

## 2019 Great Lakes Philosophy Conference Abstracts

### **Aquinas Forum Keynote Address**

Professor Robert Audi, Notre Dame University

#### Prospects for a Value-Based Deontology

The importance of reasons in contemporary ethical theory is pervasively evident. Many philosophers who regard reasons as important also consider them basic in the normative order, at least in the moral domain. That there is normative reason to avoid killing people, for instance, is plausibly and probably widely considered a truth not grounded in any further truth. Must it be so viewed? Utilitarians have taken the wrongness of killing to be derivative, and Aristotelians and other virtue ethicists apparently also take the good to be in some way prior to the right. The overall issue here has long been present in ethical theory. It concerns not only the relation between the good and the right but also the wider relation between value and obligation or, more abstractly, between the axiological and the deontic. The special concern of this paper is which broad domain, if either, is prior in determining moral standards for human conduct. There are many kinds of priority. Here it is ontic and epistemic priority that will be central.

### **Professionals**

Joshua Blanchard, Oakland University

#### The Right to Say: Self-censorship, Deference, and Identity Politics

Philosophical debates implicate the identities of participants in disparate ways. For example, mathematical Platonism carries equal stakes for males and females, but the debate about abortion does not. Both cis- and trans-gender persons are equally implicated in the semantics of counterfactuals, but not when it comes to the semantics of talk regarding sex and gender. Debates that unequally implicate participants sometimes evoke twin demands for silence and deference. For example, we sometimes demand that males remain silent on abortion or at least adopt an attitude of deference toward females regarding the nature and permissibility of abortion. Implicated participants sometimes find the lack of self-censorship and deference to be obviously inappropriate or obnoxious. Likewise, unimplicated participants sometimes find demands for self-censorship and deference to be obviously misguided. This paper has two main goals. The first is to offer a compelling justification for self-censorship and deference. I appeal to work on standpoint epistemology and epistemic (in)justice, but, following Elizabeth Anderson's (1995) defense of feminist epistemology, the argument will be expressed in general, non-idiosyncratic terms. Self-censorship can constitute appropriate epistemic humility in light of limited access to evidence—e.g., a male's lack of evidence regarding what the capacity for pregnancy is like. Deference can express both humility and an interest in the truth—e.g., in utilizing testimony as a means of knowing indirectly what one cannot know directly. The second part of the paper offers an account of the limits to demands for self-censorship and deference. The account follows naturally from the first part of the paper. Because self-censorship and deference are justified by specific, epistemically salient

properties of particular debates, they need not extend to the entirety of the debates. For example, although males ought to self-censor and defer regarding significant aspects of abortion, it does not follow that they ought not participate in the debate in suitably circumscribed ways. Likewise, although cis-gender persons ought to defer to trans- and otherwise gender nonconforming persons regarding the phenomenology and moral seriousness of preferred pronouns, it does not follow that they ought not utilize this indirect knowledge in a broader debate (say, about university policy). Apart from the epistemic concerns about implication, there are moral concerns that track how much is practically at stake in a debate. For example, while a male who refuses to defer regarding the phenomenology of potential pregnancy and childbirth may be epistemically on par with a female who refuses to defer, say, regarding the phenomenology of male prostate exams, the cases are different morally. Moral stakes are relevant for knowing when self-censorship and deference are especially important. I do not claim to make significant theoretical progress on issues of race, gender, standpoint epistemology, etc. Rather, this paper should be read as an exercise in applied feminist philosophy that makes use of theoretical frameworks developed by others, with the aim of providing a publically useful application to a contentious controversy.

Geoffrey Callaghan, University of Toronto

### Undoing the Notion of a Right to Do Wrong

A number of authors have put forward the idea of a right to do wrong (RTDW) as a way of explaining moral rights. Typically their arguments take the following form: if a moral right is to have any real value for the right-holder, it must act to protect not only the right-holder's morally acceptable choices, but her morally deficient choices as well. Void of this extension (so the argument goes), the right-holder would be limited to making either 'the right choice' or 'the morally insignificant choice' on every occasion, which in turn would eschew the purpose of assigning the right in the first place. The argument I make in this paper challenges a number of the assumptions upon which this position rests and, ultimately, its foundational premise. My claim is that the primary purpose for assigning a moral right is not to protect the action, but rather is intended to protect the interest the agent has in developing her moral character. While this interest may indeed extend to actions that are considered to be morally impermissible, it is not paradigmatically characterized by it. This is precisely the mistake advocates of the idea of a RTDW make. The implication of their position is that moral rights can only make sense to the extent that they protect wrong actions. But this is untrue. The primary function of moral rights is to protect the agent in her ability to deliberate about which action is in fact the morally acceptable one. My argument relies on a recasting of the three-fold taxonomy of moral actions Waldron used to express the idea in his landmark paper on the subject. Whereas there, Waldron characterized moral actions as either: (a) morally required, (b) morally forbidden, or (c) morally indifferent, for most people engaged in practical moral reasoning, such categories would come across as artificial and simplistic. My proposal is that we substitute Waldron's list for one that better reflects the choices agents actually face in their moral deliberations, which, roughly speaking, can be captured as: (a') actions that are generally considered to be morally permissible, (b') actions that are generally considered to be morally impermissible, and (c') actions about which there is reasonable moral disagreement. As should be clear from the list itself, this view of moral choice greatly expands the type of action for which agents may require a moral right well past those deemed to be 'wrong' per se to actions about which there is genuine uncertainty as to their moral standing.

Kyle Fritz, University of Mississippi

### The Difficulty in Identifying Hypocrisy

Though it is fashionable to accuse people of hypocrisy, identifying actual instances of hypocrisy is more challenging than one might think. To be hypocritical, one must violate the *same principle* they claim to endorse. Yet principles can be broad or nuanced, and we often lack epistemic access to an agent's endorsed principle. Thus, following the fashion of the time may be epistemically and morally irresponsible, and we would be wise to resist calling out every apparent instance of hypocrisy as genuine hypocrisy.

The paradigm example of hypocrisy is when a person's action is inconsistent with a principle that they claim to uphold. Writers on hypocrisy often use a vegan who eats meat as a clear hypocrite. Yet the details matter here. A vegan might proclaim that people shouldn't eat meat, yet eat meat from someone's plate on the way to the trash. While some vegans may hold an absolutist principle about eating meat, a vegan consequentialist, for instance, might endorse a more qualified principle: it's permissible to eat meat that would be thrown out anyway. This consequentialist vegan would not be acting inconsistently with the principle they uphold, and so would not be acting hypocritically.

One might object that only the *publicly espoused* principle matters, so a consequentialist vegan who claims "People shouldn't eat meat" is acting inconsistently regardless. But it's unreasonable to require public declaration of nuanced principles. "People shouldn't eat meat" is a much easier principle to internalize than "People shouldn't eat meat unless eating meat would not prevent an animal's death or suffering or at least indirectly causally contribute to the factory farming economy." So, I suggest that this shorthand principle is reasonable in the public forum.

Importantly, however, not just any formulation of a principle is reasonable. One who endorses the principle, "No one *except for me* ought to eat meat" and condemns others between bites of steak is still hypocritical, contrary to what some like Benjamin Rossi have recently argued (2018: 565-566). Hypocrisy, by its nature, involves self-exception. If a principle is formulated in an agent-relative way so as to build in unjustified self-exception for some agent, the principle itself is hypocritical, and someone who endorses it is as well. A self-exception is justified, however, if it appeals to relevant underlying *features* of the agent rather than the fact *that it is this agent*. If Maya's dietary condition requires her to eat meat, for instance, she might hold that it's wrong for everyone but her to eat meat without being hypocritical, because her principle is open to including other agents besides herself who have such dietary conditions.

The lesson is that we should not be nearly as confident that an alleged case of hypocrisy is an actual case of hypocrisy. We should reserve our accusations of hypocrisy for clear cases and only point out others' inconsistencies in the spirit of cooperation. By allowing individuals the opportunity to explain how their principle is more nuanced, we can respect our epistemic limitations and be more socially responsible.

Aaron Harper, West Liberty University

### A Realist Account of Cheating in Sport

Cheating is perhaps the most fundamental concept in sport ethics, yet there is no satisfactory definition of what cheating *is*. Violation of the rules constitutes the standard definition of cheating, but, in sports,

not all rule violations are considered cheating; sometimes they are even praised as laudable strategies in the pursuit of victory. Moreover, many take this definition to entail the questionable conclusion that cheaters, along with those who accidentally break the rules, have failed to play the game at all. Additional cases cast doubt on other purported features of cheating, namely that it must be done for the purpose of a competitive or unfair advantage, or that it requires an attempt at deception. In response, Randolph Feezell argues that cheating depends not on the rules but on the “prescriptive atmosphere” of the sport, essentially its unwritten rules. However, this approach risks relativism, among other concerns. In response to these troubles, renowned scholar J.S. Russell has gone so far to suggest that perhaps cheating does not admit of any core components, rendering it essentially undefinable.

I contend that these problems emerge, in part, due to underlying issues concerning the status of rules (and their interpretation) in sport. Thus, to make sense of cheating in sport ethics we should rethink the nature of sport. I argue, following many others, that we can appeal to legal theory to illuminate the basic features of sport. While positivist and interpretivist (Dworkin-inspired) theories of sport have become prominent, I have argued elsewhere that legal realism offers greater insights into the nature of sport and its distinct forms of adjudication, so here I will utilize this normative framework. The fundamental idea of realism is that sport should be understood in the manner that it actually takes place. In other words, sport isn’t merely the rules; sport is a predictive enterprise in which participants understand the rules in terms of how they will be applied, and what punishments or sanctions are likely to be administered.

In this paper, I develop an account of cheating in sport that derives from my realist conception of sport. I argue that cheating is a distinct subset of actions in sport that warrant sanction from institutions and “officials” (which in this context include not only referees but also teams, coaches, and other players). My account resolves the main problems of cheating described above; breaking the rules is a necessary condition of cheating, while deception and competitive advantage are not. Yet rule-breaking is not a sufficient condition of cheating, since the consideration of whether an action constitutes cheating depends on the decision-makers and the context, which is informed by the unwritten rules, yet avoids the worrisome relativism. While my account might appear to beg the question, in defining cheating by the expectations of the sport community, I argue that we must understand cheating within a predictive context, since an analysis of cheating in sport is really an investigation into the conditions under which a player will receive sanction for breaking the rules.

Leland Harper, Siena Heights University

### The Possibility of Racism in Heaven

Many would scoff at the idea that racism could possibly exist in Heaven. Heaven is supposed to be a place that is free of struggles, hatred, violence and pain. The existence of something as negative as racism, at least in its harshest forms, is surely not something that could be compatible with such a place as Heaven. Even if we grant that God created this utopian realm for us to enjoy in the afterlife, a crucial question still remains: for whom is Heaven supposed to be the greatest possible place? Depending on how that question is answered, and how exactly we flesh out our concept of Heaven, we may end up with a version of Heaven in which the existence of racism is possible. In this paper I argue that if we conceive of a communal Heaven, one that is the greatest possible place for all of its collective inhabitants, then it is not possible for racism to exist there. If, on the other hand, we conceive of personal Heaven, one where each individual has their own distinct "perfect world" in the afterlife, then it is possible that there are certain instances in which Heaven contains racism. This paper serves as a

comparative account of two drastically different conceptions of Heaven and details how opting for one over the other could commit the believer to accepting the possibility of racism, or any other number of generally negatively-viewed "isms," existing in certain instantiations of individualized Heaven.

Jennifer Kling, University of Colorado – Colorado Springs

### Trolley Problems are a Red Herring: Stay Focused on the Politics!

In this paper, I argue that the normative problems that arise with the advent of autonomous vehicles (AVs) are primarily political, rather than ethical, in nature. This is because of what AVs will be like; they will be nodes in an algorithmically-controlled larger system, that is itself connected to a number of other algorithmic and non-algorithmic systems. Because of this, it is not only the case that trolley problems cannot help us think through the normative issues associated with the advent of AVs, but also that using trolley problems to think through such normative issues will systematically lead us in the wrong direction. Trolley problems encourage us to focus on the interpersonal, individual level; but as regards AVs, we should be focusing on the inter-group, social, systemic level. For instance, what would a fair, or free, or just, AV system look like? Will such a system inevitably be a tool of oppression, or could it (at least partially) constitute an emancipatory social framework? Such political questions are explicitly shunted to the side by trolley problems; thus, trolley problems are exactly the wrong way to frame the normative problems that arise with the advent of AVs.

