, there are competing positive evaluative responses available. One response might laud drill music, not for concretising revolts, but rather as attending to the void created by depleting effects of racism. Another positive response might laud drill music as championing a particular kind of black empowerment through appropriating and exploiting constructions of black criminality. That is, critiques of drill as affirming stereotypes about black criminality might ignore the aesthetic richness of drill music, where the signification involved points to a deeper register of text that describes the feeling of being locked into stereotypes about criminality, or makes fun of the holder of the stereotype. Indeed, exploiting stereotypes while simultaneously expressing power is a distinctive aesthetic feature of the black literary tradition. In these ways, drill music espouses both aesthetic and moral virtues that can easily be overlooked in critiquing the lyrical content for its alleged glamorisation of violence.

This paper introduces a framework for understanding the above competing responses to drill rap by using Sukaina Hirji's (2021) analysis of oppressive double binds. I argue that drillers are caught in oppressive double binds, and this framework helps us to see the dialectical stalemates that

emerge in evaluating drillers' violent content by offering new insights into the complexities involved when drillers glorify violence.

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### ***The Role of Context in Topics in Sexual Ethics***

What role should context play in theories and definitions in sexual ethics? On the one hand, the social context of certain wrongs seems necessary to fully capture harms inflicted on victims of sexual wrongs. For example, the pure case of rape has often been rejected, in part because it fails to capture morally salient facts of real-life instances of rape. On the other hand, relying too much on contingent features may fail to identify what is wrong about an action, or place undue responsibility on a victim for her subjective responses. After all, the pure case is intended to separate the harms from the wrong of rape, proving that rape is a serious wrong in all circumstances.

The aim of this panel is to explore the role of context – social, structural, and historical – in how one ought to theorize about and define sexual wrongs. The first paper argues that a framework of sexual justice is necessary for further theorization of sexual exclusion, precisely because the context is essential for determining when one is sexually excluded such that a moral or political response is justified, and what that response ought to be. The second defends a consent-based definition of rape against objections that it fails to explain broader social harms, obscures the nature of its harm, or incorrectly assumes a common metaphysical factor between consensual sex and rape. This suggests that while the context might be necessary for theorizing about rape, it should not be subsumed into its definition. Last, the third paper introduces moral blinding to capture how dominant social norms and cultural narratives interfere with one's ability to recognize moral wrongs. Marriage, as a normatively laden social institution, can actively reorganize moral perception, creating conditions in which marital rape may fail to be recognized as moral wrongdoing.

Panel coordinator: Lindsley-Kim, Ashley (University of British Columbia)

**Lindsley-Kim, Ashley** (University of British Columbia)

#### *Sexual Exclusion and a Framework of Sexual Justice*

Sexual exclusion has emerged as a site of interest within philosophy, but there is yet no cohesive view regarding what ought to count as sexual exclusion such that it merits a moral or political response. Some view sexual exclusion as something which occurs primarily to disabled persons, due to a combination of the limitations of their physical or cognitive capacities and the social perceptions regarding disabilities (Appel; Thomsen). Others identify it in the involuntary deprivation of sexual activity, pleasure, or goods (Halwani; Liberman). Still others have argued that being deprived of goods related to or contingent upon sexual relationships can be a form of sexual exclusion (De Boer; O'Shea). A lack of cohesion can indicate that a literature has yet to identify its core phenomenon or that the phenomena under discussion are distinct issues. However, I argue that these different approaches demonstrate that how, why, and from what one is sexually excluded can vary greatly, and that different forms can justify a moral or political response. To capture these diverse instances of sexual exclusion, and the tailored remedies required to ameliorate them, a framework of sexual justice is necessary.

First, I show that sexual activity and sexual pleasure are not the only goods that one can be denied in order to count as sexually excluded. Second, I argue that why one is sexually excluded is relevant. Third, I argue that sexual exclusion must be situated within social and structural context. Last, I draw from the reproductive justice literature to demonstrate how a framework of sexual justice is able to unify the discussion of sexual exclusion, contextualize instances of it in their social, structural, and historical place, and foster the particular solutions necessary to remedy distinct occurrences and their resultant harms.

**Ichikawa, Jonathan** (University of British Columbia)

*“Sex Minus Consent” and the Harm of Rape*

Some feminist theorists, such as Brison (2021) and Liberto (2022, 66), have objected to the mainstream idea that rape should be defined in terms of non-consensual sex, or even that there is any common metaphysical factor between consensual sex and rape. I'll examine four motivations for these critiques, and argue that none provide strong reason against defining rape or sexual assault in terms of consent.

