



Stellenbosch
UNIVERSITY
IYUNIVESITHI
UNIVERSITEIT

Book of Abstracts



Philosophical Society of Southern Africa Conference

forward together
sonke siya phambili
saam vorentoe

2024

DAY ONE

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Gaile Pohlhaus (University of Miami)

Revisiting Standpoint Theory and Identity Politics in light of Elite Capture

In *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics (and Everything Else)*, Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò questions the liberatory power of identity politics and standpoint theory, suggesting that the language of identity and standpoint merely shifts attention to elite members of marginalized groups thereby creating new hierarchies instead of liberatory knowledge. In this talk I identify and diagnose what I think is happening in the sorts of cases with which Taiwo is concerned. My remedy, however, is not to abandon the language of identity and standpoint, but rather to re-root these terms within the context of Black feminism. Doing so reveals the importance of what I call “intersectional interdependence” within truly liberatory standpoint communities.

Veli Mitova (UJ)

Decolonial Epistemic-Authority Reparations

According to a novel reparations framework recently developed by Jennifer Lackey, we should take seriously the idea of *epistemic* reparations—‘intentionally reparative actions in the form of epistemic goods given to those epistemically wronged by parties who acknowledge these wrongs and whose reparative actions are intended to redress them’ (Lackey 2022: 62–3). In this talk, I take this framework further by applying the notion of epistemic reparations to the context of epistemic decolonisation. I argue that the key decolonial epistemic reparations are reparations for the undermined epistemic authority of the colonised. I call these ‘decolonial epistemic-authority reparations’ (DEAR), and develop an account of what they involve.

The talk proceeds in four parts. In the first, I argue that DEAR are indeed the key decolonial epistemic reparations, since epistemic decolonisation is, in the first instance, a project of restoring epistemic authority. In the second part, I isolate two key distinguishing features of DEAR. First, DEAR involve an irreducibly collective dimension, so that we need an account of both collective wrongs and collectively reparative actions. Second, unlike other epistemic reparations (such as, for instance, those for a wrongful murder conviction) DEAR are blocked by certain kinds of prejudice, such as racism. In the third and fourth parts of the talk, I pin down the notion of DEAR further by thinking about cases of botched epistemic-authority reparations and cases in which such reparations seem inappropriate. An instance of the former is what I call ‘epistemic authority whitewashing’—putative reparations that undermine the reparative project by making it seem like epistemic authority is being restored while it is, in fact, being sabotaged. An example here is the current status of the South African Traditional Healer Council. Finally, DEAR seem inappropriate in cases in which the original lack of epistemic authority is a clear result of colonial attitudes but since the colonised are in power, the wrong can’t be repaired by the coloniser. In such cases, it is more appropriate to think of what we might call epistemic-authority self-healing rather than reparations.

This account of DEAR is, admittedly, programmatic. But if it is compelling, it will advance both the epistemic reparations framework (which does not talk to the decolonisation literature at present), and the project of epistemic decolonisation (which does not yet canvass epistemic reparations).

Dimpho Takane Maponya (UJ)

Decolonisation and African Feminism: The Nexus of Gender and Race

While it can be argued that there have been considerable developments within the decolonisation discourse generally, my view is that decolonisation, as both a concept and a discourse, is still very limited. While I am sympathetic to the decolonisation project, I take issue with the fact that both the history of colonialism as well as the scholarship of decolonisation are usually presented solely from a race perspective. As a result, neglecting the fact that colonialism was also fundamentally a gendered enterprise. In my talk, I put forward two arguments for the place of African feminism in decolonisation scholarship. The first is that African feminism can provide decolonisation scholarship with the framework for theorising gender, which, I argue, should be an equally important category of decolonisation as race. The second is that African feminism functions within a communitarian framework, which can be related to the identity of Africans. Based on these views, I conclude that African feminism should be advanced and employed as a decolonising force.

Vasti Roodt (SU)

Rethinking the violence in epistemic violence

The project of intellectual decolonization is often presented as a response to the epistemic violence of colonialism. I take 'epistemic violence' to mean the disregard or contempt for knowledge claims which do not comply with putative Eurocentric norms of reason and knowledge. In this paper, I consider whether conceiving of epistemic norms as a type of violence is an aid or a hindrance to the argument for decolonization. This inquiry has a critical and a constructive component. On the critical side, I show that the concept of epistemic violence relies on a spurious analogy between injurious physical force and the activity of reasoning. Since this analogy does not hold, the concept of epistemic violence lacks explanatory value and therefore cannot serve the critical and liberatory aims for which it is employed. The second, constructive part of the argument focuses on the minimal criteria for conceptual adequacy and a possible approach to intellectual decolonization that would not depend on a flawed concept of epistemic violence.

I begin by fleshing out the notion of "cognitive freedom" as an aim of intellectual decolonization and show how this freedom can be impeded by the concepts that shape our reasoning. The next section gives a brief overview of the origins of the concept of epistemic violence and its role in contemporary decoloniality literature, before showing that (a) this concept lacks epistemic value and therefore (b) cannot serve the emancipatory aims for which it is commonly employed. Following this, I consider possible criticisms of my argument and show why they do not convince. The concluding part of the paper proposes an alternative conceptual frame for the project of intellectual decolonization, together with the kind of self-critical approach to concept formation that would be a hallmark of cognitive freedom.

Pedro Tabensky (RU)

The Rise of the Hustler State

I have for many years been trying to understand the rise of corruption in RSA and across the continent, and I have had conversations with many on related issues. I include on this list Thabo Mbeki, Alec Erwin, Njabulo Ndebele, Trevor Manuel and, very recently, Thembi Nkadimeng. They have all helped me piece together the puzzle. There is plenty of corruption elsewhere, but the type of corruption that cannibalises nations is more widespread in Africa than elsewhere. I think I am finally ready to give an account, basing myself to a significant extent on Primo Levi's Auschwitz memoir, *Is This a Man* and insights from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. I also explore how student apathy is related to this. At the heart of my analysis is what Fanon describes as the "pecking order" logic brought about by hunger and denigration and ossified into life habits even after the conditions of its inception are long gone. Much of the denigration story is about how colonialism humiliated Africa and how global capitalism keeps this legacy alive. I hope to be able to give some general outline of how to regain sanity.

Kiasha Naidoo (SU)

(Re)constituting Being: Two Moments in Black Consciousness Philosophy

When we are interested in the ontological conditions of the subject, we look to the world and find subjects thrown into a world of (and produced by) the creation of race. Césaire (2000) described the colonial subject as *thingified*, Fanon (2008) sought to describe the relegation of the black subject to the zone of *non-being*, and Manganyi (1973) writes of *Being-black-in-the-world*. Balibar (2017) describes this marginal mode of Being as *ill-being*. As I read it, *ill-being* a concept which insists on the clarification that what Fanon refers to as *non-being* is not an actual ontological condition, but an imposed apprehension of the subject — the misapprehension of the Black subject as deficient at the level of Being. Considering this alongside part of the philosophy of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) as gleaned from Biko's (2017) *I write what I like*, allows us to see this misapprehension as occurring on two levels: the misapprehension of the self as inferior, and the misapprehension by the other of the Black subject as inferior. I would like to suggest and develop the idea that BCM philosophy can offer us two dimensions of and moments of resistance to the construction of deficient ontology. The first seeks to address the internalisation of this supposed deficiency, and the second is the moment of solidarity and reciprocity. This may be one way to understand Butler's provocation as to "manner of touch" (2015: 197) which may reconstitute Being.

Nolwandle Lembethe (WITS)

Standpoint epistemology as a response to hermeneutical injustice

Traditional epistemology does not consider our situatedness as a feature of the epistemic process; in contrast, standpoint theory claims that where and who we are in the world determines our place as epistemic agents. Our situatedness determines the validity of our claims and speaks to our credibility as knowers. Drawing from various works in standpoint epistemology, I aim to give credence to knowers on the margins of the epistemic process who, through

hermeneutical injustice, are given less credibility than those who espouse dominant epistemic ideals. According to Fricker, hermeneutical injustice occurs when a particular group is excluded from the collective meaning-making process, and this exclusion forces marginalised groups to be well-versed in the dominant epistemic process while navigating their alienation. I aim to show how standpoint epistemology can fill the gap created by hermeneutical injustice to allow those on the margins to see the epistemic picture from both inside and outside, thus allowing them a richer insight into the epistemic process.