Joseph Kranak, Wilbur Wright College

### Duties to Self as Duties to One's Future Self

Many philosophers in the past have defended duties to oneself, but it generally remains an unpopular position nowadays. However, there are good reasons to think that we have duties to ourselves, and I will defend this idea on the grounds that these duties are to one's future selves.

By duties to self is meant that there are certain actions that are either morally obligatory or prohibited that directly only affect oneself. Historically, the most discussed duty to self is not to commit suicide, but there other examples, such as the duty to take care of one's health or to not to use harmful substances. Thus, can we justify a claim like, "You should take care of your health," as a moral claim? It can be justified, in Kant's words, as a hypothetical imperative: "If you want to live a long, happy life, you should take care of your health," but can it be justified categorically?

Several objections have been raised to duties to self. The main forms of these objections are that (1) duties are necessarily interpersonal, excluding duties to self, and (2) duties to self are too demanding, moralizing things that are outside the realm of morality. Though Kant's justification of duties to self, using the formula of the end in itself, is one of the strongest justifications, it has shortcomings, mostly due to the difficulty of explaining how one can treat oneself merely as a means.

A better justification for duties to self can be made by thinking of the self as temporally bifurcated – that the self of the now and the self of the future are separate. This is based on the observation that we often behave as if the person who will suffer the consequences of our current actions is another person. There is some psychological research that tends to confirm that, when we think about our future self, we think about it as if it's someone else. The relevant concept is temporal discounting – that we tend to

put much greater value in present benefits and costs than future benefits and costs. This can lead us to over-value the needs of our present self and under-value the needs of our future self.

Based on this temporal bifurcation, it's possible to think about duties to self in interpersonal terms – as a claim that a future self has on the present self, which addresses objection (1) from above. We could think of it in contractualist terms: that duties to self are ones that all members of our temporally distinguished community of selves would consent to. Objection (2) is addressed by acknowledging that this standard would produce few clear duties to self.

However, using this model, it seems like we can make some reasonable conclusions about duties to self. For one, that when terminally ill people voluntarily end their lives to avoid suffering, this would not violate any duty to self, since our future selves would rationally also consent to be spared the suffering of the illness.

Geraldine Ng, University of Reading

### Climate Ethics & Nietzsche

[Climate ethics] swamp the machinery of morality, at least as it currently manifests in our moral consciousness. 1 Now, Nietzsche's opposition to morality appears to make him an opponent of the environmentalist agenda. I suggest that the more clearly we see the spirit of Nietzsche's critique of morality, rather than take it at its letter, the less clearly he stands opposed to the environmentalist. I argue that Nietzsche's views in fact make him an ally. Jack lives in LA and enjoys driving on Sunday afternoons. Assume that all that Jack gains is the simple pleasure from driving his convertible. But, are such pleasures actually that simple? Given global warming, might such pleasures be morally blameworthy? Walter Sinnott-Armstrong distinguishes some more or less ambitious ways in which we might present a principled objection to Sunday driving. After rehearsing various candidates, he concludes that no moral principle defensibly grounds such intuitions. What do we do in the face of moral scepticism? While environmentalists cannot condemn pleasure driving on moral grounds, they can do so on Nietzschean grounds. Individuals might not be morally blameworthy, but those who carelessly contribute to carbon emissions can be criticised as weak. Along the same lines, we can praise those who take global warming as a matter of personal consideration as splendid individuals. Nietzsche is interested in what constitutes 'splendid' human beings: 2 'What is good? – All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man. What is bad? – All that proceeds from weakness'. 3 By affecting a complacent attitude towards her climate-related actions, an agent does not exercise power but instead proceeds from weakness. Nietzsche's immoralism is not straightforwardly immoral. While disabusing us of morality, he nevertheless insists, 'it goes without saying that I do not deny, presupposing that I am no fool, that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged – but for reasons other than hitherto'. 4 Nietzsche's reasons come from an aesthetic perspective. First, the more self-sufficiently one acts, the more excellent one is. Self-sufficiency yields a constraint on conduct: "higher men have good reason not to hurt others, since doing so stains their character by showing them suboptimally self-sufficient and hence less excellent." 5 We could say that hurting 1 Jamieson 2014: 4, and 144. others to achieve one's aims is inconsistent with being a splendid human being. Second, consider Nietzsche's familiar idea that what is good is what heightens the will to power, and feeling that "a resistance is overcome". Importantly, when Nietzsche talks about overcoming he primarily means self-overcoming. The narrator in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* says of Tom and Daisy that "they retreated back into their

money and their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that held them together”. The environmentally complacent individual’s indifference, choosing the exploitative option, is bad because it merely yields to rather than overcomes her own resistance to change. In failing to overcome her resistance to inconvenient truths, the complacent individual diminishes her will to power. She falls short of being a splendid human being.

Geraldine Ng, University of Reading

### Transhumanism and the Iliad

I want to respond to the transhumanist view that transcending our mortal natural beings would be prudential and desirable. I take Homer’s Iliad as a resource for thinking about, and opposing, the transhumanist view. I will defend what I call the Homeric View, and argue that invulnerability, where it is conceivable at all, would make our lives go worse. To be invulnerable as the gods, ageless and blissful – what could possibly be wrong with that? My subject is whether or not our lives would go better if we were technologically enhanced humans or transhuman. If it were technologically possible, should we push towards bioengineered ‘perfection’? Should we make ourselves ‘more than human’? The debate raises the most enduring questions – about what it is to be human, about our relationship to nature, and about what kind of social world we want. I will put together the ambition of transhumanism to be invulnerable with the Iliad, one of the oldest stories about gods and mortals, and about war and death. We are familiar, in the Iliad, with the importance of courage, virtue, and honour to human flourishing. But Homer also presents war as the occasion to reflect upon the significance of mortality and human vulnerability. The flourishing of an individual depends not only on courage in light of the inevitability of death in battle but also, more basically, on an understanding of human mortality. By exploring temporality, narrative, and the contrast between divine and mortal wounds in the Iliad, I will show how the Ancients speak to the present debate in bioethics. I will focus on one basic idea, vulnerability, in the Iliad. I will suggest that it is close to the idea that we ourselves possess. Of course, neither pain nor death are desirable in themselves. Nevertheless, they contribute to ethical goods in virtue of their anticipation and the narratives provided in light of their existence. When Achilles eventually gives up his guise of invulnerability, he restores his particular individual nature and recovers his place in a social world. Achilles’s story suggests at least this: that vulnerability is not necessarily a bad thing, and not in the sense that vulnerability is a natural human experience, but in the first personal sense that it is a good thing for an individual. Homer leads us to see that vulnerability makes Achilles’s life go better.

James Roper, Michigan State University

### Does “Putting America First” Entail “Making America Great Again”?

What does “Make America great again” mean? Trump used this mantra in his 2016 Presidential campaign. He also used “America First,” implying, often specifically stating, that putting America first would make America great again. Like many political mantras, both of these are vague and ambiguous. What is unique about Trump’s use of them, though, is the fact that they are said to be related in a specific way. This paper explores the possible meanings of both mantras and the supposed connection between them. I argue that the best interpretation of “make America great again” is associated with making America ETHICAL again—that the closest this country has come to being “great” happened when it did things that many deemed ethical in a sense that incorporates the strongly deontological analysis associated with our founding documents. In this sense, making America great again does not follow in

any obvious way from putting America first. In fact, I argue, putting America first entails acting unethically—hence, putting America first does not entail making America great again.

The term ‘great’ has many meanings, some of which are more compatible with the claim that putting America leads to American greatness. For example, if we take ‘great’ to mean ‘powerful’ then this association does make sense; but America has been powerful, militarily and economically, for many years. Therefore, Trump’s claim that he would make America great would be problematic on this interpretation of ‘great’. A further problem arises if we add the word ‘again’. This suggests that America has somehow ceased to be great and that Trump will restore its greatness. As noted, though, America is and continues to be great (powerful) militarily and economically, so speaking of “restoring” America’s greatness really makes no sense.

I argue that the most reasonable interpretation of ‘make America great again’ utilizes a meaning of ‘great’ in Merriam-Webster (on-line): “markedly superior in character or quality, especially: NOBLE.” America’s behavior toward the world and toward its citizens after WWII until the mid-70s manifested behavior that many consider ethical. Many things happened during this period that were not means ethical, but the trend was toward more ethical behavior by the U.S. Government. Since the mid-70s, the country’s behavior has moved away from acting ethically. Inequality has been allowed to increase exponentially both in the U.S. and in other countries; and the paper will explore many other examples. In this sense, then, the mantra of “making America great again” does make sense; but, on this interpretation, “putting America first” does not entail making America great again. Putting America first is typically not interpreted as putting America first in an ethical sense. It is usually associated with an economic interpretation consistent with the CORPORATE mantra of maximizing the bottom line and ignoring all the other lines (the ethics)—an interpretation inconsistent with the deontologically based ethics associated with this country’s founding documents. In fact, I will argue that it is not even consistent with any reasonable interpretation based on utilitarian (or “character”) ethics.

Peter Rose-Barry, Saginaw Valley State University

### On Doxing Racists

A 2016 *United States Attorney’s Bulletin* published by the Executive Office of the United States Attorneys titled “Cyber Misbehavior” identified a series of technology-facilitated violent offenses of interest to attorneys in the Department of Justice (DOJ) at the time, including “cyberharassment.” One kind of cyberharassment of interest to the DOJ is doxing. The term ‘doxing’ is a term of art, but I understand it to involve intentionally releasing personal information about an individual onto the Internet. Doxing resembles, to some extent, public shaming rituals that at least some faithful liberals, including Mill, regard as inconsistent with liberalism’s commitment to respecting the equal dignity of all citizens. But the availability and increasing influence of social media suggests that the ethical challenges posed by doxing are very much a challenge to ethics in the future.

I do not purport to defend the practice of doxing quite generally and there are undoubtedly cases of doxing that are morally wrong. Of special interest is the moral permissibility of doxing individuals associated variously with white supremacist, white nationalist, and neo-Nazi organizations—the sort of conduct exemplified by the Twitter account Yes You’re Racist. Still, I argue that doxing can be morally justified, and that the practice of doxing racists in particular can be justified on grounds recognizable to the faithful defender of liberalism. I consider some reasons for thinking that the practice of doxing racists might be wrong, some of which do not survive scrutiny. I then offer what I take to be the strongest argument for thinking that doxing generally and that doxing racists in particular is wrongful:

while doxers are usually careful enough to refrain from explicitly inciting or agreeing to engage in wrongful conduct via a dox, there is a case to be made that a Lewis-style convention obtains for a certain population that mandates the harassment and intimidation of a doxed subject. If so, then even in the absence of an explicit agreement, doxing may often involve a conspiracy to engage in seriously wrongful conduct.

Even if doxing is often wrong given the existence of a Lewis-style convention, I contend that very many cases of doxing racists need not be wrongful. I offer an argument that appeals to rights theory that contends that many racists have forfeit whatever right or rights that would have otherwise made doxing wrongful and that, in the absence of other wrong-making considerations, doxing racists can be morally justified—in particular, the sort of conduct exemplified by Yes You're Racist.

David Scott, Bellarmine University

### Containing Unreasonable Faiths and the Risk of One-Dimensionality

Members of cultures or religions who differ radically from mainstream democratic life are faced, according to Rawlsian liberalism, with one of two fates: some degree of absorption into the prevailing legal discourse or a fading away from social existence by their refusal or inability to so transform. Jeremy Waldron offers a particularly pessimistic articulation of this trend, one that will only proliferate as the mainstream public sphere perpetually extends its reach into minority communities: “We know that a world in which deracinated cosmopolitanism flourishes is not a safe place for minority communities. Our experience has been that they wither and die in the harsh glare of modern life, and that the custodians of these dying traditions live out their lives in misery and demoralization.” John Rawls describes this kind of loss as an inevitable fact of “commonsense political sociology.” Stephen Macedo suggests that certain of these losses, particularly illiberal cultural or religious communities, ought to be catalyzed or celebrated.