First, Brison argues that definitions of rape in terms of consent do not adequately explain its broader social harms. But not everything important to understand about rape needs to be, or should be, built into the definition of rape. Recognizing the pervasive relationship between rape and gendered oppression, for example, should come from a wise and perceptive engagement with the contingent world, not mere linguistic competence.

Second, Brison argues that such definitions contribute to epistemic injustice by actively obscuring the nature of their harms; I'll argue that the epistemic injustices Brison is correctly noticing are not attributable to the definitions, but rather to other hermeneutical resources

Third, Liberto argues that such definitions improperly imply that rape includes something with positive value; but this follows only if we assume that the “highest common factor” between rape and consensual sex is itself valuable, independently of consent.

Fourth, Liberto argues against the metaphysical claim that any part of what happens in rape is something that is consented to in other circumstances. I'll argue that this is inconsistent with the most plausible general stories about the content of consent.

All told, the arguments against understanding sexual assault in terms of consent do express important feminist insights, but ones that are better understood consistent with a more orthodox treatment of sexual assault and consent.

**Sharma, Ritu** (University of British Columbia)

*Moral Blinding, Marital Rape*

This paper introduces and develops the concept of moral blinding: a distinct form of moral harm in which dominant cultural narratives and social expectations distort an individual's capacity for moral judgments. Unlike existing accounts of moral and epistemic failure—most notably hermeneutical injustice—moral blinding does not primarily arise from gaps in conceptual resources. Rather, it operates through the impairment of moral emotions, such as anger, sympathy, indignation, and revulsion, which ordinarily function as affective signals that register morally salient harms. By dulling, redirecting, or suppressing these emotions, moral blinding undermines moral judgment even where the relevant concepts are formally available. Moral blinding operates at the level of moral perception, emotional responsiveness, and motivated ignorance. It is an active, socially mediated process in which power structures shape what individuals are capable of noticing, feeling, and judging as wrong.

The paper examines marital rape as a central case through which the dynamics of moral blinding can be illuminated. It argues that marriage functions as a socially and legally sanctioned institution that shapes moral perception itself. Marital norms of sexual availability, entrenched power asymmetries, and relations of economic and emotional dependency can obscure coercion and normalize domination, creating conditions in which sexual violation may fail to be experienced or recognized as moral wrongdoing.

The paper then addresses the relative neglect of marital rape within philosophical discussions of sexual violence. Drawing on work on domestic abuse and coercive control, it identifies three interrelated features that contribute to its moral invisibility: relational embeddedness, the

systematic nature of the harm, and coercive control. The paper concludes by suggesting that moral blinding provides a broader framework for understanding how normalized social institutions can undermine moral agency by reshaping emotional and evaluative capacities, thereby sustaining enduring forms of injustice.

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### ***Well-Being***

The notion of well-being plays a central role in debates across applied ethics and political philosophy. Claims about what benefits people underpin discussions in bioethics, distributive justice, and public policy, yet these debates often rely on contested assumptions about well-being. Applied contexts, moreover, bring into view tensions within standard theories of well-being—namely hedonistic theories, which identify well-being with pleasure or positive experience; desire-based theories, which ground well-being in the satisfaction of a person’s desires or preferences; and objective list theories, which posit a plurality of goods that benefit individuals independently of their attitudes. Policies aimed at promoting welfare may conflict with respect for agency; concerns about adaptive preferences and structural injustice raise doubts about whether desire satisfaction reliably tracks benefit; and life-shaping values such as commitment or integrity are not always easily captured by familiar prudential metrics.

Panel coordinator: Renzo, Massimo (King’s College London)

**Renzo, Massimo** (King’s College London)

#### *Well-being and Life-Authorship*

We normally think that making our own choices is important for our well-being because it’s by making our own choices that we get to lead an autonomous life. But in what way does making our own choices contribute to leading an autonomous life? To address this question, I first articulate an ideal of autonomy as authorship over one’s life. Next, I critique accounts that place commitments at the core of this ideal (such as those defended by Raz and Chang), arguing that they are overly restrictive. Instead, I argue that “warrantless desires” (Sobel & Wall), i.e. desires that are not grounded in antecedent objective value, play a crucial yet neglected role in explaining how our choices ground genuine authorship. I conclude by exploring the complex interplay between objective and subjective value in generating the reasons that shape the lives we author, and by drawing out the implications of this picture for an account of well-being. In doing so, I develop a hybrid picture of practical reasoning that gives desires a wider role than Sobel and Wall allow.