Mary Carman (WITS)

Explanations of emotional actions: A parallel between virtue and emotion

A growing consensus in philosophical work on emotion is that emotion is best understood as a *sui generis* 'intentional feeling', whereby the intentional and affective elements of emotion are intricately intertwined. Increasing attention is also paid to how emotions can contribute to rational action when considered as intentional feelings. A related question that has yet to be comprehensively addressed, however, is how these insights affect *explanations* of action. Addressing this question, in this paper I argue that emotion explanations do not fall under the two standard types of action explanations making use of emotion found in the literature, where either the true content of the emotion is sufficient to explain the action or where the emotion is needed to identify how the agent is aware of the content, true or not. I do so by drawing on parallel insights from John McDowell's (1979) argument that virtue is the reason for a virtuous agent's action, which lends itself well to a conception of emotion as intentional feeling where emotion is the reason for an emotional agent's action. If citing an emotion in an action explanation is identifying both the reason content and the motivational element of the agent's reasons for acting, as I argue, then we cannot explain the action without citing the emotion, but neither is the emotion awareness of content in a traditional manner. Because of this, we must treat emotion explanations as a distinct form of explanation.

Andrea Hurst (NMU)

The significance of the will in philosophic transformation

Contemporary advocates of transformative philosophy must take account of our complex contemporary landscape. Briefly, Edgar Morin usefully contrasts complicated and complex phenomena. Concerning complicated phenomena no decisions are necessary (a decision in principle changes the original conditions that warranted the decision). Instead, such phenomena only require calculations (which work out stable, however intricate, relations between elements). Complex phenomena require decisions under conditions of uncertainty where rational calculation between equally viable alternatives is impossible. Such decisions regularly come down to expressions of will. Hence the question of will in transformative philosophy may be formulated as that of how to exercise the will wisely under conditions of practical complexity. In considering this question I believe that existentially orientated thinkers in a domain between philosophy and psychoanalysis such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Freud, as well as more contemporary thinkers such as Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, and Deleuze draw upon ancient philosophies to offer intriguing insights into the nature of the will, wisdom, and the exercise of the will. I find value in the ancient distinction between will and the passions, where the passions encompass external forces or the psychoanalytic concept of "drives" (including emotions, persuasion, Eros, Thanatos, and the drive to "be", articulated as the life and death urge to be recognised). Will, by contrast has something intellectual in it, although this is something other than reason. Following Lacan, I propose that will, as synonymous with desire, names the "passions" insofar as they are articulated in language. Will/desire has an intentional structure, although it is not straightforwardly the conscious expression of our passions. It exists in the interplay between the conscious and the unconscious, as it is influenced by unconscious fantasies, symbolic meanings, and the workings of the symbolic order that are often inaccessible to direct conscious understanding. While reason can temper or modify the will, it can also be overpowered by the will. Similarly, the passions or drives can influence the will but can also be overpowered by it. Thus, the concept of "will" entails freedom as the capacity for decision-making. Traditionally, the will is associated with choosing actions based on our attraction to what is apprehended as good and repulsion of what we consider to be evil. However, I agree with Deleuze that the will is not inherently oriented toward the good, as there are clear instances where we recognize the good but lack the will to act upon it. Conversely, individuals may knowingly engage in evil actions. I also propose to take the Socratic notion of wisdom seriously: the more you pursue knowledge the more you know that you do not know, and I would add, following Nietzsche, that this self-awareness should be accompanied by benign humor. In the context of contemporary complexity, I suggest that the will always manifests as the will to power, broadly defined as desire for the power to act upon something, to bring something into being, to take it out of being, to modify or change something, to make something or somebody react or act, to make something happen – ultimately in order to "fix" the world according to the way you think it should be. I propose to explore the idea, following Nietzsche, that exercising the will wisely entails a wholehearted commitment

to pursuing your will to power, your desire to correct things, up to the point where you must relinquish it, because, precisely through the pursuit of your will's object you come to see that benign self-ridicule is the most appropriate response to it.

Sarah Wright (University of Georgia)

Epistemic Reparations as Restoring the Epistemic Relationship with Self

In this paper, I explore three ways in which our epistemic relationship with ourselves can be damaged by sustained epistemic injustice, before turning to the ways that epistemic restoration can help us to repair these harms and develop virtues needed for a healthy epistemic self-evaluation.

Firstly, our epistemic relationship with ourselves can be damaged when we are blocked from a proper understanding of ourselves by counter narratives in a dominant story. Jennifer Lacky focuses on a "right to be known" as a central element of epistemic reparations. While this could be understood as only a right to be known by others, I argue that it can be naturally extended to a right to be known by oneself and epistemic injustices interfere with this right.

Second, we may suffer a credibility deficit to the self. While the literature on testimonial injustice has tended to focus on the credibility deficits that hearers ascribe to speakers, there are other relevant and disabling credibility deficits. I have recently argued that credibility deficits to the self can be just as harmful as, and perhaps even more pernicious than, credibility deficits assigned by others. Continued denial of one's own experiences by the larger culture or by the official narrative can cut off or corrupt our own self-trust. When I fail to take my own beliefs seriously enough, I am epistemically insulting myself. When I do so on the basis of an identity prejudice, this treatment of myself has features relevantly parallel to the elements of Fricker's account of testimonial injustice. It should, as a result, be treated as an epistemic self-injustice.

Third, on some views in philosophy of language, continued epistemic injustices can even cut us off from our very participation in public language, as so undermine our justification for a wide range of experiences. Keith and Adrian Lehrer give an exemplarization account of how our experiences connect to our concepts. They go further to explain how exemplarization connects us to public language, insofar as the meaning of our public language terms relies on the exemplarization of many individuals. If one's exemplarization is rejected and does not become part of the make-up of a public language term, then one's use of that term is not anchored in one's own exemplarization. This brings the justification of one's assertions in the communal language into question because that are not appropriately grounded in one's own experiences.

In response to these three harms of the relationship to self through epistemic injustice, I propose that we consider how particular acts and practices of epistemic reparations work to restore the epistemic relationship with self. In general, we can see that epistemic reparations help the recipient develop

Nancy Daukas's virtue of epistemic trustworthiness. This is a virtue of self-evaluation which can help those possessing it to use epistemic reparations to heal above harms of epistemic injustice.

Josh Platzky Miller (UFS)

Three Alternative Sources of Philosophical Insight

As an academic discipline, philosophy has a reputation for being the preserve of 'dead white men'. This is changing, especially in South Africa since the #MustFall movements from 2015 called for the decolonisation of education. Nevertheless, it remains the case that many philosophy departments and professional philosophers draw primarily on conceptual resources from a largely Euro-American, male canon. This paper suggests three alternative sources to the canon, which sometimes overlap and intersect with one another. In doing so, I argue that there are significant philosophical contributions to be made by more deeply engaging with such sources' insights.

The first source is well-known, although remains somewhat marginal to the disciplinary core, namely feminist philosophy, and more generally the historical contributions of women philosophers. Although such sources have, to an extent, been integrated into mainstream philosophy over the last half-century, it remains something of an 'add-on': often offered (if at all) as a separate course for undergraduates, rather than integrated into, for instance, core courses on ethics, political philosophy, or epistemology. As such, the history of feminist philosophy's integration into the mainstream provides instructive lessons for the two further sources.

The second source is commonly referred to as 'Non-Western' philosophy; or perhaps more accurately, philosophy from the majority world. There has been increasing interest in this vast area over the last few decades, and particularly the last 10 years. However, this too has often remained somewhat adjacent to or disconnected from the mainstream. Insights from global traditions are not only interesting in their own right, but moreover offer important contributions to all existing areas of philosophical inquiry, from Fanon's contributions to political theory, to Abanindranath Tagore's contributions to aesthetics, to Graham Priest's engagement with logical systems originating in South Asia.

The third source is rarely engaged with in academic philosophy, namely insights from social movements. Usually seen as too involved with 'political' and 'here-and-now' questions to be of much philosophical value, I argue that social movement intellectuals have in fact offered numerous significant contributions to our philosophical understanding. This applies not only in more obvious areas like ethics and political philosophy, but also in metaphysics and ontology (especially via critical philosophy of race), epistemology (standpoint theory, for instance), and even in areas like the history of philosophy. Indeed, much feminist philosophy today has its roots in women's movements and the insights generated therein – and as such also offers lessons for how to ethically engage with philosophical issues raised by social movements more broadly.

If philosophy is to rise to the challenges of the 21st century and beyond, we must be wary of parochialism and prejudice masquerading as universal insight. Engaging ethically with philosophical ideas from these three sources is a vital way of doing so.