The question that this “commonsense fact invites is how we can fairly decide which comprehensive doctrines will have difficulty persisting in a legal or political milieu. This essay begins by detailing the partial answer that Rawlsian liberalism offers: we are justified in both excluding from the political constituency and “containing” what he calls “unreasonable persons.” What he means by “containment” is notoriously vague, so I assume *arguendo* Jonathan Quong’s well-supported interpretation that a “containment measure” is a legal measure that makes it intentionally difficult for a religious community to proliferate. Containment measures might include denying a community a religious exemption from a generally applicable law or imposing compulsory education in public schools. The Rawlsian believes such unreasonable doctrines are rightly “contained” because: (1) They don’t recognize our society’s considered convictions, such as the equal respect for all citizens, and (2) They erode the public’s assurance that all citizens in society intend to abide by the fair terms of the social contract, thereby threatening social stability.

Despite its laudable intentions, Rawlsian liberalism is overbroad in its justification of containment measures against unreasonable comprehensive doctrines. Drawing on insights from Herbert Marcuse and Charles Taylor, I argue that containment measures instantiate a condition of one-dimensionality. In

doing so, I defend similar arguments from Jeff Spinner-Halev and Marilyn Friedman that an ostensibly neutral conception of “unreasonableness” risks stigmatizing and imposing mainstream liberalism on minority communities. I present two illiberal, yet socially cooperative, non-hostile, and non-mainstream religious communities, each of which based on influential federal court decisions: one set of cases involving Native American tribes and another involving Amish and Hutterite communities. While these communities might risk *some* social dissension, they do not threaten social stability *per se*, but only the Rawlsian model of it. As such, containing such cooperative doctrines is only justifiable by a controversial and contestable form of social-instability-toleration. If this is so, then by containing such comprehensive doctrines, we do so illegitimately and disregard those who most require democracy’s protection.

Jonathan Spelman, Ohio Northern University

### Eating Humanely-Raised Meat: Revisiting Fred’s Basement

Alastair Norcross begins his challenging paper “Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases” with a story he titles “Fred’s Basement.” In that example, Fred gets into a car accident that irreparably damages his godiva gland. Given how the human body works in Norcross’ example, the result is that Fred cannot enjoy chocolate unless he can procure some cocoamone, and as it turns out, the only way for Fred to procure cocoamone is to torture puppies. Thus, “[Fred] did what any chocolate lover would do. He read the research, and set up his own cocoamone collection lab in his basement.” For every puppy that Fred tortures and then brutally slaughters, he gets enough cocoamone to enjoy the taste of chocolate for a week. Norcross argues that the behavior of those who buy and eat factory-farmed meat is morally equivalent to that of Fred. And since Fred’s behavior is clearly wrong, it follows that buying and eating factory-farmed meat is wrong. Norcross’ argument shows us that when faced with a choice between buying and eating factory-farmed meat and going vegetarian, we are morally obligated to go vegetarian. But what if our choice were between buying and eating humanely-raised meat and going vegetarian? In this paper, I modify Norcross’ example to make Fred’s situation more similar to that of those who can choose between buying and eating humanely-raised meat and going vegetarian. In my example, puppies develop cocoamone naturally during their first year of life, so Fred needn’t torture puppies. Instead, Fred treats his puppies well. He gives them plenty of space to roam outdoors, he feeds them a healthy diet, and he plays with them. He knows them by name. It is hard to criticize the way Fred treats his animals, but he still kills them unceremoniously at a relatively young age. And for what? To enjoy the taste of chocolate. What should we think of Fred? The answer to this question is not obvious, but the fact that it is not obvious is instructive. Can Fred justify killing year-old puppies, puppies that he raised from birth, simply for the sake of gustatory pleasure. If he’s a utilitarian, it seems that he can. If he’s a virtue ethicist, however, it becomes harder. What if he’s a deontologist? Here, he’s faced with the question of what he owes animals. Fred wouldn’t raise humans for gustatory pleasure. Is there something different between humans and non-human animals that would justify our killing them at a young age for gustatory pleasure? While I see my example as speaking against the moral permissibility of buying and eating humanely-raised meat, the goal of my paper is not to convince my readers, primarily students of philosophy, that buying and eating humanely-raised meat is wrong. Instead, my goal is to both give them a clearer picture of the choice they face at the supermarket and to help them appreciate the force of the argument for vegetarianism.

Isidoro Talavera, Franklin University

## What is Critical Ethics and Why it Matters?

Critical ethics comes into play whenever a systematic attempt to get around the limitations of personal belief is sought to get to what ought to be done. Critical ethics uses critical thinking to take some ethical argument apart, via analysis, and evaluate whether some derived conclusion follows from the evidence to make reasonable, intelligent decisions about what to believe and what to do (enter applied ethics). Accordingly, critical ethics examines the ethical questions that are most central and relevant to how (normative ethics) and why (metaethics) we ought to live our lives. However, if we teach only *normative* ethics (whether as a set of absolutistic or relativistic ethical beliefs)—no matter how useful and even inspiring it may be to a particular culture or community, the average student (or future citizen) will not be able to distinguish good from bad (as an act of personal responsibility and free choice). Without fomenting and teaching critical thinking, the average student (or future citizen) would believe all kinds of false or inconsistent things and ethical knowledge would be in conflict with better-established background information—there would be no coherency in a person’s ethical knowledge and/or actions. This would have devastating consequences for the survival of the human species because our knowledge would not align or match with (at times dangerous) reality. Accordingly, it is crucial that we learn how to evaluate and to select among alternatives to do the thing that must be done, when it ought to be done, using critical thinking. Therefore, to foster the development of ethical, responsible, and engaged citizens, it is important for students to learn to modify or correct belief molded by personal interest, motivated thinking, upbringing, and/or indoctrination.

Matthew Waldschlagel, Anna Maria College

Immigration, Freedom of Movement, and State Sovereignty

The present debate over immigration in the U.S. is concerned almost exclusively with the construction of a policy that it is thought will deal most adequately with unauthorized immigrants (often called illegal immigrants) and refugees from Central and South America. Views about unauthorized immigration are derived from norms concerning the ethics of immigration. This paper is concerned with the ethics of immigration. I will argue in favor of the freedom of immigration and will build a case on behalf of a more-or-less open immigration policy. Two issues are central to the ethics of immigration: the scope of state power in determining membership in the state, and the demandingness of the right of the individual to freedom of movement. I frame the ethics of immigration as a debate between communitarians and cosmopolitans. On one side of the immigration debate are the communitarians. They uphold a vision of a shared national identity, which they say is constitutive of community, the integrity of which is arguably fragile, and thus may not withstand the pressure of waves of (unauthorized) immigration. The communitarians are pitted against the cosmopolitans, who affirm, with respect to the question of justice, that each person is a member of a global polity to which they have equal rights. Under this view, to prohibit an individual from immigrating is difficult to justify. Chandran Kukathas will serve as a representative for the cosmopolitan position in favor of freedom of immigration. David Miller will serve as the main representative for the communitarian position in favor of limits on immigration. Although my thesis is that the morally right course of action is to institute a more-or-less open immigration policy consistent with cosmopolitan norms, I appreciate the sheer impracticality of such a course of action, given the present political reality in the United States. I conclude by arguing for the *political* necessity of border security in the US, while suggesting that the

cosmopolitan position be used as a *moral* criterion that should inform humane laws and promote the spirit of hospitality at all ports of entry in the US.

Steven Wathen, Siena Heights University

### The Green Chemistry Commitment at Siena Heights University

Virtually everything used in modern society is a product of chemical processes, and the way that chemical substances are designed and produced has a wide impact on society in many different ways. The chemical process affects the safety of workers in the chemical and related industries, the cost of commercial products to consumers, the hazards the finished products pose to consumers, the cost of waste treatment for industry, as well as the societal impact of chemicals that are released into the environment. As a science educator I am concerned with the safety of my students and colleagues, the cost to the university of dealing with the materials produced in chemistry lab work by students, and the impact of our work on the wider community. I am also concerned to help students understand both the benefits to society and the nature of the risks involved and how to mitigate or remove them altogether. With these concerns in mind, the chemistry program at Siena Heights University has signed the Green Chemistry Commitment, a voluntary program for schools who are committed to include Green Chemistry issues in their curricula to prepare students for 21st century sustainable chemistry. Green Chemistry relates to the Liberal Arts Learning Outcomes of Siena Heights University, particularly Ethical Integration and Social Responsibility as well as the Science Program's Learning Outcome to have an understanding of the role and impact of science in modern society, as well as the functions and responsibilities of scientists. The role of Green Chemistry and the Green Chemistry Commitment at Siena Heights University will be discussed.

Jeff Wisdom, Joliet Junior College

### What Does Hume Have to do with Environmental Ethics? Assessing the Prospects for 'Humean Environmentalism'

The debate concerning which entities (if any) possess intrinsic value is one of the dominant issues in contemporary environmental ethics. On the one hand, animal liberationists including Peter Singer and Tom Regan argue that individual organisms have intrinsic value to the degree that they can suffer (Singer) or are experiencing subjects of a life (Regan). On the other hand, environmentalists like Richard Routley and J. Baird Callicott contend that ecosystems as a whole are the proper locus of inherent value; sentience is not necessary for an entity to possess inherent moral worth, though it may be sufficient. Recently, Alan Carter has argued that a Humean metaethic can unite these seemingly disparate camps.

This essay examines the prospects of Humean metaethics for grounding a sensible environmentalism. I begin by presenting Carter's case for a Humean bridge between environmentalism and animal liberation. Next, I point out what I take to be severe shortcomings of Humean environmentalism. Among other things, I argue that if one accepts the error-theoretic implications of Hume's projectivism, then Humeanism does not so much bridge the divide between environmentalists and animal liberationists as it explains the divide away. After critiquing Humean environmentalism, I argue that correcting the flaws in Humean metaethics leaves us with a view on which only human lives have intrinsic value. I call this view *proper-function moral realism*. On this view, it is plausible that human moral judgment-producing faculties have the biologically-proper function of valuing human lives intrinsically, but they do not have the proper

function of viewing other species as having intrinsic value. Further, morally good circumstances or states of affairs turn out to be the natural circumstances that tend to make life go well for humans biologically, psychologically, or socially, and the morally bad circumstances will be those that tend to make life go poorly for humans.

Despite what some may consider to be the odiously anthropocentric implications of proper-function moral realism, one who embraces the view can still justify placing a high value on preserving ecosystems. This is because a disposition to mistreat animals or destroy plants without good reason is not a disposition that would tend to make life go well for humans. Such a disposition would tend against human flourishing (and therefore would be wrong) because (1) others may care about the animals or plants, (2) one might reasonably suspect that the person who mistreats animals or the environment cannot be trusted with vulnerable humans, and (3) killing certain animals or plants will either directly or indirectly make food, shelter, or medicine more scarce. Finally, and in conclusion, the argument I present here makes clear a challenge that few if any in the applied ethics literature have thus far endeavored to meet. Specifically, a defender of a moral realist view on which non-human animals, plants, and/or ecosystems have intrinsic value must show how valuing intrinsically the lives of other species can plausibly be considered part of the distal function of the human moral sense.