**Rosati, Connie S.** (University of Texas at Austin)

#### *Nonfungible Goods*

A great many things can be good for a person, and what is good for a person varies among individuals. Some of the things that are good for a particular person may be good for her at some times and not others, and some can be traded off for others. But not all goods are equal, when it comes to personal good. Some goods are nonfungible. In this essay, I explore what it is for a good to be nonfungible and what makes certain goods nonfungible for a particular person. These goods, as I’ll explain, are deeply tied to human nature and our individual natures and bear on what makes for a good life as a whole.

**Wall, Steven** (University of Arizona)

#### *Well-being and the Success of a Life*

Well-being encompasses all the components of what is good for a person. To be sure, we sometimes distinguish narrow from broad notions of well-being because narrow notions are useful for various purposes, as the notion of medical well-being is useful for health care, for example. But the broad notion of well-being is the fundamental notion. With this in mind, we may be led to accept what I shall call the common supposition, which holds that well-being is the most comprehensive assessment of what contributes to our good. This comprehensive assessment is not the most comprehensive assessment we can make of our lives, for we can assess our lives in terms of all their good-making features including, for example, their contribution to the lives of others or to impersonal goods, as well as those that concern our own good. But when it comes to our personal good, well-being, on the common supposition, represents the most comprehensive assessment of a life. This paper presents some reasons for rejecting the common supposition by putting forward a different perspective, that of the success of a life, and arguing that it has a stronger claim than that of well-being to being the perspective from which the most comprehensive assessment of the good of our lives for us is made. The trick will be to show that the success of a life remains fixed on considerations that concern what is good for us, as opposed to other good-making features of a life, while not collapsing into a conception of well-being itself. Considerations to be assessed include the ideal of a well-lived life (as distinguished from a life high in well-being), the distinction between well-being and its importance, and the relation between prudential self-concern and well-being.

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### ***Philosophy of Journalism: What Role Should Journalism Play in Democracy?***

Panel coordinator: Schipani, Vanessa (University of Pennsylvania)

It is surprising that, while applied philosophers have devoted much work to examining law, science, religion, and education, journalism remains a grossly under-explored topic. This is despite the many points of connection between the goals of journalism and topics of perennial interest in applied philosophy, such as truth-seeking, responsible communication, and democratic value.

**Marciel, Rubén** (University of Geneva)

#### *Deliberative journalism defended against three criticisms*

Despite the vast literature on deliberative democracy, comparatively little has been said about the kind of journalism that best suits it. In this talk, I propose an account of deliberative journalism and defend it against three possible criticisms.

Drawing on insights from deliberative theorists and communication scholars, I suggest that the core function of deliberative journalism is to promote high-quality democratic deliberation. I then identify and explicate three specific duties that journalists should honor to fulfil this function. The first is the duty to set a deliberative agenda, which commands journalists to report only on issues worth being deliberated about by citizens qua citizens. From this duty, two second-order duties follow, both regulating the selection and reporting of the information needed to engage in quality deliberations about newsworthy issues. One is the duty to explain, which commands journalists to make newsworthy issues understandable to their audiences. The other is the duty to promote public reasoning, which commands journalists to actively stimulate their audiences' engagement in high-quality deliberations.

I then defend this account of journalism against three possible criticisms. The first holds that the ideal of deliberative journalism is conceptually inconsistent, as it requires journalists to know *ex ante* which views and proposals would be publicly acceptable—something we can only know *ex post* deliberation. The second accuses deliberative journalism of being excessively rationalistic, which would presumably entail that some (e.g., minorities, the less educated) would be left out of the newsmaking process and would have greater difficulties following the news. The third claims that deliberative journalism incurs in unacceptable forms of paternalism. In rejecting these

criticisms, I shed further light on what deliberative journalism is and what kinds of media institutions it calls for.

**Schipani, Vanessa** (University of Pennsylvania)

*Rethinking Journalistic Objectivity (Or Why Journalists Can Be Activists)*

In democratic societies, the right to a free press is often premised on journalistic objectivity, where objectivity requires journalists to forgo their right to publicly express their values. To resolve this conflict, I argue objectivity should be a requirement of the journalistic community, not individual journalists. If we take this tack, then journalists can retain their right to free expression—including being activists—and we can preserve the foundation on which the right to a free press is built—objectivity.