Ben Kotzee (Birmingham University)

Finding a way

According to Stanley and Williamson, knowing how to do something comes down to knowing a way how to do that thing. As Stanley and Williamson put it, S knows how to do some kind of thing ϕ if there is a way w to do ϕ and S knows that w is a way to ϕ . (2001: 425)

In this paper, I argue that Stanley and Williamson's idea that know how consists in knowing the way to do something is wrong in a number of important cases. I hold that it is possible to know how to do something without necessarily knowing, in advance of doing that thing, how one is going to do it. I show that in many cases of practical knowledge, the know how consists in being able to discover a way to achieve the task in hand - either in a way that is completely new or in a way that needs to be adapted to a certain situation. Drawing on a number of examples concerning problem-solving, discovery and improvisation, I hold that it is sufficient for knowledge how to do something if one knows how to find a way to do that thing.

Based on this observation, and building on work by Ryle (and latterly, by Hornsby and Noë) I hold that more than the knower who knows how to do something in a specific way, we admire the person who can experiment, innovate and improvise; more generally, I hold that the successful practical actor is someone who can find a way to solve new, unpredictable or unfamiliar problems. This kind of knowledge, I hold, cannot be explained well in terms of knowledge of 'ways' to do things.

Casper Lutter (NWU)

"Kill the Boer, kill the farmer!" Possible hate speech re-evaluated within a poststructuralist perspective

During a recent populist gathering in July 2023, Julius Malema chanted "Kill the Boer, kill the farmer!" Malema, a showman of note, could not, however, be prosecuted for (the crime of) hate speech as the Equality Court ruled in his favour that this utterance, despite being extremely offensive to whites in general, does not constitute hate speech. In essence, the court held that since the intention of the author (Malema) was a cultural expression and not intended as such to lead to actual killings, the utterance is legitimate. In particular, Malema claimed that the song refers "to a system of oppression." The matter is currently on appeal and remains sub judice. This, in any event, was the comment of Cyril Ramaphosa, South Africa's sitting head of state. At a time when moral guidance is needed, we find ourselves sorely lacking. Against this background, I decided to re-assess the rationale behind the Equality Court's decision. I argue that from a post-structuralist perspective (notably the work of Lacan and Derrida), the intention of the author was/is, or will, become irrelevant when the signifier (the utterance) in focus undergoes translation across numerous contexts. The notion of the 'signifying chain' is a revolutionary insight of Lacan's following on logically from his ranking of the signifier over the signified. Ideas have an uncanny ability to create context-dependent meaning, due to the former's 'unstable' surplus value. It follows then that the potential import/impact of an idea, as it is re-interpreted within different contexts, can never be exhausted. I conclude that in philosophical terms, the transplantation of the signifier to new contexts can never depend solely, if at all, on the intention of the author and for this reason alone, Malema's utterance should be regarded as hate speech since it has the potential to instigate genocide.

David Spurrett (UKZN)

The Priority of Preferences in the Evolution of Minds

More philosophical effort is spent articulating evolutionary rationales for the development of belief-like capacities than for precursors of desires or preferences. Nobody, though, seriously expects naturally evolved minds to be disinterested epistemologists. We agree that world-representing states are unlikely to pay their way without supporting capacities

that prioritise from an organism's available repertoire of activities in light of stored (and occurrent) information. Some concede that desire-like states would be one way of solving this problem.

Taking preferences as a starting point instead of beliefs, I defend two conclusions. First, psychologically real preference states, which approximately token expected utilities, have a quite general evolutionary rationale. They are a solution to the problem of efficiently allocating capacities with incompatible uses. This argument is a version of the Environmental Complexity Thesis.

Second, preferences can plausibly function and naturally evolve without belief-like states, even though the converse claim is incredible. Preferences, that is, can mediate between discriminations of occurrent states ('internal' or 'external') and the processes selecting activity. By tokening expected utilities of actions conditional on discriminated state, they can increase the rate at which the 'right thing' is done at appropriate times, and they can do this without the support of belief-like, world-representing states. Preferences, even incomplete and noisy sets of them, are a fuel for success that will tend to be favoured when environments are complex in ways that matter to an organism, and when the organisms have complex behavioural repertoires with heterogeneous returns and costs.

Simon Beck (UWC)

The Puzzle of Parfit's Puzzle-Cases

Derek Parfit opens his watershed discussion of personal identity in *Reasons and Persons* with a thought experiment. In the course of the discussion, he introduces close to twenty more. Though he also makes appeal to actual cases, the use of fictional ones is the most striking methodological tool that he wields. By itself this is not surprising – the use of thought experiments has marked the personal identity debate since Locke began its systematic treatment. What is puzzling, however, is Parfit's description and related defence of his method. I will argue that the defence he offers in the face of envisaged criticisms is inadequate. But I will go on to argue that this inadequacy does not matter since the method he outlines and defends is not one that he actually employs to any significant extent, and it is certainly not the one operating in his most important cases. I will scrutinize his actual methods in the central thought experiments and suggest that they are far more easily defended.

Mikael Janvid (Stockholm University)

Appraising Analytic African Epistemology

This paper addresses the much-discussed relation between analytic and African philosophy with special focus on ordinary language philosophy as a representative of the former. Barry Hallen and J. Olubi Sodipo famously carried out such a project as a contribution to African (and analytic) philosophy in their classic book *Knowledge, Belief, and Witchcraft. Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy*, which I shall devote special attention to together with other works by Hallen alone. Critics of the adoption of analytic philosophy within African philosophy often rely on a too narrow characterization of analytic philosophy. Often criticism is directed against the claimed universalism of analytic philosophy. By contrast, I argue that analytic philosophy does not consist of any unique set of theses (or informative disjunction of such). Hence no inherent incompatibility arises either in general or with respect to the ordinary language approach in particular. The result of the appraisal will be a plea for further exploration of analytic African epistemology, and especially the ordinary language approach, but without any claim of exclusivity. A pluralism of approaches both within and outside of analytic philosophy should thus be encouraged. The paper goes on to offer further reflections on the ordinary language approach suggesting fruitful elaborations and areas of inquiry in the spirit of Hallen's ground-breaking project to complement, and on occasion correct, his account of Yoruba epistemic practices.

Dimpho Moletsane (UJ)

Fact Checks and Context Notes: Regulating Trust In The Digital Free Market of Ideas

"Fact-checking", conceived as a tool to counter mis/disinformation, is an emerging practice in our digital age characterised by rampant misinformation and disinformation. The primary objective of fact-checking is to supplement our informational intake with reliable and accurate data, thereby nurturing a well-informed and rational society in its decision-making. Fact checking, then is an intervention into how society acquires knowledge and determines the truth of statements. Recent empirical investigations into fact-checking, however, have yielded concerning results.

It appears that the mere act of fact-checking has the potential to engender a negative bias among readers, leading them to be sceptical of the content under scrutiny - regardless of the factual accuracy of the information being fact-checked. This phenomenon finds itself alongside other related preexisting apprehensions surrounding fact-checking, such as the "chilling effect," where individuals resort to self-censorship fearing their content might be fact-checked and

thus avoid discussing certain topics, as well as “backfire effects,” making individuals become more entrenched in their beliefs when confronted with contradictory information. These effects of fact-checking may contribute to a fragmented information landscape where people choose to believe what aligns with their existing beliefs, irrespective of fact-checks. Thus, fact-checking, intended to provide accurate information to the public, might inadvertently contribute to further polarisation and decreased trust in information sources.

For my presentation, I aim to undertake a philosophical inquiry into the theory and practice of fact-checking and investigate its impacts on the information and trust commons. By delving into the unintended consequences, I shed light on how this well-intentioned practice might inadvertently erode the foundation of reliable information and the trust it engenders. Additionally, I investigate potential remedies and strategies to address these challenges, striving to strike a delicate balance between veracity and scepticism, towards a more resilient trust and information ecosystem.

Nine-Marie van Veijeren (SU)

Social media, political polarization, and democracy: A non-ideal virtue epistemological approach to our epistemic norms

I investigate the epistemic grounds upon which the relationship between social media, political polarization, and democracy is understood. Much of the literature on this topic maintains that political polarization undermines democracy (particularly understood as deliberative democracy) by obstructing free, open communication in the public sphere, thereby inhibiting the flow of information, and eliminating ground for agreement and decision-making.

By turning to epistemologies of ignorance, I develop a non-ideal conception of epistemic virtues in order to investigate the epistemic value of “free, open communication in the public sphere” as well as open-mindedness as traditionally understood. I put forward that the above view of political polarization as harmful towards deliberative democracy largely depends on idealized conceptions of epistemic obligations – in particular toward free speech and open-mindedness. By developing a non-ideal, relational understanding of these epistemic norms, I offer grounds for a more nuanced view of the effects of social media and political polarization on democracy.