### **Graduate Students**

Grace Boey, University of Pennsylvania/Nanyang Technological University

#### Morally Worthy Deference

Pure moral deference is the epistemic practice of forming and sustaining some moral belief  $p$ , solely based on someone else's purely moral testimony that  $p$  is true. The following case is an example: Halloween. Joel is attending an Intro to Ethics recitation. The class is discussing the ethics of Halloween costumes, which he's never thought about before. Because Joel has a history midterm right after class, he isn't paying attention. Rather, he's reciting historical facts about minstrel shows in his head. At the end of class, Joel hears his TA state that she herself thinks donning blackface for Halloween is wrong. Joel leaves class having no clue why anyone would have this view. He also has no feelings about either blackface or minstrelsy. He knows they upset the African American community, but thinks everything seems to upset someone anyway. Still, he believes his TA. Whenever she's explained her moral views in the past, he's always been able to grasp her explanations, and has always agreed with her conclusions. Joel, a white man, decides not to paint his face black and dress up as Black Panther for Halloween. When asked why, he says, 'It would be wrong. My TA said so. Come to think of it, I don't know why. But I want to do what's right.' Assume that Joel is justified in believing his TA's testimony, and has successfully engaged in pure moral deference to acquire moral knowledge. One observation that those in the moral deference debate is that successful deferrers like Joel still fail to respond intellectually, affectively, and conatively to the moral reasons which make  $p$  true. In light of this, one substantive worry is that the actions performed on the basis of deferential moral knowledge can't have moral worth, since being responsive to moral reasons is necessary for performing morally worthy actions. In this paper, I'll argue that actions stemming from deferential moral knowledge, like Joel's, can indeed have some amount of moral worth. In particular, I'll take a stand on the philosophical debate over morally worthy motives, and argue for the following claim: The contextual claim about moral worth: In contexts  $C$  where an agent's unresponsiveness to the moral reasons why  $\phi$ -ing is right makes her incompetent at  $\phi$ -ing on the basis of those moral reasons, her act of  $\phi$ -ing has some moral worth if (i) she's motivated to  $\phi$  by a

concern for doing the right thing, and (ii) she's competent at  $\phi$ -ing based on this concern. Acting on deferential moral knowledge is a way for agents to meet the standards of the contextual claim, and hence perform actions with at least some amount of moral worth. My account occupies a sensible middle ground when it comes to assigning praise to competent deferrers like Joel, and acknowledges the essentially non-ideal nature of human moral agents. Moreover, moral worth on my account doesn't come too cheap; meeting the requirements of the contextual claim by successfully practicing pure moral deference is more demanding than it might seem.

Johnny Brennan, Fordham University

### Trust, Reactive Attitudes, and Moral Responsibility

P.F. Strawson has changed how we conceive of responsibility. Thanks to his insights on reactive attitudes, we can make sense of responsibility whether or not we possess free will that consists in an agent's ability to have done otherwise (often referred to as libertarian or contra-causal free will). Even if determinism is true, what makes someone responsible is not that she could have done otherwise, but that she is an appropriate target of our reactive attitudes such as resentment, blame, disappointment, shock, grief, gratitude, praise, and approval. Victoria McGeer has extended Strawson's theory by identifying the property of co-reactivity—a kind of responsiveness to reactive attitudes that points to a communicative scaffolding serves to bolster moral communities by bringing participants to an increased moral understanding—that serves to track who is an appropriate target of reactive attitudes. They hit the mark if they are addressed to individuals who can understand them *as normative messages*, which doesn't rely on libertarian free will. But there does seem to be a puzzling question arising from co-reactivity. When we took moral responsibility to presuppose free will, the implied purpose of practices of responsibility is to shepherd people into making the right choices. But what is the purpose of reactive attitudes if we take seriously that they are indifferent to determinism? *Why* do we express reactive attitudes? Is there a positive rationale to be had for what reactive attitudes do for us, or do we simply find ourselves saddled with them? If reactive attitudes track the property of co-reactivity as McGeer suggests, why do we possess co-reactivity?

In this paper, I aim to build on McGeer's insights by suggesting a theoretical commitment of co-reactivity. I will argue that trust is the psychological and logical enabling condition of co-reactivity, as well as its upshot. The general thrust of my argument is this: if the purpose of interpersonal procedures of co-reactivity is to come to renewed or increased moral understanding, then for this to function successfully we must already trust others to be receptive to our reactive entreaties. In making my argument, I will answer two distinct but interrelated questions: (1) why should we think that trust underpins co-reactivity? And (2) what must trust be in order for it to perform this function? I will gesture at an explanatorily basic form of trust—What I call 'recognitive trust'. In a word, recognitive trust is trust that others will recognize you as the kind of being that puts a constraint on their actions. Even if it is true that persons have intrinsic worth, it is not guaranteed that others will respect this worth. Recognitive trust is trust that others will see you as morally mattering to them, which is a necessary component of being sensitive to reactive attitudes. Like any form of trust, recognitive trust involves vulnerability. But it involves a *particular* vulnerability: that one's existence—not simply in the biological sense, but as having the *status* of being a person—depends on others.

Richard Briggs, Wayne State University

## Enoch's Deliberative Indispensability Argument for Metanormative Realism

The aim of this paper is to respond to some objections to David Enoch's recent defense of a "Robust Realism" about normativity (in *Taking Morality Seriously* (2011)). Enoch defends this view by means of an "indispensability" argument modeled on indispensability arguments in philosophy of mathematics and science. Such arguments hold that we are epistemically justified in believing in entities that are indispensable to our best scientific explanations. Enoch thinks another kind of indispensability can justify ontological commitment to objective, response independent normative properties. He calls this "deliberative indispensability": if something is indispensable for our deliberation, we are justified in believing in that thing. Central to Enoch's defense of Robust Realism is the claim that deliberative indispensability and explanatory indispensability justify ontological commitment for the same reason. Deliberation and explanation are what Enoch calls "rationally non-optional" projects, in that we cannot disengage from explaining or deliberating and still be rational agents. He challenges his readers to provide a reason why we should take explanatory indispensability seriously but not deliberative indispensability. Several authors have taken up this challenge and tried to show that there is a relevant disanalogy between explanation and deliberation, such that explanatory indispensability can justify ontological commitment, but deliberative indispensability cannot. More specifically, Alex Worsnip has argued that there is an important disanalogy between deliberative and explanatory indispensability (*in Thought*, (2016)). He concedes to Enoch that inference to the best explanation is indispensable to explanation as a belief forming method but argues there is no analogous belief forming method in the case of deliberation, without which we could not expect to successfully engage in deliberation. I will argue that Worsnip's argument fails for two main reasons. First, the relevant analogy between deliberation and explanation is not found in their both having successful belief forming methods. The relevant analogy is between what each project indirectly must assume to be true if we are to succeed in that project. Explanation must assume that our world is explanatorily friendly for us to have any chance of successfully explaining, and deliberation must assume that there are normative truths for us to have any success in deliberation. Secondly, requiring Enoch to present a successful belief forming method for deliberation is unwarranted in this context. A belief forming method for deliberation would output normative judgments, and whether there is any such method is a general epistemological problem that Enoch attempts to solve later in *Taking Morality Seriously*. These reasons support Enoch's claim that we should take deliberative indispensability as seriously as we take explanatory indispensability, supporting his defense of "Robust Realism" about normativity.

Jay Carlson, Loyola University – Chicago

## Political liberalism, skepticism, and political disagreement: A critique of van Wietmarschen

Disagreements over political issues is perhaps the most salient aspect of our contemporary political environment, and there is a common anxiety about how we should address them. In recent years some have used epistemology of disagreement debates to frame how we should think about disagreements in the political domain. Han van Wietmarschen (2018) has argued that peer disagreements over political beliefs undermines the political liberals' justification in holding their own sectarian beliefs. I will argue that van Wietmarschen's position ignores the diversity of political disagreements. I will argue that political disagreements can differ along four different dimensions: subject matter, scope, genealogy, and urgency. They can be about facts or values, depending on whether they are about descriptions of the world or norms that ought to govern our behavior. Their scope can be deep or shallow, depending on how widespread the disagreements are between interlocutors. They can arise from different genealogical sources, whether from different people making reasonable use of their rational powers of

judgment, or from various irrational processes like prejudice, or culpable forms of active ignorance. Finally, certain disagreements—like informal disputes on social media—are non-urgent in the sense that they do not require a decision of any kind, making “agreement to disagree” a reasonable option. In other political disputes, however, participants cannot simply “agree to disagree.” Legislators deliberating on passing a law have to come to a decision on its content. There are also different levels we can respond to these disagreements: we can adjust our confidence, the content of our beliefs, or the policy we wish to implement. With these distinctions in place, I will argue that they undermine van Wietmarschen’s skeptical conclusion: we do not need to be significantly skeptical of our beliefs in order to give reasons that other reasonable interlocutors would accept. Furthermore, we do not even need to agree on reasons in order to converge on a policy that all participants would find acceptable.

My criticisms of van Wietmarschen help to frame the positive proposal for a more adequate epistemology of political disagreement, a view I call public justificationism. The “justificationist” aspect of this position follows from Jennifer Lackey’s (2008) justificationist approach to disagreement more generally. Where I expand on her view is that how one should respond to disagreement can include not only epistemic considerations but also practical ones. On this account, how one should respond to a given political disagreement depends on some features of case: what kind of disagreement it is, whether practical urgencies are at stake, even the social positions of the interlocutors in question. This is not to provide a theoretical decision procedure for how to deal with various political disagreements from the armchair. Rather this is to begin identifying what features might be relevant for a more particularist epistemology of political disagreement.

William Cochran, Northwestern University

#### Enhancing Human Excellence: Aristotle and the Ethics of Genetic Engineering

“Designer babies” are no longer science fiction. The recent announcement that a Chinese scientist has created the world’s first genetically altered human beings has alarmed the scientific community, made news around the world, and hastened the need to understand the ethics of genetic engineering. In this paper, I aim to provide some clarity over one particular issue in this area: what consideration, if any, we should give to human nature. I do so by turning to an unlikely source of insight on the ethics of this emerging technology—Aristotle. Opponents of biomedical enhancements often claim that if we enhance ourselves genetically, we will lose our essential human nature. Proponents of biomedical enhancements deny that human nature should be a concern. We suppress our so-called ‘natural’ behaviors—e.g., anger, jealousy, lust, etc.—all the time, and for good reason. Yet scholars on both sides of the debate agree on one thing: Aristotle supports their position. According to opponents of enhancements like Kass, such biotechnologies “disrupt the normal character of human being-at-work-in-the-world, what Aristotle called *energeia* psyches, activity of soul, which, when fine and full, constitutes human flourishing” (2017, p. 153). Conversely, proponents of these enhancements like Buchanan claim that “Aristotle’s point will hold for post-humans: what’s good for them will depend on their post-human nature. The fact that there aren’t any beings whose nature is human won’t interfere with their ability to judge the good” (2017, p. 71). Since both sides claim Aristotle as an ally, we can make some progress through this impasse if we interpret Aristotle correctly. I argue that each side gets part of Aristotle right, but neither captures his full thinking on this topic. For Aristotle, our characteristic activity (our function) as human beings is to exercise reason. Since each thing flourishes when it performs its function well, our human good lies in our exercising reason well. Opponents of enhancements are therefore right that (a) if we enhance ourselves to the point where we no longer exercise reason, we will, according to Aristotle, lose the activity that is essential for our human happiness. But proponents are also right that (b) if we

enhance ourselves the point where we exercise some faculty superior to reason, we will no longer be human, but that is not bad per se; a different good will correspond to that changed nature. Given Aristotle's thinking on the relationship between nature and goodness, he would maintain both that (a+) we should not enhance ourselves so that we no longer actively engage in the exercise of reason (or some capacity superior to reason), and (b+) we should enhance ourselves to the point where we exercise reason better than we can now, or to the point where we can exercise a capacity that is superior to reason, even though doing so would mean we are no longer human.

Thomas Crosby, Loyola University – Chicago

### Ideal Theory, the US Border and Derrida: new ways of conceptualizing the relationship between Ideal and non-Ideal Theory

Political philosophers since Rawls have debated the merits of prioritizing “Ideal Theory” over non-Ideal theory. A major dividing line between Ideal theorists and their critics concerns the need for a theoretical ‘aim’ in political theory. Ideal theorists contend that without a prior Ideal theory to draw on, non-ideal theorists are insufficiently oriented toward or informed about justice, while critics argue other aims—such as incremental improvement or responding to injustice—supply a sufficient spring board for political theory.

I will argue that there is a different conceptual scheme than the one often hewn to by Ideal/non-ideal theorists that provides something of a middle ground. There are parallels between Jacques Derrida's concept of “Hospitality” and the distinction between Ideal and non-Ideal theory. Derrida argues the concept of hospitality has two necessary poles—legal hospitality, which is practical, instantiated hospitality, and the pure ideal of hospitality without any practical consideration—which he terms “hyperbolic hospitality.” Not only does he suggest these are mutual constitutive of the concept of hospitality as such, but he suggests that not actively focusing on hyperbolic hospitality as a check on legal hospitality renders legal hospitality morally suspect. Legal hospitality severed from hyperbolic hospitality leaves legal hospitality at best insufficiently just, and at worst, it becomes fetishized unto itself leading to abuses of those seeking hospitality. I suggest there is a real world example of useful appeal to hyperbolic hospitality in current debates about US border control. Calls to abolish borders or Immigration and Customs Enforcement, when they are not accompanied by a real reform platform, nevertheless draw attention to the extraordinary demands of a purely theoretic hospitality. These in turn push border policy to not simply settle for a horror-avoiding or supererogatory sense of hospitality.