To make my case, I first show that contemporary debates about journalistic objectivity problematically center on objectivity in individuals. For example, a common critique on the right is that individual journalists could be objective if they wanted to, but they aren't. For that reason, journalists shouldn't be trusted. In contrast, in an 'ought implies can' argument, those on the left claim that individual journalists can't be objective, so they shouldn't be required to. Furthering this argument, they claim that there are moral reasons to abandon journalistic objectivity.

However, there are senses of objectivity that go beyond the individual. To illustrate this, I apply classic arguments in philosophy of science about scientific objectivity to journalism. I argue that newsrooms must be deliberative bodies composed of diverse groups of reporters who are responsive to each other's views. Accordingly, I claim an objective journalistic community is a politically and culturally depolarized one.

In the last part of my talk, I outline a complementary empirical study I'm conducting with social scientists concerning journalistic practices that would improve public trust in the media. This includes reporting that conveys multiple perspectives on issues, and on means to encouraging such practices, such as legislation. In this way, I seek to find epistemically and democratically legitimate ways to recover trust in the media that also work in practice.

**Fairbank, Viviane** (Universities of St. Andrews and Stirling)

*The Responsible-Inquiry Model of Journalism*

According to the Informational Model of journalism, the primary role of journalism in a functioning democracy is to provide people with true information about a certain range of important topics. Although this model is appealing and widely accepted, I argue that it is unsatisfactory. Journalism can be criticized—with democracy in mind—not only for the quality of its outputs, but also for the quality of the inquiries that lead to those outputs.

In the first part of the talk, I present two recent journalism case studies. I then argue that if journalism's role was only the publication of true, relevant, and useful information—as the Informational Model claims—then (1) we could not properly criticize those journalists who publish facts without proper warrant or ethical backing, and (2) there would be no relevant difference between journalists, expert bloggers, and whistleblowers.

In the second part of the talk, I propose to define journalistic practice as a distinctive kind of inquiry. This suggests that we should reject any simple factive account of journalistic publication norms: the truth of certain (relevant, useful) information is neither necessary nor sufficient for its publication. In epistemological terms, whether an individual journalist believes in or knows the information they have reported is incidental to whether its publication is warranted—though it is, for good reason, very closely correlated.

These reflections on journalistic practice lead me to propose a revised account of journalism's role in democracy: according to the Responsible-Inquiry Model, the primary role of journalism is to

provide people with responsibly gathered, true information while, in the process, serving as zetetic models. Good journalists do not only provide useful information to democratic citizens; they also conduct (ethically and epistemically) exemplary inquiries into the subject at hand.

**Prescott-Couch, Alexander** (Oxford University)

*Narrative and Explanatory Journalism: Epistemic Functions and Democratic Value*

This talk examines the epistemic and democratic value of two forms of journalism: narrative journalism and explanatory journalism. Explanatory journalism aims to furnish citizens with sophisticated explanations of significant fact in the social world, frequently drawing on the social sciences. By helping readers grasp why social and political outcomes occur, it enables more informed judgments about policy and political strategy. Narrative journalism also conveys explanatory information, but its reliance on storytelling conventions—dramatic tension, character-driven arcs, and emotional closure—has raised concerns: narratives can offer false or overly agent-centered explanations, create an illusion of understanding, and struggle to incorporate mature social scientific theory. This talk argues that, when properly understood, narrative journalism contributes far more to political understanding than is often assumed.

The talk develops two complementary arguments to show that narrative journalism nevertheless plays a crucial epistemic role. First, drawing on recent work on understanding, it argues that narrative formats can enhance a reader's "doxastic know-how"—the suite of intellectual skills that enable one to manipulate an explanation, apply it to new contexts, and reason counterfactually. By organizing information in memorable, experientially rich structures, narratives can facilitate "grasp" of explanatory information.

Second, the talk proposes that narrative journalism promotes what I call "skillful attunement": the acquisition of fitting affective and motivational responses to social phenomena. Such attunement is not merely ethically valuable; it constitutes an aspect of understanding itself. Drawing on work on recognition and civic friendship, the talk argues that narratives help cultivate the affective dispositions required for citizens to fully recognize one another and to sustain civic relationships grounded in mutual recognition.

Taken together, these arguments show that narrative journalism is not simply infotainment. When well-crafted, it advances core democratic aims by deepening explanatory understanding and fostering the affective competencies essential to civic life.

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