Jean du Toit (NWU)

Freedom in an algorithmic future – An embodied conversation

The increasing sophistication of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine intelligence (MI) technologies, the proliferation of remote work and online leisure activities, and the ubiquity of social media has resulted in the increasing digitalization of our contemporary societies. Concurrently and steadily algorithms thus serve to structure the embodied subject’s potentialities, raising pressing questions regarding the individual’s capacity for freedom of thought and action.

This paper draws on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. For Merleau-Ponty, freedom arises in a temporal field that describes the exchange between the world and our embodied existence (the latter of which includes acquired habits and sedimented life choices). This field of freedom provides a general structure for existential obstacles, and ways through, for the individual.

Since the body-subject is fundamentally intertwined with digital technology through the flesh (*la chair*), we find that the use of digital technologies renders the field of freedom uniquely altered. The algorithmic presents a general structure of the world that is predicated on instantaneity and perceptual regimentation, as may be seen in the use of predictive text and other forms of algorithmic processing of language (*parole*). Algorithmic constraintment of language use delimits existential ways of being, highlighting how digital technologies serve to alter our potentialities for freedom. But Merleau-Ponty describes language as a bodily gesture, as a dynamic and co-created ‘singing of the world’ that serves to uncover and articulate the emotional core of our worldly perceptions and significations. The act of speaking and using language entails the recognition of unique experiences and perspectives – it is a form of freedom that allows for the exploration of new ways of being in the world. This paper argues that embodied conversation, finding a voice in both offline and online worlds, is needed to maintain and enhance our capacity for freedom of thought and action in an algorithmic future.

David Doat (Catholic University of Lille)

The Paradoxical ontology of vulnerability: a conceptual and normative reevaluation

Vulnerability has been the subject of numerous works in the human sciences, philosophy and ethics over the last few years (Levinas, Honneth, Butler, Gilligan, Nussbaum, Tronto, etc.). From feminist theories to theories of care, from the sociology of risk to political philosophy, the theorization of the concept has enabled us to appreciate its critical scope (Garrau, Brodiez-Dolino). The prism of vulnerability has not only opened the way to questioning the liberal anthropology that underpins classical conceptions of the social contract. It also laid the foundations for a genuinely

inclusive political philosophy and moral theory of vulnerability, which are not found in modern theories (Maillard, Nussbaum, Tronto).

However, pioneering work on the conceptualization of vulnerability has only qualified its content from the point of view of its essentially negative etymological, semantic, biological and phenomenological "matter". Indeed, the word "vulnerability" is generally taken to refer to any sentient being whose dependence on the environment for subsistence or the flourishing of its capacities, exposes it negatively to various risks of injury (biological, psychological or social), loss of well-being or catastrophic alterations which, in moral or political theory, call for protection, support and prediction (Fotaki, Virokannas et al., Petherbridge, Pelluchon). While such an interpretation of vulnerability is perfectly correct as a starting point for the study of its political and social implications, the aim of my presentation will be to show that it remains insufficient.

Contrary to its most widespread meaning today, I wish to emphasize why vulnerability does not simply ontologically expose life to harmful consequences, the anticipation of which imposes on human beings the moral obligation to prevent them. Indeed, I will demonstrate that vulnerability is also fundamentally significant in a positive sense, constituting - despite the negative risks to which it exposes us - one of the conditions (not sufficient, but necessary) for any possible evolution of beings (Lambert & Rezsöhazi, Pommier, Jonas). In short, if vulnerability characterizes the state of beings exposed to anything that might damage their "conatus", I aim to show why the concept also paradoxically refers in its very essence to an active power that positively conditions any process of empowerment and/or fulfillment: the power of beings that possess the recursive capacity to affect their form, i.e. to expose themselves to heterogeneous or endogenous transformations that contribute to their unpredictable becoming.

Whether vulnerability therefore has an active and a positive dimension depends on a reassessment of the concept's etymological, semantic, biological and phenomenological ("experiential") foundations. These are the various milestones of my presentation, which will lead me step by step to conceive of vulnerability as an essential quality of living beings, characterized by an intrinsic ontological ambivalence whose consequences have not yet been sufficiently highlighted in philosophy, care ethics and the feminist literature (Mustaniemi-Laakso et al., Pulkkinen, Mackenzie et al., Molinier et al., Nussbaum). Because these effects have gone largely unnoticed, studies that place vulnerability at the heart of their concerns remain somewhat exposed to criticism from their detractors, and sometimes pave the way for biopolitical and securitarian ideologies that confiscate the capacity of individuals to expose themselves to risk and give birth to unpredictable creations.

Awongwa Gcelu (RU)

Human Ontological Vulnerability: The Alteration of Culture and Identity in the Face of Cultural Devastation

In my thesis, I will address how, in the face of cultural devastation, people can retain their cultural identity and originality. I will address this problem by, among other things, exploring Steve Biko's idea of how a truly integrated society ought to look like. I am particularly interested in his suggestion that oppressed populations ought to be granted the opportunity to express their identities in mainstream society. I will also explore Franz Fanon's influential discussion of the veil, where he argues that cultures are dynamic and everchanging. The important thing for Fanon is that change must be driven by members of oppressed groups rather than by the imposition of dominant groups, even if those groups may, in instances, be right.

My central aim will be to explore whether there is an alternative that is neither nostalgic of a past that will never return nor assimilationist and hence defeatist.

Lindsay Kelland (RU)

Vulnerability, heteronomy, and ethics: "The heteronomy of our mutual vulnerability"

We are inherently vulnerable creatures—that this is so, how it is so, and what follows from this fact has been the subject of much philosophical thought. In this paper, we are interested in what recognizing our vulnerability means when thinking about certain ethical questions in our contemporary social milieu. One of the central questions guiding ethics is 'how should I/one/we live.' Here, we want to think about our vulnerability—the place and consequences of vulnerability and heteronomy in our lives—in relation to questions of how we should live as embodied subjects in the world with others. Exploring how we relate to others when it comes to questions of social justice and fundamental disagreements around what constitutes the 'good' and 'right,' we argue that the ways in which we live with others ought to be informed by the acknowledgment, even affirmation, of the vulnerability at the heart of the human condition. Furthermore, we argue that this recognition should lead us toward a kindness that refuses the temptations of self-righteousness and 'cancel culture.'

Matthias Pauwels (NWU)

On “Remaining Barbarian” (Yousfi) as an Anti-Racist/Colonialist Aesthetico-Political Strategy

In 2022, French journalist/activist Louisa Yousfi published an extensive essay entitled *Rester Barbare* (La Fabrique éditions) translatable as “remaining/staying barbarian.” An aesthetico-political manifesto of sorts, the essay boldly intervenes in the perennial debates in France on the integration of its many minorities which are the offspring of long-term migrational patterns rooted in France’s troubled colonialist-imperialist past. In the lives and works of francophone “postcolonial” novelists (most prominently, the Algerian Kateb Yacine), black American writers (such as Chester Himes and Toni Morrison), as well as French rap musicians with an migrational background (Peace N’ Lovés, Booba) Yousfi detects and traces a persistent theme and strategy of resistance which consists of nurturing and deploying a “barbarian” sensibility in opposing persistent forces of anti-Arab and anti-black racism, as well as Western cultural imperialism.

In this paper, I shall first explicate Yousfi’s interpretations and arguments which – other than her essay’s sloganesque title might suggest – involve intricate distinctions between the barbarian and savage, between “becoming” and “remaining”, etc. I shall then proffer a more general formulation of the cultural-political oppositional strategy highlighted by Yousfi in terms of a *strategic barbarism*, i.e. the strategic adoption of the “barbarian” register by artists from racially or colonially oppressed groups as a means of resisting or fighting their oppression. I shall then interpret the striking contrast and tension between this strategy of barbarism and more established theories and practices of anti-racist and anti-colonialist struggles – and recognitional, emancipatory struggles more generally – that, inversely, posit the efficacy of demonstrations by oppressed groups of their equal humanity, civility or dignity to the oppressor, taking French philosopher Jacques Rancière’s work as exemplary of the latter. Finally, I will discuss some possible cultural applications of strategic barbarism in contemporary anti-racist and decolonial struggles in South Africa.