The parallel between Derrida's theory and Ideal theory is not perfect. His “hyperbolic” hospitality is a far more extreme pole than that found in Ideal theory. Nevertheless, Derrida's distinction is an instructive one for Ideal theory debates. Unlike Ideal theorists, he does not argue that his correlate of Ideal theory must be conducted first or apart from non-Ideal theory. He sees the two as mutually constitutive, at least in the case of Hospitality. Nor does he think Ideal theory is only an occasionally useful tool for political theory, as some critics of Ideal theory suggest. To the contrary: he sees his correlate of Ideal theory as necessary for a sufficiently just non-ideal theory. Derrida's theory thus opens up a new, more conciliatory conceptual space in the debate between Ideal theory and its critics.

Lori Dowell, Siena Heights University / Indiana State University

### Do No Harm: The Ethical Responsibility to Reduce Medication Errors

In her essay, *Notes on Hospitals*, Florence Nightingale strongly advocated for the protection of patients by declaring the first requirement for hospitals is to do the sick no harm. The American Nurses Association Code of Ethics for Nurses serves as a framework that guides the care of individuals, families, and communities. Nurses have an ethical obligation to advocate for patients and protect them from harm, while promoting health, preventing illness, and enhancing patient well-being.

Medication errors are one of the greatest threats to patient safety and harm more than 1.5 million patients per year in the U.S. and continue to negatively impact the health and well-being of patients (Rogers et al., 2017). To reduce errors, the U. S. Food and Drug Administration has established numerous guidelines for safer medication administration. Despite the implementation of safety measures such as bar code scanning, computerized physician order entry, and electronic medical records, errors still exist in alarming numbers.

Medication management is a skill vital to nursing practice that requires mastery, confidence, and critical thinking. A knowledge deficit has been identified as one of the most common causes of fatal errors resulting from the administration of high-alert medications. Who is advocating for nurses who represent the final step in the medication administration process, where preventable errors often occur? Multiple studies suggest there is an unquestionable knowledge gap that results in errors in medication administration and conclude that ongoing education is a much-needed strategy to support nurses and prepare them for the complexity of medication administration.

Medication errors were identified as an ongoing problem at a small acute care hospital that contains 88 inpatient beds. A single-group pre-test, post-test quasi-experimental design research study was implemented to assess the effects of an online learning module on medication safety knowledge and confidence levels of bedside nurses. A pre-test and post-test were administered via an anonymous online survey tool, using a tool created by the author and reviewed by pharmacy and nursing experts at the research site. The intervention included an online learning module addressing common sources of medication errors and safe administration techniques for opioids, insulin, and anticoagulants.

Sixteen (n=16) acute care bedside nurses had a statistically significant increase in knowledge ( $p < .0001$ ) following completion of the online learning module. Despite a slight increase in mean confidence levels for each medication category, the difference following completion of the online module was not statistically significant.

Every step of the medication administration process needs to be critically evaluated for gaps in safe practice. There is an ethical obligation to support both the health care system and the nurses who work diligently to provide safe patient care. The results of this study indicate the potential benefits of providing regular medication safety education addressing safe medication administration. Future research should include monitoring the rates of medication errors for a potential correlation with the learning module. More innovative means, however, will be needed to enhance confidence in high-risk medication administration.

Brian Eckley, Purdue University

#### Personal Foul: Indifference to Native Americans

Much of the discussion over sports teams' use of pseudo-Native-American imagery (PNAI) – team names, logos, and mascots – has been over claims of racism and derogation. In *Simone de Beauvoir and the Politics of Ambiguity*, Sonia Kruks uses Beauvoir's *America Day by Day* to discuss the mode of

oppression she calls indifference. In *America Day by Day*, Beauvoir discusses “the race question” in the United States in relation to Native Americans and Black Americans. Kruks does not specifically mention the use of PNAI by sports teams, but I will ultimately argue that the use of such imagery in sports is a form of oppressive indifference.

In the second section, I will explicate the theory of oppressive indifference that Kruks uses. Like Kruks, I will use Beauvoir’s observations in *America Day by Day* to demonstrate the use of indifference on the Native American’s situation in general. Indifference leads to stereotypes being considered necessary conditions or essential characteristics for membership in a group. Furthermore, indifference is a form of oppression in which the oppressor does not seek out any sort of recognition from the oppressed; instead, the oppressed are completely objectified. This is manifested legally and socially.

In the third section, I will move onto a few examples of sports teams’ use of PNAI and explain how they, specifically, are examples of indifference. Many use racial comparisons to fictional team names such as the Blackskins and the Yellowskins. Part of the task in the third section will be explaining how these team names would incite widespread outrage, but the name Redskins does not. I will also address the University of Notre Dame’s Fighting Irish, which is a common counterexample given in defense of the use of PNAI.

In the fourth section, I will address claims that the sports teams’ PNAI is meant to honor Native Americans, which is a common defense used by sports teams and their fans. More specifically, this defense refers to some teams’ histories behind obtaining their PNAI, such as the Chicago Blackhawks and the Atlanta Braves, which could be reasonably thought of as rooted in honoring Native Americans. Others claim that teams with PNAI can use their platforms as nationally recognized brands to support Native American causes. Still others claim that teams’ PNAI could motivate fans to learn more about Native American culture, and can do so in socially sensitive ways, even if those same teams have failed to do so in the past. In this section we will find that these arguments do not stand up to scrutiny; they simply do not do enough to address the myriad ways that oppressive indifference is promoted by sports teams’ PNAI.

Aaron Franklin, University of California – Santa Cruz

### Metaethical Minimalism and the Challenge of Respectability

This paper will be a discussion of metaethical minimalism in two parts. First, I will analyze the justificatory burdens of metaethical minimalism, i.e. the stance that moral propositions can be true without the existence of truthmakers which ground their truth. I will argue that current versions of metaethical minimalism on offer carry a burden of justification for the reason that they marry minimalism with a rejection of the belief in moral truthmakers. I will argue further that it is not necessary that the minimalist offer this rejection and that their minimalism can consist solely of an attitude of non-acceptance towards the truthmaker theorist’s belief in the existence of moral truthmakers. The crux of my argument will be that we do not have sufficient reason to believe that the truthmaker’s position has prima facie status and that merely holding the attitude of non-acceptance towards propositions which do not have prima facie status does not require an accompanying justification. I call this stance ‘bare minimalism’. The second part of this paper will be dedicated to defending this bare minimalism in the face of a challenge to it that can be found in Donelson (2018). This is the argument that if the minimalist does not accept that there are moral truthmakers, then they can maintain no difference in respectability between moral discourse and those discourses which do not merit our respect an account of their lacking truthmakers. That is, it is not obvious on what grounds the

minimalist could maintain their non-acceptance of the existence of moral truthmakers if they are committed both to the possibility that discourses can differ in respectability and that there are true moral propositions. This is what I call 'the respectability challenge' to minimalism. My response to this challenge will involve showing why the reasoning at the core of the respectability challenge is not decisive in favor of the existence of moral truthmakers in virtue of the fact that one of its central premises is either undermotivated or begs the question against the minimalist. This is the premise that the only plausible way of making sense of moral epistemic access is via an explanatory model of it constructed on analogy with our epistemic access to empirical states of affairs. In the concluding section of this paper, I will gesture towards a counterintuitive claim that, if tenable, would further quash concerns about metaethical minimalism's lack of explanatory power. This is the claim that neither knowability nor respectability calls out for explanation; rather, it is instances of unknowability and unrespectability that call out for explanation. The positive claim that the minimalist then must commit to in order to defend the respectability of moral discourse is a relatively humble one: that we do not have any evidence of the unrespectability of moral discourse.

Simone Gubler, University of Texas – Austin

### The Broken Promise of Public Forgiveness

What role should forgiveness play in public life? In particular, what role should forgiveness play in contexts of transitional and restorative justice – where communities are seeking ways to heal in the aftermath of serious wrongdoing? As a potential mechanism of social reconciliation, forgiveness has significant appeal. It can appear as a possible alternative to retributive justice: in private life, forgiveness is categorical, yields radical transformations in the normative landscape, appears morally appealing, and costs little to pursue. For these reasons, practical roles have been suggested for forgiveness in public contexts. For example, forgiveness has been proposed as a potential goal for institutions aimed at transitional justice and social repair, such as truth and reconciliation commissions. But there are also problems with the promise of public forgiveness. In this talk, I argue that while forgiveness may be an admirable moral accomplishment in the context of private relationships, it is neither an appropriate nor a practical end of state action. I survey three cases of forgiveness that illustrate both what is moving and powerful about private forgiveness, and why it is the sort of thing that we should refrain from seeking to effect, emulate, or facilitate in institutional contexts. These cases show forgiveness in all of its difficulty and strangeness. They move us to recognize that forgiveness has its own temporality that is at odds with that of public processes, that it requires partiality from one person to another, and that it is obscure to observers. These features support my argument that forgiveness will not translate well to projects of transitional and restorative justice – assuming that we want those projects to be effective and to realize basic norms of justice like impartiality, transparency, and nonarbitrariness. The conversation about public applications of forgiveness is an important one to have for several reasons, but perhaps the most compelling of these reasons have to do with social justice. When governments and their agents and agencies attempt to institute analogues of forgiveness in the public realm, when they mimic aspects of the exchanges involved in private forgiveness, when they ask a community to respond in a particular way that reflects forgiveness, they are also engaged in conducting a social experiment with legacies of suffering, often with the suffering of marginalized or persecuted peoples. They are, further, advocating a process that demands the active involvement of victims for its success. And if we take these facts seriously, if we recognize that public advocacy and facilitation of forgiveness is experimental, and that it requires making normatively loaded demands upon the victims of harm, then we will recognize an urgent responsibility to determine whether or not the pursuit of public forgiveness is something that

stands to benefit victims and communities. In this paper, I take up this challenge, and argue that the pursuit of forgiveness in public life is misguided, impractical, and antithetical to justice.

Mark Herman, Bowling Green State University

### Towards Enhancing Moral Agency through Subjective Moral Debiasing

The capacity to act in accordance with one's morality (broadly construed) is constitutive of moral agency. This capacity can be undermined—in whole or in part—by for instance, hypnosis, addiction, or obsessive-compulsion. Another way this capacity can be undermined is through poor moral reasoning. Moral irrationality can frustrate one's capacity to act in accordance with one's morality and in turn, stunt one's moral agency. In a similar respect, improving moral rationality can strengthen this capacity and enhance moral agency. How could moral rationality be improved? The empirical research program on (non-moral) *cognitive debiasing* inspires developing techniques to improve our moral rational capacities—i.e., *moral debiasing*. Yet, moral debiasing presupposes *moral biases*—that is, systematic *moral errors*. As such, the adequacy of moral debiasing depends upon the adequacy of this notion of *moral error*. So, what are *moral errors* exactly? The pertinent kind is *subjective moral errors per instrumental subjective moral rationality* (ISMR). For example, discriminatory acts that violate reflectively endorsed commitments to egalitarianism. Conceptual resources are harnessed from internalist theories of practical reason and subjectivist theories of well-being and the good. This includes drawing from Bernard Williams' *idealized agent* model of internal reasons to achieve extensional adequacy with respect to avoiding putative assessments of subjective moral erroneousness stemming from *mistaken morally-relevant ends* (*a la* avoiding putative internal reasons stemming from *mistaken desires*). Such idealization raises the question of which idealizations to bestow. For example, should the idealized agent be endowed with maximal compassion and/or maximal reverence for authority (qua foundations of moral *psychology* per Jonathan Haidt)? Endowment selection is especially consequential given the extent of preference revision enabled by the divergence of human psychology from prerequisites of rationality idealizations, such as preference-coherence. The solution can be drawn from Connie Rosati's *two-tier internalism* regarding a person's good, which avoids alienating idealization conditions by grounding their selection in the agent's assessments of authoritativeness. Ultimately, this yields the following model of subjective moral errors: agent *A*'s  $\phi$ -ing is a *subjective moral error* insofar as  $\phi$ -ing deviates from *A*'s *genuine* morality—i.e., frustrates *A*'s morally-relevant ends, wherein *A+* is a counterfactual idealization of *A* upon whom is bestowed those endowments that *A* considers morally authoritative under ordinary optimal conditions. The provision of an in-principle standard of subjective moral error lays important theoretical groundwork for future empirical inquiry into subjective moral debiasing.

Bryan Heystee, Memorial University of Newfoundland

### Liberalism, Technology and the Fact-Value Distinction

This paper discusses a 1967 essay by Canadian philosopher George Grant (1918-1988) entitled "The University Curriculum". As part of a broader meditation on "what it is to live in the Great Lakes region of North America," this essay discusses the present state of the university, the activities of those who work in it, and the forces that shape the content of the curriculum. This discussion provides a point of entry for a broader discussion of Western society and its fate, which Grant sees as characterized by technology and liberalism. This paper aims to articulate how Grant understands the relationship between liberalism and technology and the consequences of that relationship. In doing so, it contributes

to a presently limited body of scholarship of one of Canada's foremost public intellectuals and conservatives, and helps elaborate a philosophy of North America, thereby contributing to North American ethical discourse. The paper first argues that Grant believed that liberalism and technology have a circular relationship. Liberalism, understood as the belief that the human essence is freedom, requires technological mastery in order to overcome necessity and make human freedom actual. Technology, understood as the endless drive to mastery and efficiency over all aspects of human and non-human nature, requires the development of the fact-value distinction; this very distinction in turn means that liberalism is the only legitimate political regime. Consequently, liberalism and technology lead to one another and have a circular relationship. The paper then argues that this circular relationship precludes other systems of meaning and thereby ensures that liberalism and technology will dominate in Western society. Inherent in the claims of liberalism and technology is the division of cosmos from human meaning: a person cannot order their life according to a purpose derived from the cosmos because that would contradict the claims of modern freedom. Consequently, pre-modern systems of meaning (e.g. Platonism) become unthinkable from a modern perspective. As a consequence, Western society is politically and morally monolithic, despite liberalism's claims to pluralism. Liberalism and technology ensure that they will comprise the dominant political and moral regime in Western society for the foreseeable future.

Nicola Kemp, University of Southern California

#### The Ethics of Failing to Make Happy People: Why Deontologists Don't Escape the Problem of the Procreation Asymmetry

A problem that has received a lot of attention within the ethics of procreation is how to reconcile the following two plausible ethical claims: (1) there is a strong moral reason not to create people who will live lives of abject suffering, and (2) there is not strong moral reason to create people who will live happy lives. Jeff McMahan christened the conjunction of these claims 'the Asymmetry', and accounting for them within a theory of harms, benefits, and their moral significance has proven extremely difficult. The puzzle, that I will call 'Original Asymmetry', has received a great deal of attention from consequentialists working in the ethics of procreation but has largely been ignored by deontologists. This might be attributable to the belief that there is no puzzle at all if one is a deontologist. Deontology, it might be suggested, is concerned with the ways in which individuals can wrong others. If we were to create the miserable person then our action would have a victim; a person who is wronged. On the other hand, when we fail to create a happy person our act has no victim. I will call this the 'No Victim Argument' for the asymmetry. In this paper I will argue that the No Victim Argument, if successful, requires greater theoretical grounding than might first be thought, and that while it may support a related, deontic, asymmetry, its prospects for establishing Original Asymmetry are much weaker. First, I will consider proposed deontological solutions to the puzzle of the Original Asymmetry that have the appearance of being No Victim arguments. In section 2 I will consider an argument for Original Asymmetry from Johann Frick and in section 3 I will consider a similar argument from Rivka Weinberg in support of a deontic version of Original Asymmetry. I will show that both Frick and Weinberg's arguments are unsuccessful. In section 4 I will argue that the best diagnosis of the failure of Frick and Weinberg's arguments is that, while they have the veneer of a No Victim Argument, they in fact can be more accurately described as 'no subject' arguments, in that their proposed solutions of the puzzle both point to the lack of a subject of any kind if one fails to create the happy life. I show that an argument of this kind will be insufficient in drawing a distinction between the happy life case and the miserable life case. I then draw a rough picture of what a genuine No Victim Argument for a deontic version of OA would look like and gesture

toward how McMahan, (1981) Frick (2014) and Weinberg (2012) it might be defended. In section 5 I consider whether a No Victim Argument for OA could be successful and offer some reasons to think that it could not.

Theodore Lai, University of Chicago

### Taking Responsibility for Injustice: Thinking and the Imperative of Political Action

Iris Marion Young argues that only a socially connected model of responsibility can implicate agents in the wrongs of structural injustice. The issue in such cases of wrong is not of direct willful action, but of individuals who, though possessing no wicked intentions, nevertheless bring about suffering through their actions. While I find Young's model compelling in implicating individuals, I suggest that it may not adequately persuade us to confront our political responsibility and move us to institute collective action. Demonstrating that one is responsible – that wrongs exist in the world and that their actions contribute to it – does not yet do the work necessary for her to take responsibility. Young's model assigns political responsibility to participants of structural injustice, but it may not compel them to adequately address it, since the elusiveness and normalcy of structural wrongs themselves thwart responsive action. This makes the motivation of responsive, political action a problem deserving of its own attention. In an increasingly opaque world, what will drive us to act? Young's readers have recently expressed this same worry over her model's inability to compel action, suggesting that it arises from blind ignorance of responsibility. I argue that ignorance is the ostensible problem behind generating responsiveness, and suggest that these theories hold less potential to succeed because they expect galvanizing responsiveness to be primarily a task of revealing the wrongs that individuals perpetuate on a daily basis and the responsibilities they thereby incur. To theorize with the assumption that a particular form of knowing is what matters is to conceive of epistemological certainty as the crucial factor behind responsiveness. Yet the very demand that we must know of our involvement in the suffering of another presupposes that action is predicated on building a particular store of information rather than fostering a particular attitude toward the world. I propose, by invoking Stanley Cavell, that galvanizing action is not a matter of attaining more knowledge, but of acknowledging the structural wrongs that we know. Cavell argues that we may still deceive ourselves in our relations with others even though we "know" all we need to know about them. Dismantling structural injustice is therefore not a problem of knowledge, where the existence of suffering is brought to light in an effort to dispel ignorance. Instead, it is a task of acknowledging individuals harmed by our actions. What must I do in order to acknowledge my involvement in forms of injustice that persistently frustrates my ability to acknowledge and respond? I argue that Cavell's acknowledgment can be achieved through Hannah Arendt's phenomenological activity of representative thinking. Representative thinking does not simply engage me with a reality that I was previously ignorant of, but also grants me the ability to respond to that reality. As a dialogue with re-presented standpoints, I become capable of performing reactions that are wholly my own, but in response to what others have done. Representative thinking is therefore integral to bringing acknowledgment and motivating political action.

Franco Manni, Kings College London

Herbert McCabe's System of Ethics

Anglo-Irish philosopher Herbert McCabe (1926-2001) wrote an articulated system of ethics, for several reasons: his determination to oppose both the ethical relativism typically widespread in the culture of those times and an ossified traditionalism present in Christian handbooks; also, his commitment to replacing the 'conscience and free will' theory with Aristotelian virtue ethics. Moreover, his interest in revolutionary politics leaned onto a 'tragic' version of ethics, because human good cannot be delivered by a pacific reformist evolution but needs a painful struggle for 'revolutionary' changes.

This integration of these factors seemed indeed original and powerful to Stanley Hauerwas who thinks *Law, Love and Language* "is one of the most important books to have been written in ethics in the last century".

McCabe discusses the classical stands from history of philosophy such as Relativism, Platonism, Stoicism, Kantism, Positivism and Pragmatism, and focuses on some ethical theories that were widespread in the Sixties and Seventies, such as 'situation ethics', 'proportionalism', and 'new natural law theory'. These theories were coping with the flourishing of the so called 'religion of love', to use the words of French intellectual Edgar Morin.

For the philosophers who followed 'situation ethics', the good ethical behaviour has to be decided time after time basing on the real circumstances, without being bound by any alleged 'natural law'. But natural law does exist – says McCabe – even if it is 'minimalistic' and, also, there is language and communication which bound us to one another both in understanding and in behaviour.

However, the moral community is universal only potentially, and in any given moment we are "in the realm of the local"; whereas, the unity of humankind lies in the realm of the future.

McCabe from the Sixties onward admired many aspects of the political revolutions going on in Vietnam, Ireland and Cuba, and, taking the political revolutions as a model, he applies their features to our individual lives: in a moral decision like in a revolution we have to ask ourselves "Who am I?", and we must reinterpret our past life. A moral decision is a difficult process because it is not enough to act differently in the future, but we also need to reshape our past, like a successful revolutionary movement does while considering the history of its country.

Philosophers quite different from each other, such as Alasdair McIntyre and Terry Eagleton, have been influenced by McCabe who was able to make them open to theistic metaphysics and Thomistic virtue ethics without getting rid of their original Marxism

Shaun Miller, Marquette University

### Moral Foundations in Sex Education Curricula in the United States

This paper investigates the moral assumptions of sex education programs in the United States. Current sex education programs do not work. For abstinence-only programs, empirical evidence shows that gender discrepancies are presented as inevitable. For more comprehensive sex education programs, they offer better understanding for our sexual health since it empowers students with essential knowledge such as anatomy and sexual mechanics. However, they are still limited because it fails to discuss many forms of sexuality and gender such as intersex and transgender folks. Most importantly, comprehensive sex education programs fail to address the gender inequality at the root of the problematic power dynamics and heteronormativity. Our current sex education programs focus on a person's behavior, but sexuality is much deeper. I offered my formulation of what sex education ought to be which I refer to as the care of the sexual self: a sense of oneself as a sexual person who is entitled

to have sexual feelings and to make active decisions about sexual behavior, where it is the opposite of “it just happened,” a passive rather than active agent. I use the notion of *áskēsis* to explain sexual subjectivity. *Áskēsis* has been associated with practices related to education or intellectual formation, athletic and military training, spiritual formation, and even the process of artistic creation. In each case, the root meaning of *áskēsis* denotes some sort of formation discipline, an attempt to shape or form the self according to an ideal of goodness or excellence. Using *áskēsis* would help the students actualize their own creative sexual individuality and have a positive affirmation of who they are as sexual beings. A good sexuality education must include the emotions, exercises, practices, and activities to take care of the self. I do so by applying *áskēsis* to three sexual components: the sexual emotions, the sexual mind, and the sexual body. I rely on contemporary philosophers who draw upon the ancient Greeks to focus on *áskēsis*, to train oneself to become an improved human being. I conclude that by applying *áskēsis* such that people can formulate a sexual subject rather than an education that focuses solely on the actions and behaviors.

Nicoletta Montaner, Loyola University – Chicago

#### The Big Chill: Law Enforcement and Intelligence Agencies in the Ethics Classroom

Increased presence of law enforcement in colleges and universities, and in particular federal law enforcement, affects the campus and classroom environments in numerous and sometimes subtle ways. Recent research (Daniel Golden, John Krige, et al.) has revealed a level of penetration of American higher education institutions by agencies, including the FBI and CIA, not seen since the height of the Cold War. This situation poses a number of complex questions for professors and students. Among these, I argue, it poses ethical challenges for philosophy and ethics professors. The goal of this presentation is to develop an understanding of our professional duties as philosophy and ethics educators in a rapidly changing work environment, using the following questions. Question 1: What duties do we have to our students to disclose when federal law enforcement may be present in a learning environment in which students are invited and encouraged to think critically about the norms and laws governing their professions? Question 2: What duties do we have to ourselves and our colleagues in maintaining and defending academic freedom under these conditions? (These are only two of the many ethical questions the current campus situation presents us with.) In offering a way to answer these questions I first present a hypothetical case in which a federal law enforcement employee is enrolled in an upper-division undergraduate applied ethics course. I introduce a conception I call the “professional learning environment.” This is a classroom dynamic that philosophy instructors often strive to create in order to encourage the productive exchange and conflict of ideas among learners in the course of discussion, reflection, peer-review, online forum participation and other group activities. Then, I identify some of the problems the presence of federal law enforcement raises for the students and for the aims of the class as a whole. These speak to question 1. Then I identify the challenges posed for the instructor. These speak to both questions 1 and 2. The presentation aims to generally identify what duties philosophy and ethics professors may have in such cases, and to whom. I will also generally identify the interests of the students involved. Finally, I identify the implications of some different views on the problem.