Gideon Owogeka Onah (RU)

Neither Absolute Nonviolence nor Violence are Ethically Justifiable: Clarifying an Aspect of Camus’ Philosophy of Rebellion

Suppose humans have intrinsic dignity, and we have a corresponding primary universal duty to respect and protect it. Would that make nonviolence absolutely ethically justifiable and violence absolutely impermissible? While people imbued with the above supposition tend to respond in the affirmative, Albert Camus suggests a contrary, underexplored and ill-understood paradoxical yet logical response. Imbued with the noted conviction on human dignity and its demands, Camus argues that neither absolute nonviolence nor violence can be ethically justifiable. However, he argues that violence may be permissible practically speaking on a minimal scale, although it is not so from an ethical point of view. This essay explores the logical consistency of Camus’ position, demonstrating its superiority to the alternative inference made by advocates of absolute nonviolence.

Schalk Gerber (SU)

Violence and the Zone of Non-Being in Achille Mbembe

What, philosophically speaking, constitutes the violence par excellence of colonialism, and what is the implication thereof for philosophy? This paper seeks to outline Achille Mbembe’s understanding of the violence par excellence of colonialism in his reading of Franz Fanon’s description of the degradation of African subjectivity to the zone of non-human. Mbembe’s reading situates this violence in the denial of the moral status of the African subject that logically justified other forms of exclusion like economic and political. Mbembe’s reading is thus contra the more popular Sartrean-inspired reading that situates violence in the denial of the economic and political status only. It will be argued that Mbembe’s description of the denial of moral status takes place before the Hegelian dialectic of the lord and bondsman. The African subject in this view is reduced to that of a slave, whose moral status is denied and who therefore cannot enter the dialectic. This interpretation is consistent with recent interpretations of Fanon and Mbembe in that the description implies that the Hegelian dialectic is not applicable to the postcolonial context since it places the African subject as failing to enter the dialectic. However, in contrast to these readings, it will be argued that this is not due to the misleading French interpretation of Hegel’s dialectic with the terms master and slave, but rather due to Hegel’s own definition of the slave’s lack of moral status, which he connects to the African subject. Moreover, the argument will be made that this reading is crucial for two reasons: first, as it defines Mbembe’s reading of violence within colonial and postcolonial Africa; and second, that it also situates the primacy of the question of rethinking ethics as the point of departure of decolonial thought within the African context.

Elisa Galgut (UCT)**Psychoanalysis and Moral Psychology**

I defend the relevance of psychoanalysis to moral psychology with reference to the work of Melanie Klein. I argue that the concept of the depressive position is helpful as an account of self-actualisation, as it explains integration and harmony - factors relevant to a moral theory - as a psychic achievement. Klein's account of the depressive position also explains the importance of the good and loving parts of the self succeeding in ameliorating the bad or persecutory aspects. Klein's theory of the mind is essentially relational: internal objects are constructed via fantasies of internalisation of, and identification with, the other. This provides a natural way of explaining that what is good for the self in terms of desire-satisfaction turns out to involve a harmonious integration of self with others.

Although Klein's account of the depressive position seems to involve normative elements (harmony, integration of the good and bad), I argue that this is not question-begging. Klein's account is minimally normative, especially since we can cash out notions like 'good' and 'bad' in psychological terms with reference to feelings and desires. In addition, Klein credits the depressive position as being necessary for the successful integration of the subject with external reality, and Richard Wollheim notes that such self-integration will express itself in 'external creativity and achievement'. This minimal normativity serves as a bridge to a more fully developed moral theory in a way that seems intuitive, while also keeping in view the foundations of such a bridge in empirical psychology.

Carla Turner (Fort Hare)**Human Brain Organoids: The Philosophical Dilemmas of Creating Consciousness**

Human brain organoids (HBOs), or human cerebral organoids, are lab-grown cultures made to replicate parts of the human brain as closely as possible, and are proving incredibly valuable for scientific and medical research. At the moment, these organoids are short-lived and lack blood vessels and other structures of the human brain, yet they show coordinated electrical activity. Considering the speed at which this research is developing, questions about the likelihood that these organoids could have, or could develop conscious experiences start to arise. With that, concerns about the ethical nature of this type of research emerge, since consciousness is generally considered morally significant, in that it allows for thoughts and feelings, possessed by a type of entity that can be morally harmed. In this paper I will address three main philosophical questions around HBO's: Firstly, I will consider if there is a likelihood of consciousness developing, in parts of a structure (the human brain) that we know can produce consciousness, yet at the same time these parts are not embodied and have no traditional sensory experiences. Secondly, I will look at how one would measure this consciousness, considering both that there is no objective standard for measuring consciousness, and that an organoid has no clear means to 'communicate' or otherwise demonstrate consciousness to us. Finally, I will consider what kind ethical consideration we should give to something that could achieve consciousness in this new and perhaps completely unique way, and what this would mean for ethically conducted research in future.

Jens De Vleminck (KU Leuven)**Peace Through Law? Freud Between Kelsen and Schmitt**

This paper scrutinizes Sigmund Freud's 'Why War?' (1933) by taking it as the focal point to explore the Freudian conception of violence. According to Freud, violence is intrinsically connected with the constitution of right. What is at stake in Freud's reflections is this very specific dynamic relation of violence and right, being equally important in his dispute with Albert Einstein. The debate between Freud and Einstein is problematized by confronting it with the legal philosophy of Hans Kelsen. It is argued that Freud subscribes to both Einstein's and Kelsen's liberalism in order to radically criticize it. Based on his own conception of right as a temporary incantation of violence, Freud subverts the liberal thesis of 'Peace Through Law', using arguments that show great affinity with some of the ideas of Carl Schmitt.

Nomaswazi Kubeka (UJ)**Linguistic Justice as an Epistemic Reparation**

The lack of usage of indigenous languages and the dominance of some languages today is arguably a linguistic injustice. This injustice becomes clear when we acknowledge the historical facts that have led to the marginalization of some languages. One of the beliefs at the core of discussions concerned with the language loss and the imminent extinction of indigenous languages that are marginalised, is the belief that language is inextricable to any community, including epistemic communities. Such that when a language is removed or disappears from this community, then something fundamental is lost. While philosophers and linguists alike agree that something fundamental is lost when we lose our language. The question remains: What is lost when we lose our language? Could what is lost be the ability to make oneself known and to be known? What Ethan Nowak (2019,2020) shows is that part of what is lost when we lose our language, is the speech act possibilities of agents of that epistemic community. Using Nowak's framework, can linguistic

justice be understood as an epistemic reparation? (Lackey,2022) In this talk, I argue that linguistic justice, understood as: encouraging the use of indigenous languages for epistemic agents in epistemic communities, is a kind of epistemic reparation that promotes the freedoms of agents after suffering an epistemic wrong. This development has promising insights for those concerned

with linguistic injustice and who encourage language preservation. It also expands theories on epistemic reparations, to consider how epistemic reparations can empower epistemic agency for victims of an injustice.

Shené de Rijk (UJ)

Toxic Positivity as a Form of Epistemic Injustice

Toxic positivity is a relatively recently identified phenomenon. Toxic positivity occurs when people are positive and optimistic to a degree that is unreasonable in a given situation, and as such make others (or oneself) feel as if their own (less than positive) feelings are invalid or in some way wrong (Corp 2021, 18-19; Al Bawaba 2022, n. p.; Mecking 2022, n. p.; Cherry 2022, n. p.). First, I argue that toxic positivity has some distinctly epistemic features. In the first place, when the victim of toxic positivity articulates their negative experience, they have privileged access to the knowledge about that experience. In the second place, the perpetrator of toxic positivity tries to alter the victim's belief about their negative experience or reaction to that experience. In effect, this means that the victim is denied self-knowledge since their perception of a negative experience, even when it is reasonable and justifiable, is distorted. Second, I argue that the denial of self-knowledge harms the victim of toxic positivity in their capacity as a knower (Fricker 2007, 20), which constitutes an epistemic injustice. This injustice takes the form of denying self-knowledge which prevents the victim from fully comprehending their experiences and processing them in an appropriate manner.

Gontse Lebakeng (UJ)

Being at Home in Philosophy

One of the ways the epistemic injustice literature investigates racial and gender-related injustices is in the context of silencing practices. So far, a common thread in the literature points to structural barriers as the reason marginalised groups struggle or fail to participate effectively in the academic space. However, are there cases where these structural barriers covertly prevent members of marginalised groups from participating in academic spaces? In this talk, I explore a possible response to the question by looking specifically at academic philosophy in South Africa. I aim to explore the structural issues that render it difficult for marginalised groups (with a specific focus on black female students) to get into and remain in the discipline. I argue that the harms stemming from historical injustices affect black female students academically and professionally. This harm leads to a twofold silencing that black female students might experience in academic philosophy. This first is external silencing – an overt form that stems from acts of pushback and other structural difficulties they might experience. The second is internal silencing, which occurs because these structural features cause the already oppressed to internalise these oppressive structures.

Tess Dewhurst (RU)

Fregean Puzzles and the Object of Knowledge

In epistemology, it has largely been presumed that the object of knowledge when we make knowledge ascriptions like 'Susan knows that it is raining outside', the thing that Susan knows is the true proposition 'it is raining'. In this paper I will argue that knowledge does not take propositions as its object. When Susan knows that it is raining, it is the rain itself that she is aware of. Knowledge is of 'the world', and not the propositions that describe it. I will defend this claim by showing how Fregean puzzles in semantics pose a metaphysical threat to the idea that knowledge takes propositions as its object.

Joachim Nicolodi (UCL)

Philosophy without Language: A Further Objection to Wittgenstein's Metaphilosophy

Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy – especially the claim that there are no real philosophical problems but only confusions in our use of language – has sparked a heated debate, quite literally. Almost legendary is now the episode where Wittgenstein threatened the young Karl Popper with a fireplace poker during a discussion at Cambridge when Popper dared to criticise his theory. The aim of this paper is similar to Popper's, namely criticising Wittgenstein's bold claims about the nature of philosophy. I want to do so, however, by introducing a completely new argument that has been missing from the literature so far: With a thought experiment, I aim to show that it is perfectly conceivable that language and philosophy can come apart, something that radically contradicts a key assumption in Wittgenstein's argument. Of course, due to the limited scope of the paper, some premises of my argument are bound to remain rather

general, but it still offers a new outlook on the debate and I hope to be able to flesh it out in more detail at some future point.

Ragnar van der Merwe (UJ)

William Whewell's hylomorphism redux

William Whewell's 19th century philosophy of science is seldom discussed. There is, however, a key feature of Whewell's view that is prescient of later developments, notably in pragmatism. This feature is what Whewell (1840) calls the "fundamental antithesis of philosophy". It is an antithesis between subject and object, between mind and world. It relates to the key philosophical question "what is the nature of the relationship between mind and world?" Following Kant, Whewell thinks of this antithesis in terms of the hylomorphic synthesis of form and matter. Subject (or mind) is the form and object (or world) is the matter that jointly constitute the identity of all things.

Whewell refers to his form/matter antithesis as an "illustration" or a "metaphor" for the relationship between subject and object. He uses the example of a die. Ivory is the substantial matter and cubeness is the structural form of the die. The former is sensed, while the latter is conceived. However, the ivory cannot be separated from the cube. Although form and matter are conceptually distinct, they are inextricably entwined in the ontological make-up of things.

I argue that Whewell's form/matter antithesis (aka hylomorphism) offers us a cogent way to think about the subject/object or mind/world relationship. It may be a useful metaphor for those who (a) find both strict realism and strict anti-realism about the external world untenable and (b) consider past attempts to explicate the interaction of mind and world unconvincing. Recourse to metaphor may, then, be a viable option. Whewell's account presents a plausible middle way between realism and anti-realism. This is reminiscent of experience pragmatists like Cheryl Misak's (2014) notion that subject and object merge in experience. I contend that the hylomorphic metaphor offers a plausible way for pragmatists and like-minded thinkers to express how mind and world interface and merge without recourse to metaphysical speculation.

Hylomorphism is enjoying something of a revival in the current literature. Derivates have recently been developed in philosophy of quantum theory, philosophy of biology, and philosophy of mind. However, most hylomorphists utilise the mereological tools of analytic metaphysics, tools that pragmatists aim to avoid. Contemporary hylomorphists also largely overlook the applicability of hylomorphism to the relationship between mind and world. A reboot of Whewell's hylomorphism – a hylomorphism specific to the mind/world relationship – can make a novel contribution to the topical literature. It might offer a way to explain how mind and world interface and entwine without invoking supervenience, bridging laws, or type/token identity relations.

Aragorn Eloff (NWU)

The new Library of Alexandria: machine learning and the individuation of knowledge in the 21st century

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty argues that "[t]he world is inseparable from the subject, but from a subject which is nothing but a project of the world, and the subject is inseparable from the world, but from a world which the subject itself projects". This notion of the recursive becoming of subject and world significantly influenced Simondon's work on individuation and the pre-individual field – the idea that there is a phase space of unactualized differential potential implicit in, anterior to and exceeding any given ontology. This profoundly novel perspective allows us to conceive of being as the more-than-individuated, i.e., in terms of its multiple real but unactualised becomings, a view that has influenced everything from Deleuze's philosophy of the virtual to physicist Stuart Kaufman's new ontological status of *res potentia* to enactive cognition's recent theorisations of the ontogenetic possibility spaces that form part of bodies as ongoing processes of adaptivity and sense-making. These various philosophies of individuation are most frequently modelled using the resources of dynamic systems theory, which maps out the potential becomings of systems as traversals of vector fields describing energy landscapes and attractor-repellor distributions in topological spaces. Contemporary machine learning models, while not frequently modelled using dynamic systems theory, can be understood in much the same way as complex, iteratively adapted weighting distributions in high-dimensional parameter spaces where the use of a model – generating an image in Midjourney or text in ChatGPT, for instance – entails the actualisation of a trajectory in a vector field as a form of individuation. Said otherwise, machine models trained on vast corpuses of human knowledge and creative labour can be viewed as pre-individual fields of knowledge and labour, and to use them is to trigger processes of ontogenesis and individuation. This has serious implications for how we think about the ontological status, production and sharing of knowledge. If machine learning models are our new Libraries of Alexandria but the knowledge stored in them is in the form of a pre-individual differential field of potential becomings instead of discrete actualised products, how do we conceive of authorship, property, ontological identity or the creative act? Do they represent a new and enhanced antagonism between the means and relations of production? Is it possible to produce the truly new from the statistical aggregation of extant human knowledge? What

ontological and epistemological frameworks are sufficient for meaningfully understanding the relationships of reciprocal priority between CNN's, LLM's and meaning making? If subjects are a project of the world and that world is increasingly projected via the vast potential spaces of generative adversarial networks and large language models, are we at risk of being locked into a closed onto-epistemological loop? In this presentation, I outline the novelty of the philosophical questions posed by machine learning and propose, via Deleuze and Simondon, one way in which we can become better authors and librarians of this new ontogenetic library.

Karabo Maiyane (NMU)

Robots and dignity from an Afro-communitarian perspective: an evaluation

One of the often-cited reasons against the use of technologies with artificial intelligence is that such a use would undermine human dignity. It is argued that the successful use of such technologies, especially in the context of care robotics, is often associated with deception, manipulation, humiliation, surveillance, and infantilisation, to name a few. The use of these robots, it is argued, undermines the dignity of the patients who use them in that it disrespects their autonomy and treats them as means to ends and not ends in themselves. Western conceptions of dignity, such as Kant's and Nussbaum's, are salient conceptions used to conduct such evaluations. This paper proposes an Afro-communitarian conception of dignity as another plausible conception of dignity to consider when evaluating the impact AI technologies could have on human dignity. The paper evaluates capacity-based conceptions of dignity championed by Metz, Ikuenobe and Molefe to ascertain which would be best suited to conduct such an evaluation. It argues that although these conceptions do well in laying a foundation for a plausible conception, they each have some shortfalls. A plausible African conception of dignity suitable for evaluating the impact of AI technologies on human dignity must be inclusive, based on capacity, protect individuals' rights, promote communal values, and ensure respect for all with capacities. The paper will illustrate how a modified version of Metz's and Molefe's conceptions would be suitable for such an evaluation.

Stefan Gruner UP

Aristotle's "Sea Battle" Scenario: A Matter of Strict versus Lazy Evaluation

Aristotle's famous "Sea Battle" scenario [in: *de Interpretatione IX*] has kept philosophers busy until the 2nd half of the 20th century. The problem is that, according to Aristotle's classical *tertium-non-datur* (TDL) logic, the *disjunctive* assertion "tomorrow there will be a sea battle *or* tomorrow there will be *no* sea battle" *must* be true even if it is unknown today whether there will be any sea battle tomorrow. Because Aristotle's own TDL logic *seemed* to imply a peculiar *determinism in the course of history*, which Aristotle rejected on metaphysical grounds, Aristotle found it necessary to give up the fundamental TDL principle as soon as any formal-logical assertions were "materially loaded" by "*future contingencies*". We see here that Aristotle was not yet entirely able to separate formal syntax from material semantics: the semantics crept back into the syntax through the backdoor of ontology.