Daniel Pepe, DePaul University

#### Damaged Goods: Life and Ethical Inquiry Adorno and Aristotle

Adorno famously begins *Minima Moralia* with a perhaps uncharacteristic, universal proclamation that diagnoses the very possibility—or rather impossibility—of ethics today: damaged life. Throughout this internally fragmented text of aphorisms, Adorno offers various elaborations of and critical reflections on the forces behind the damaging experiences of theoretical, practical, and private life in modern society. And while much work has been done on the philosophical, literary, and even sociological merits of those analyses, Adorno's dexterous use of aphoristic writing often seems to deter a more traditional, methodological question: what is the exact conceptual status of this general condition, "damaged life?" Is damaged life a historical presupposition about the failures of modern society, a moral judgment against all hitherto ethical programs within a capitalist society, some kind of negatively deployed normative claim (such as Adorno later formulates the new categorical imperative in *Negative Dialectics*: Auschwitz never again), or something else altogether? In this paper I argue that damaged life is not itself a normative or moral claim, but a theoretical concept that names the internal splintering of ethics as a discourse, that is, when social critique and a society's normative claim to the good life no longer mediate one another. By reading damaged life as a theoretical and not a normative claim, I do not mean to diminish its provocation of and mediation by practical questions, but only that no elaboration of damaged life itself provides a normative answer as to how praxis could cure or rehabilitate damaged life—hence Adorno's understanding of this work as a melancholy science. In order to illustrate what is lost when ethics fractures in this way, I turn to Aristotle's presentation of ethical inquiry in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, because Aristotle consistently presents the intelligibility of the good life or happiness through immanent inquiries of what Adorno would simply call social critique: an account of the given ethical practices of virtue, the principles to which those practices refer, followed by an interrogation of the good life that thereby becomes possible (or not) for human beings. For Aristotle, then, social critique is only meaningful when it operates in an explicitly ethical framework, since it evidences the ethical criteria for judging action under the rubric of a coherent and unified ethos. If the inquiry into the principles behind given ethical practices contradicts a society's image of happiness, then the very practices of self-preservation threaten that which they were meant to preserve, viz., life's capacity for happiness and flourishing (*eudaimonia*).

Ajeng Putriningrum, Western Michigan University

### Sincerity as a Virtue of Truth

Sincerity as a virtue of truth—I will henceforth call it Truth Sincerity—views Sincerity as a virtue that is possessed by a person who says what she believes to be the truth. This account, which is endorsed by Bernard Williams, has a significant bearing on the discussion about testimony since testimony requires the informant to be reliable and Sincere. Thus, Truth Sincerity should be able to set the conditions for how the ideal agent who testifies about truth should be. Nonetheless, Williams's account of Truth Sincerity is problematic because the notion of belief in his account is insufficient for the strict needs of an account of Truth Sincerity. I conclude this paper by claiming that given the problems of belief in Williams's account of Sincerity, it is unclear why Sincerity should be considered a virtue of truth at all.

Walter Stepanenko, University of Cincinnati

### Climate Change and the Limits of Moral Demandingness

Climate change is one of the most pressing moral challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Combatting the effects of climate change requires many people to reduce their ecological impact. However, for many moral

agents making these changes can be quite demanding. In this paper, I ask how much morality can require of agents faced with the demands of climate change. I advocate a view that regards a moral demand as supererogatory when that demand would alienate, confine, compromise the well-being of an agent, or treat an agent unfairly. Distinguishing between an obligation to minimize our ecological footprints and an obligation substantially reduce our ecological footprints, I argue that the former, but not the latter, is extremely demanding and I suggest that this account helps us make compelling, but moderate moral demands in the case of climate change. I concede that limits on moral demandingness should be defeasible, that they may be overridden in some situations, but I argue that for most agents this is not the case, and that for these agents doing the very best thing, even in the case of climate change, would be supererogatory. However, I also insist on the claim that the obligation to substantially reduce one's ecological footprint does not alienate, confine, compromise an agent's flourishing, or treat an agent unfairly and I conclude that agents should seek to substantially reduce their ecological footprint.

David Storrs-Fox, New York University

#### Non-Cartesian Agency and Normative Theory

A Cartesian view in epistemology is one according to which (roughly) we have perfect epistemic access to something, which serves as a foundation for our imperfect access to other things. For instance, a Cartesian epistemologist might think we have perfect epistemic access to states of our own minds, and to minddependent objects like sense-data. Although it is now common to reject Cartesian views in epistemology, a parallel view of action persists mostly unnoticed. A Cartesian view in action theory is one according to which (roughly) we have perfect control over something, through which we exercise our imperfect control over other things. For instance, a Cartesian action theorist might think we have perfect control over certain mental actions (like decidings), and over what we try to do. I argue that most contemporary normative theories work only if a Cartesian view of action is true. I also argue that Cartesian views of action are likely false. So there's a problem – one that afflicts nearly all our normative theorizing. Standard normative theories accept Orthodoxy: what someone ought to do depends entirely on the outcomes the available actions (the options) will (in expectation) lead to if performed. Here I understand "outcomes" very broadly: the outcomes of your murdering someone include all the consequences of the murder, as well as (for instance) the fact that you committed that murder at that time. Both consequentialist and deontological theories are usually sensitive only to what will happen if the agent Fs, what will happen if she G-s, etc. (for all her options). They ignore the chance that she might not manage to F. You might think there's an obvious fix. Instead of taking the options to be F-ing and G-ing, we retreat to trying to F and trying to G (or alternatively: deciding). The theory will then be sensitive to what will happen if the agent tries to F, if she tries to G, and so on. But I argue that for such a move to work in general – and for Orthodoxy to be true – there must be actions the theory can retreat to that we have perfect control over. That is, a Cartesian view must be true. Otherwise, our standard normative theories will not capture all the normatively relevant possibilities of failure. Cartesian views of action are false, and Orthodoxy is true only if a Cartesian view is true. So we should reject Orthodoxy. In closing, I explore potential approaches to normative theory that do without Orthodoxy. It requires more than one paper to develop such an approach in any detail, but my aim is to convince readers that this is a research program worth undertaking. Epistemologists have made great progress by abandoning their Cartesian approach. It is time for philosophers of action and normative theorists to do the same.

William Thai, American University

### Moral Blame and Responsibility: Microaggressions, Implicit Bias, and Racial Injustice

Much has been written about the topic of implicit biases in American culture. More specifically, a discourse around whether people are morally blameworthy and responsible for harboring implicit biases has emerged. Implicit biases are difficult to call attention to, primarily because they are generated implicitly and executed subtly. Particularly, racially biased implicit actions and attitudes can be thought of as a platform to which microaggressions arise. Microaggressions are demonstrated in stereotypical, prejudicial, and biased implicit actions toward marginalized racial groups. They are oftentimes indirect, unconscious, and unintentional. Politically and morally, microaggressions are nuanced actions that perpetuate a constructed racial hierarchy. Microaggressions are nuanced in such a way that microaggressors (people who commit these microaggressions) do not get reprimanded for their actions and consequently do not feel guilt or responsibility because they themselves do not realize they are committing a moral wrong. Although the discourse on microaggressions is scarce, the harmful impact it has on the daily lives of racial minorities is substantial. Joshua Glasgow (Alienation and Responsibility, 2016) argues that the impact of implicit biases are variant, and therefore the criteria to assign moral responsibility is contingent upon the degree of harm caused. Utilizing the initial work of Glasgow, I defend the claim that implicit attitudes and actions, manifested in the form of racial microaggressions, cause significant harm to the victims of the microaggression; in fact more harm than explicit racism and aggressions, and due to the content and impact of that harm, microaggressors should be held to the fullest extent of moral blameworthiness and responsibility. In this paper, I will first give an in depth summary of Glasgow's conception of moral responsibility in relation to victim harm. Next, I will illustrate some examples of racial microaggressions and the harmful impact it has on the victim and on their moral trust. Then I will combine Glasgow's work with the context of racial microaggressions to argue that microaggressors should be held morally blameworthy and responsible for their transgressions, more so than explicit racism and actions. To conclude, I will respond to some common objections against my argument to prove that, although there are valid concerns regarding my thesis, it is nonetheless able to withstand these criticisms.

Jordan van den Hoonard, Memorial University of Newfoundland

### Radically Situated: Using Levinas' Other to Round Out Heidegger's Critique of Technology

Considering how much we center our lives around technology, it seems worthwhile, even necessary, to ask whether its overall impact is positive. There is no question that many people not only interact with technology, but in fact revolve around it. People no longer merely use technology, but actually live technologically. People carry themselves toward the world in such a way that technology determines how they act.

My paper examines whether living technologically has any normative aspect – is living in such a way something we ought to do? This question allows us to examine ethical implications. How does our living technologically affect our relationships? My way into these questions is through German philosopher Martin Heidegger and French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. For Heidegger, living technologically is detrimental to our relationship with the world because we use it to gain access to the world in a way other than how it presents itself. As an example, take a bird so rare that specialists are unsure if any still exist. I can use the Internet to find pictures of it, and suddenly one of the rarest birds in the world is in

front of me. What I am looking at is not a rare bird anymore, since anyone can have access to it. The Internet—a product of our being-technologically—has taken away much of the meaningfulness the bird once had. Through a technological mindset, we understand ourselves to have access to everything.

This is problematic because, for Heidegger, we are situated; we exist at a particular time and in a particular place—in other words, being situated means that we do not have access to everything. Certain things have, not just measured distances, but *meaningful* distances, and when we take away those distances, we also take away their inherent meaning. For Levinas, the most meaningful distance is that between us and other people. Without other people, the self is free to do as it wishes. It can exercise its freedom with nothing coming up immediately against it. But other people do exist and do come up against our individual freedom. When our freedom comes up against these others, they remind us that we are situated, and that things have the meaning they do precisely because they are other than us, especially other people themselves. This notion of things having an inherent meaning beyond us is an important feature of existence. It determines who, and how, we are. It reminds us that some things are beyond our control and understanding. Living technologically worsens relationships with others, I argue. We seem to lose the respect for others we once had because, through technology, we take them to be ours to “own,” as it were. We see them as objects there for us, just as we see everything else. As others seem to actually be forever outside of our grasp, technology cannot change their ontological status. Rather, I argue that living technologically changes how we take them to be, which ultimately changes how we treat them.

### **Undergraduate Students**

Shrijan Amatya, Westminster College

#### Is Existence Always Better Than Non-Existence?

We do not choose to exist. We do not choose our genes, the environment we grow-up in, the type of parents we have, or the religious values we inherit. We do not choose the level of our intelligence, the type of education we receive, the level of our ambitions, or how attractive and well socialized we are. We do not choose the historical circumstances we are born into, nor the political ideologies we come to embrace. Yet we can suffer, and we do suffer based on the arbitrary position of our existence in a society. With genetic manipulation technology, hierarchies and power structures will no longer be based on myths, but on actual biological differences. With manipulation comes some challenging ethical problems, and it is the first time in human history that we can choose what type of persons there should be. Genetic manipulation brings forth many ethical problems, and this especially challenges us with the issues of the cherished values of liberalism, mainly justice and human rights. However, I am specifically interested in suffering and its avoidance, and the goal of this paper is to challenge Derek Parfit's “Non-Identity Problem.” To address the “Non-Identity Problem” I explore the argument that coming into existence is always a harm, and some persons are harmed more than others. After explicating this premise, I will argue that antinatalism is a solution to some forms of Parfit's non-identity problem. Antinatalism is the philosophical position that assigns a negative value to birth. Philosophers like Arthur Schopenhauer, Peter Wessel Zapffe, David Benatar, and others have espoused these views in their different works. I will be exploring the different arguments put-forth by these different philosophers in order to challenge the “axiomatically-true” premise “coming into existence is always good”, and argue that Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) should take actions in order to reduce harms of coming into existence. I am not a pessimist, nor an anti-natalist; I am most interested in refuting the premise

that “existence is always better than non-existence” and then explore bioethical cases in which suffering can be reduced.