In the 20th century this problem was formalised and treated typically by means of various *modal logics* (whether in the form of temporal/tense logics, epistemic/doxastic logics, or otherwise), or in the form of *higher-order predicate logics* in which material-linguistic terms such as "unknown" and "known" (with a "natural" epistemological semantics) can be introduced as special higher-order meta predicates (about predicates), or in the form of "*non-monotonic*" logics in which it is possible to reason formally with "exceptions from the general rules".

Such higher-level formal treatment seemed necessary because the classical assertion ($X \oplus \sim X$) is a tautology only in bivalent TDL logics over a Boolean set of truth values $B := \{t, f\}$. As soon as the *trivalent* Kleene truth table over the semantic value set $K := \{t, f, u\}$ (with *u* for unknown) is used, the formula ($X \oplus \sim X$) does *no* longer represent a tautology – in line with Aristotle's own (albeit not yet entirely formalised) considerations concerning "tomorrow's sea battle". Thus: if the interpretation $I(S)$ of the sentence $S :=$ "tomorrow there will be a sea battle" is *u*, then $I(\sim S) = u$, too, such that eventually also $I(S \oplus \sim S) = u$ according to Kleene's "strict" interpretation (to which Aristotle might have agreed if he had known the modern logicistic formalisms). However: Modern mathematics and computer science have *also* shown us plausible and valid ways of *circumventing* the conundrum by means of *non-strict* interpretations (a.k.a. "*lazy evaluation*"). When these methods are taken into consideration we can formalise "tomorrow's sea battle" quite "cheaply" – rather than being forced to deal with this problem "expensively" by way of Modal or Higher-Order or Non-Monotonic logics.

In this talk I will demonstrate the methodological analogy of three selected examples to Aristotle's "sea battle" scenario ($X \oplus \sim X$) in order to illustrate the difference between "strict" and "lazy" evaluation. All examples show how a conventional choice of operator precedence leads to different evaluation results.

DAY TWO

Ntobeko Shozi (UKZN)

A report on Africanising philosophy of disability

Philosophy of disability is a relatively new field of study and research in philosophy. This field critically examines various philosophical questions related to disability including its nature, experience, and social, political, and ethical implications. However, it is observable that this field is of current mostly constructed through the lens of Western disability tenets, discourse, and epistemologies. Up until very recently, African philosophers made only passing reference to the topic of disability. Having been preoccupied with questions about the legitimacy, character, and methodology of African philosophy for a very long time, African philosophers have too often failed to address central aspects of life. The uphill battle to include inquiry concerning class, race, colonialism, sex, gender, and sexuality is an obvious example of this. So is the exclusion of serious philosophical reflection concerning disability. Despite this challenge, philosophical discussions on disability among African philosophers have become common in the last six years. In this paper, these discussions are outlined and reviewed.

Lauren den Besten (SU) & Louise du Toit (SU)

The Scoliotic Subject of Philosophy: imaginary for a new ontology and ethics

This paper is based on Lauren's thesis project that ventured to reimagine the body posture of the philosophical subject as inclined and scoliotic, as opposed to vertical and erect. Reading Adriana Cavarero's books (esp. *Inclinations and Horrorism*) together with feminist disability theorists like Garland-Thomson, Lauren demonstrated how traditional imaginaries in the west 'disabled' the female body and feminised (and thereby devalued) the so-called disabled body. Lacking, deviating and falling away from the norm of upright muscular masculinity, emblematic of the (philosophical) subject freshly emerged from the Platonic dark cave, the 'abnormal' body-posture of inclination characterises beings not cut out for philosophical discourse: a line-up of figures such as women crouching in birth, suckling babies, caring for ill bodies, or inclining outwards in desire; but also the crooked spine designating 'disability' or old age, and the curvatures of animal bodies. Fearing and denying its own fleshy weaknesses, the philosophical subject objectified and distanced (through gazing at the sex object and staring at the monster), then denigrated, violated and exploited those designated ontologically inferior. The two main aims of the paper are to first use body posture as a lens to expose the violences committed in the name of "Homo Erectus", and second to reimagine philosophy, by turning to the singular creativity of the Scoliotic Subject of Philosophy.

Amandine Catala (University of Quebec)

Nothing about Us without Us: Identifying Principles of Justice for Emancipatory Participatory Research in the Context of Neurodiversity

The neurodiversity movement has long advocated for "Nothing about us without us" or the necessity of including Autistics in the production of public policies, social discourses, academic knowledge, and scientific research about autism. Similarly, the scientific and academic community is increasingly recognizing the importance for participatory research to be not only ethical but also emancipatory. Yet the call for "Nothing about us without us" is still too often ignored, inaccurately understood, or imperfectly applied, in ways that can be jarring and disrespectful at best, and violent and traumatic at worst. In this paper, I argue that, beyond a call for formal inclusion, the call for "Nothing about us without us" is first and foremost a call to reclaim epistemic authority and agency. Focusing on the experiences and testimonies of Autistic academics and self-advocates who have participated in studies on autism, I develop a proposal for how the principle of "Nothing about us without us" understood as reclaiming epistemic authority and agency might best be implemented in emancipatory research with Autistic adults. Specifically, I turn to two frameworks that have so far been developed independently of each other, yet that prove to be particularly fruitful when used together in this context: namely, the framework of design justice and that of epistemic injustice. Drawing on these two frameworks, I identify four principles of justice so that participatory autism research can be conducted in both an ethical and an emancipatory manner that heeds the neurodiversity movement's call for "Nothing about us without us" – namely, the principles of thorough involvement, of nonnormative communication, of trust-building, and of accountability.

Yolandi Coetser (NWU)

Towards an ecofeminist animal law: Second wave animal ethics and South African Animal Law

It is the case that animal law reform still has a long way to go to convince lawmakers that animals ought to enjoy legal standing. One way in which extant legal frameworks are challenged to consider the inclusion of animals is through the

use of philosophy – more specifically, animal ethics. For example, the work of Peter Singer, Tom Regan, and Gary Francione is often used to consider moral arguments for the legal standing of animals. These views are classified as ‘first wave animal ethics’ (Offor, 2020: 269). There is, however, a second wave of animal ethics, which some argue are better for grounding animal law (Offor, 2020: 269). Where first wave animal ethics are liberal-rational, acontextual, and considers animals’ similarity to humans as a basis for moral consideration, second wave ethics rather focusses on differences between human and non-human animals. Second wave ethics engages with (intersectionally) marginalised communities to seek alternative paradigms (Offor, 2020: 295). Second wave animal ethics often arise from these non-dominant spaces, and is embodied by feminist, intersectional, poststructural, Marxist, posthumanist, and postcolonial approaches, amongst others.

It is also the case that there is a particular geographical context in which this conversation is uniquely suited to take place, due to its long history of oppression: South Africa. However, an entire category of beings was all but entirely left out from the considerations of the constitution’s authors – animals.

In this paper, I question whether an ecofeminist ethic can provide a unique lens through which to consider animal law reform in South Africa. An ecofeminist approach begins by questioning the oppressive conceptual hierarchies prevalent in Western thought “which categorise women, animals, and nonsentient nature on the same devalued side of the dualism, serve to oppress women along with nature in a vast array of similar ways” (Slicer 1996, p. 101). This oppressive hierarchies are present in most legal systems too. In this paper, I further unpack ways in which an ecofeminist lens assists in reconsidering the place of animals in South African law. I argue that an ecofeminist ethics already has the central tenets that provide a novel way to philosophically engage law in South Africa.

Liezl van Zyl (University of Waikato)

Empathy and Wonder in Animal Ethics

In this paper I explore the role of two basic moral capacities - empathy and wonder - in cultivating the virtues that are necessary for flourishing with other animals. Empathy, understood as the imaginative capacity to see and experience the world from another's perspective, forms an essential part of many traditional (inter-personal) virtues, such as compassion, benevolence, generosity, and honesty. Thus, it seems obvious that in order to extend these virtues to non-human animals, we have to begin by extending our capacity to empathize with them, by imagining and sharing their feelings of fear, joy, frustration, and loneliness. Story-telling, for example in documentaries like *My Octopus Teacher* (2020), play an important role in this regard. However, empathy also has several shortcomings when perceived as a component of moral and intellectual virtues. We cannot really imagine what it is like to be an octopus, and our clumsy (though well-intentioned) attempts to do so often invite the charge of anthropomorphism. This can distort our understanding of animals and prevent us from acting in ways that are truly benevolent. The focus on empathy also supports a hierarchical view of the animal kingdom, one that favours species that are more like humans while devaluing creatures that are too different. I argue that these problems can be avoided by cultivating, alongside empathy, a capacity for wonder. Unlike empathy, wonder is a response to difference, where the subject is captivated by, and comes to appreciate the uniqueness of another being. Rather than competing with empathy, wonder complements it. Together, these two capacities play a significant role in cultivating virtues such as compassion, benevolence, generosity, and respect for animals.