T. William Bell, McMaster University

### The Humanity of Morality and Sensitivity Arguments against Moral Realism

Morality is understood to exhibit sensitivity to many human concerns. What this means can perhaps be elucidated by analogy. Human beings are sensitive to injuries we suffer because there's some connection between our bodies suffering an injury and our mental states, usually through pain. An engine is sensitive to pressure applied to the gas pedal via a series of mechanical parts. The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), a test used in psychometrics, is sensitive to the test taker having a personality disorder or not. In all of these cases, the connection is not necessarily perfect. You can show up as a false positive on a personality test, your gas pedal could be broken. Not all cases of sensitivity necessarily exhibit a dependence relation (causal or otherwise) between the relata, at least hypothetically. Malebranche's occasionalism provides an example where future physical states exhibit sensitivity to past physical states, but where there is no dependence relation (aside from nebulous occasional causation) between them. They are instead organized by a third party to be harmonious in advance.

Similarly, human beings are sensitive to moral principles and vice versa. A human being demonstrates sensitivity to morality by having mental states that accord with true moral facts (or their equivalent). These take the form of motivational states, beliefs, dispositions, and attitudes that accord with true moral facts. This means that I am ruling out by decree moral skepticism in its strongest form, as well as any belief that asserts human nature to be essentially evil. However again, sensitivity does not need to be perfect, and so I do not suggest that we are all moral experts either. Morality exhibits sensitivity to humanity because moral ways of organizing tend to accord with our needs as a species and individuals.

The sensitivity of morality is a fact in need of explanation, and if there's nothing explaining it then we're left with a major and unlikely coincidence. Further, this difficulty must be handled at the level of metaethics, and has been handled by many theories. However, moral realism at least in some forms is an exception. It does not have an obvious capacity to explain this feature of morality and this will lead to problems for moral realism, as I will attempt to show. This will shed light on a group of arguments in response to moral realism that I call *sensitivity arguments*, and I will attempt to state them in greater generality.

One difficult feature of this argument however is that it is not a deductive argument, but rather probabilistic. Thus I will need to make this argument in the language of probability. In the process I hope to demonstrate the usefulness of formal tools for the conduct of ethical philosophy, and how this usefulness coincides with rather than conflicts with a vision of philosophy concerned with the manifest rather than scientific image of morality.

Gabrielle Beveridge, Siena Heights University

### Protest Burnout: Re-Thinking How We Go About the Effort We Care About

There is an all too familiar condition that happens when there is a social or political problem that eventually loses attention after an extended period of time where little has changed. The Flint Water

Crisis for example garnered national attention in January 2016 when there was a declared federal state of emergency. The following months brought an outpouring of support to Flint residents, calls for federal and state political action, and more. However, as time went on, support and various causes related to the Flint Water Crisis appeared to dissipate. Flint is not the only example of this type of burn out. “Protest Fatigue”, “Resistance Fatigue” and “Protest Fatigue Syndrome” are similar terms that broadly describe this type of burnout; after spending a great amount of resources on a problem, societal interest declines when solutions are perceived as minimal. It’s not that these issues don’t deserve our attention and support, it’s that burn out gets the best of these movements and little to no changes occur. This not to say that protest burnout is the primary or only reason why there appears to be minimal solutions to large issues, however, I think it’s worth talking about how such a seemingly small problem has large consequences. Of course, there are several theories as to why this happens, but there is a larger discussion to be had about the moral implications of this type of burn out and how we ought to approach it going forward. In the end, I discuss the why having a socially or politically unified moral approach to the protest burnout hopefully yields future solutions to societal and political problems.

Devin Brennan, Central Michigan University

### Error Theory and Intrinsic Value

We all embrace error theories about some domains of discourse: from children’s exclamations about Santa Claus to eighteenth-century chemists’ discussions of phlogiston to ancient Greeks’ proclamations about Zeus. In this paper, I argue for a local moral error theory that maintains that any moral discourse committed to intrinsic value errs. Two large steps comprise my argument for this error theory. The first step is conceptual: I show that some moral discourse, including virtue ethics, hedonistic utilitarianism, and Kantianism, requires that something possess intrinsic value. The second step is ontological: I argue that, necessarily, nothing has intrinsic value. Since intrinsic-value-laden moral discourse cannot succeed without bearers of intrinsic value, I establish my local moral error theory.

Hope Carrane, University of Kentucky

### Live or Let Die: The Ethical Dilemmas Posed by Advance Directives, DNRs, and Suicide

The body of literature pertaining to the ethics of killing or letting die in the context of both physician-aided dying and treating suicide attempts is extensive. However, there is little discussion on the subject of the physician’s role in treatment of suicide attempts when a patient has medico-legal documentation dictating treatment, such as do-not-resuscitate orders or advance directives. I will argue that it is morally impermissible for a physician to honor an advance directive or do-not-resuscitate order if a patient presents following a suicide attempt, regardless of their illness status. I do so by first, exploring the application of end-of-life documentation more generally, then moving to specific case studies that are examples of (mis)application of do-not-resuscitate orders and advance directives after suicide attempts. Ultimately, I argue that the principle of beneficence and acting in the patient’s best interests should guide intervention. To not honor a do-not-resuscitate order or advance directive following a suicide attempt is to allow the physician to enact the most morally permissible framework. Using a framework for patient competency even if it means a short-term ceding of autonomy, is the most beneficent action possible, as it gives the future freedom for a patient to make autonomous choices they believe are in their self-interest.

Alyssa Elaine Dail, Siena Heights University

### Young Adult Literature: Filling the Representational and Ethical Void

Within the walls of the secondary English classroom, one can predict which titles live on the literary syllabus. This is because well-known and widely taught titles reside in the Western Literary Canon. However, the Western Canon fails to represent all human voices and perpetuates many racist and sexist views. It is dominated by the white male voice as, historically, this specific subgroup exclusively maintained the resources and freedom to read, write, and obtain publication. Consequently, the Western Canon asserts ethnocentric 'universal truths' and fails to acknowledge the diverse cultures and experiences that exist in the United States today.

My paper assesses how the teaching of primarily canonical works in the secondary English classroom affects a diverse student population and seeks a solution to provide representational literature for all students. Through synthesis of data, my paper asserts that when students are not represented in the studied texts, they struggle to engage with the literature. Therefore, teaching primarily canonical works in secondary English classrooms leaves many students underrepresented and deprived of a desire to read. This is an ethical issue as reading empowers the mind and provides information—locating and teaching representational literature in the classroom is of utmost importance.

Through synthesis of data, my paper affirms that Young Adult Literature (YAL) offers a plethora of representational literature and diverse authors. Therefore, my paper argues that YAL should be taught to represent modern society and students. I construct my argument by comparing the YAL novel *Dear Martin*, by Nic Stone, with the canonical work *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee, in order to demonstrate that *Dear Martin* provides a more engaging and pertinent narrative for the adolescent audience. Both novels cultivate social consciousness surrounding the topic of race, as both novels advocate for empathy and racial equality. I holistically analyze the novels with focus on plot, characters, and formal elements. Through comparison of construction, I show that *Dear Martin* communicates a more significant and pointed commentary about modern race issues and should be taught in the secondary English classroom.

Through my close analysis of each text, I conclude that *Dear Martin* is representative of modern students and opens a dialogue about race issues for the classroom to research and discuss. *To Kill a Mockingbird* fails to instigate the same level of thought and discussion as it portrays race issues in an outdated way and develops flat characters that perpetuate stereotypes—causing many students to disengage from the text. In order to ethically study *To Kill a Mockingbird*, significant time must be spent analyzing its problematic elements instead of solely focusing on modern and relevant issues like one can while studying *Dear Martin*. Therefore, *Dear Martin* is a more representational and ethical choice for the classroom bookshelf.

Nate Emerson, Ohio Northern University

### Ownership Through Agent-Causation

In this paper, I offer an original account of free will and moral responsibility that reconciles the insights of Harry Frankfurt's 'ownership theory' of free will and Roderick Chisholm's 'agent-causal theory' of free will. According to Frankfurt, free will is found in a person's ability to identify herself with a certain desire through the hierarchical nature of her desires. Frankfurt distinguishes between first and second-order

desires, claiming that first-order desires are desires for a particular action while second-order desires are desires for another particular desire. A person can thus identify with a certain first-order desire,  $D_1$ , if she has a second-order desire,  $D_2$ , to have  $D_1$ . I find Frankfurt's account of free will problematic for two reasons. The first is that it fails to explain why it is that these second-order desires reflect the true self, i.e., it seems unclear why we should believe that second-order desires better represent one's true commitments instead of first-order desires. Second, Frankfurt's account of free will fails to address the 'Whim Problem.' As the name suggests, the Whim Problem points out that a person acting on a whim, defined as the ability to act while neither identifying nor disidentifying with a particular desire, seems to absolve that person of moral responsibility for that action. However, this seems to clash with our intuitions about the nature of moral responsibility, viz., that we should hold a person morally responsible for a decision made on a whim. To account for these problems, I argue that Frankfurt's theory should be modified such that free will includes a causal component. Specifically, I argue that a person is able to freely identify with a certain first-order desire by being the cause of the corresponding second-order desire. This modification retains Frankfurt's key insights on moral responsibility (such as the rejection of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities and his distinction between a willing and unwilling addict) while also resolving the problem of true self identification and the Whim Problem. Next, I appeal to Chisholm's account of agent-causation to explain how second-order desires can be caused by an agent. According to Chisholm, events can be caused either by another event (transeunt causation) or by an agent (immanent causation). Second-order desires, then, ought to be considered immanently caused events under my view of free will.

Valerie Joly Chock, University of North Florida

### The Role of Cognitive Biases in the Moral Permissibility of Nudges

Advances in cognitive and behavioral science reveal that we typically make decisions in virtue of how options are presented (what is referred to in the literature as 'choice architecture'). Choice architecture strongly influences our decisions because we tend to react to a particular option differently depending on how it is presented to us. This claim is supported by many studies which suggest that we often make irrational choices due to the interplay between choice architecture and systematic errors in how we reason—cognitive biases. Based on this data, Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein came up with the idea of a nudge. In their book *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health Wealth and Happiness* (2009), they define a nudge as a small change in the choice architecture that steers people towards certain choices without limiting options and while preserving freedom of choice. A nudge is analogous to a GPS. A GPS suggests the best route, but it doesn't coerce the driver to take that route. Likewise, a nudge influences people to make certain choices without coercion. Nudging is thus, the practice of influencing people in non-coercive ways by changing the choice architecture. 'Choice architect' refers to a person responsible for presenting options. Policy makers, waiters, salespeople, doctors, professors, and web designers are just a few examples of choice architects who nudge. Central to the debate on nudging is the question of whether it is morally permissible for choice architects to intentionally nudge people. Libertarian paternalists argue that this can be the case even when the thinking process being affected is subconscious. That is, even when those being nudged do not realize they are being nudged. However, some object to this answer to the question based on the claim that nudges that do not sufficiently engage our reflective and deliberative capacities are manipulative. My research is concerned with the implications of such objection and how they affect the moral framework of nudging. I differentiate between type-1 (subconscious) nudges and type-2 (conscious) nudges according to the thinking system and decision-

making processes each engages. I then present the libertarian paternalistic defense of nudging. Having done this, I motivate the aforementioned objection by way of an argument that claims that a particular kind of nudges is manipulative and thus morally wrong. After evaluating the objection, I conclude that it is unsuccessful given the different roles that cognitive biases play in type-1 nudges and type-2 nudges. Even though the objection fails, its evaluation raises a challenge for the libertarian paternalistic defense of nudging. It shows that the libertarian paternalistic defense must be supplemented to appropriately distinguish morally permissible and impermissible type-1 nudges. I conclude by supplementing this defense in a way that is compatible with the different roles biases play. My research not only offers an answer to the question of whether it is permissible to intentionally nudge people but also to questions about *how* and *when* it is permissible to do so.