Carin Robinson (UKZN)

‘Empirical revision’ revised. A case for a truth conditional account of revision.

The research problem addressed in this paper is that ‘empirical revision’ has not been more effective in the ongoing debate about whether there is an analytic-synthetic distinction. ‘Empirical revision’ is supposed to be useful for this debate as it should be able to illustrate the empirical significance of truths which are confirmed or rejected on empirical grounds. Doing this, supposedly, provides a marker for how to know which truths are synthetic and which analytic.

It is argued that a confusion arises for ‘empirical revision’ as a delineating criterion because, 1. all truths are revisable but 2. not all revision is empirical. The method used to show this is, firstly, to present four formulations for ‘revision’, two empirical and two non-empirical, and, secondly, to identify the most correct formulation for each proposition-specific case of revision. Doing this moves sharply away from the current tendency to try and assess the revision criteria for whole systems – which is not useful to a debate about propositional truth.

The conclusion is that, when keeping revision truth condition specific it is possible to distinguish between analytic and synthetic truths.

The implications of having found a way to distinguish analytic from synthetic truth bear on a range of other debates about, for instance, the character of logical laws, of metaphysical claims, of deductive argumentation, of tautological truth and even the character of moral statements.

Fabio Tollon (Edinburgh University)

Responsibility gaps and Technology: old wine in new bottles

Recent work in philosophy of technology has come to bear on the question of responsibility gaps. Some authors argue that the increase in autonomous capabilities of decision-making systems makes it impossible to properly attribute responsibility for AI-based outcomes. A prominent point of discussion is the very existence of such a gap and whether possible solutions can or should be found in order to close it. In this paper we argue that one important, and often neglected, feature of recent debates on responsibility gaps is how this debate maps on to old debates in responsibility theory. More specifically, we suggest that one of the key questions which is still at issue is the significance of the evidence from the reactive attitudes, and how these ought to feature in our theorizing about responsibility. In essence, then, we provide a descriptive argument in which we claim that much of this relatively new debate can be reduced to a much older debate in responsibility theory. The implications of this reduction are that those interested in this debate would do well to pay more attention to the history and development of responsibility theory since P.F. Strawson. Significantly, we also argue that reflection of this kind yields analytical clarity with regard to what is at stake among various interlocutors within this debate.

Tanya de Villiers Botha (SU)

LLMs, chatbots, and online search. What could possibly go wrong?

Various players providing online search services, both established and emerging, seem to be betting on large language models that generate information relevant to a user's query as the future of online information retrieval. Given the demonstrable current limitations of such systems, not least of which is their tendency to hallucinate and our tendency to anthropomorphize them, the question arises as to whether general LLM-based internet search agents are a good idea, especially in the short term. In this paper, I assess the potential risks of LLM-based search agents, and weigh them up against the potential benefits. My main focus is on contexts where users engage in online search informationally—i.e. where they search for accurate, factual information on a particular subject. While researchers in other fields have already pointed out some of the potential pitfalls of this approach, a systematic analysis of the potential risks and benefits has not yet been done. Given the immense epistemic value of the internet as a repository and source of information, and the immense dangers posed by a misinformed public on a variety of high-risk topics, such as health and politics, it is imperative that this lacunae be addressed. Here I argue that two fields in philosophy are well-suited to contribute to such an analysis. Firstly, valuable work has been done in the field of applied social epistemology on the epistemic impact and value of various practices on (and off) the internet, starting with Goldman's excellent and prescient analysis of the early internet. Secondly, the field of AI ethics has drawn on the extensive resources from both the long normative ethics tradition and the comparatively more recent developments in applied ethics to distill an outline of what requirements AI and related systems would need to fulfill in order to be considered ethical. I go on to draw on both fields to develop a more comprehensive picture of the potential risks that LLM-based search agents might pose. Overall, I argue that presenting LLM-based search agents as all-purpose, general experts poses significant epistemic and moral risks and that the onus therefore falls on those deploying these systems to demonstrate that the potential benefits of these systems outweigh the risks. More specifically, I argue that while LLM-based search agents may pose relatively low risk in certain contexts, their deployment as general search systems is epistemically and ethically concerning. I conclude with some remarks on ways to mitigate the risks identified.

Ke Yu (UJ)

Ambiguity of trusting AI: implication from trusting things, humans, technology and animals

Trust is primarily and predominantly a relationship between human beings. Given that AI is not human, it would be inappropriate to conceive trust with AI like we do with other human beings. However, AI is also not merely things (like a calculator) where our expectation in terms of their function is relatively fixed. This paper proposes that this ambiguity of treating AI as an object (subject to rules and expectations that govern objects) and as a human (subject to human and social expectations and rules) is the fundamental reason accounting for our ambiguous attitudes towards AI. In other words, we propose that this ambiguous trust is a manifestation of humans' muddling conceptualization about and relationship with AI, with AI's increasing embodiment of human(like) characteristics (e.g. capability, adaptability), our increasing emotional attachment to it and simultaneously our rejection of AI as (or better than) human and inability to assign other key typical human characteristics to it (including accountabilities and social norms).

By revising the main characteristics of trust in the human realm, trust in things (reliability as it is often called), the history (& increasing ambiguity) of trust in technology (from more primitive to the more advanced technology), as well

as trusting in another domain which is also in between things and human (animals), we distill key lessons and insights for trusting in AI.

Mark Rathbone (NWU)

A phenomenological analysis of un/employment and the critical role of the impartial spectator and inoperativity to resist anthropological reductionism

In this paper the work of Giorgio Agamben and Adam Smith on the phenomenology of un/employment is critically analysed to explicate alternative non-reductive perspectives on labour. This analysis follows Agamben's argument that Smith's invisible hand is the basis of his providential economics that provides a point of departure for governmentality and market control. This perspective has important implications for labour and our view of un/employment because people can be defined, valued and reduced as part of the labour market. A person can be defined as being employed or unemployed and according to Agamben this can only be transformed by inoperativity. However, contrary to Agamben's analysis of free market economics, Smith's does support an alternative view of labour, value and personhood in his book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) that resists reductionism. The basis of this alternative view is Smith's introduction of the impartial spectator which resists anthropological reduction, amongst others. The reason for this resistance is because the impartial spectator is not controlled by providence but rather part of the natural ability of people to assess situations in conjunction with others. I will argue that the impartial spectator and Agamben's inoperativity are important to understand the labour market, its limits and the tension between employment and unemployment that embraces a life affirming understanding of un/employment and its deconstructive nature.

Tamia Moodley (UKZN)

Phenomenology and Ectogenesis - Redefining Motherhood

The traditional understanding of motherhood is deeply rooted in the biological process of gestation and childbirth. However, ectogenesis challenges this notion by providing a technological solution that enables embryos to develop in an artificial womb. By shifting the focus from the physical experience of pregnancy to the nurturance and care provided by the individual who raises the child, ectogenesis presents a new perspective on motherhood one that I seek to explore.

In Part 1 (Phenomenological accounts), I outline accounts from the writings of Edmund Husserl and Iris Marion Young; I show the original development of the phenomenology of pregnancy. The main upshot of my analysis of these thinkers is to draw attention to the importance of the paradigmatic shift in considering the pregnant woman not simply as a utiliser of ectogenetic technology but as an embodied self, as a mother. Part 2 (Space and Time of Pregnancy) stands as an exercise in the epoché, critiquing common depictions of the pregnant body and pregnant temporalities. I advocate a re-thinking of gestational temporalities in the context of ectogenesis. In Part 3 (The Who of Pregnancy), I explore the "emergence" of the fetal other through ectogenetic technology. By providing an overview of the conceptualisation of alterity, particularly focussing on the process of personalisation of the fetus and its consequences for the gestational process through ectogenetic technology.

Thereafter, I argue for the pregnancy process through ectogenetic technology in terms of radical intercorporeality by analysing the role of touch in defining the gestational polarity and the specific kind of agency the gestating self (the mother) and the fetal-other have in their mutual and asymmetrical co-constitution. By shifting the focus from the natural pregnant condition to the (inter)subjective character of the gestational process and its implications through ectogenetic technology, I seek to offer new phenomenological insight into the structures of gestational experience through ectogenetic technology.

Richard Swinney (UKZN)

False hope and transhumanism

The aim of this paper is to define and discuss false hope, a problem which philosophers of hope have hitherto overlooked. I begin with an analysis of hope itself in order to be in a position to define false hope. I distinguish between ordinary hopes and fundamental hope, and argue that false hope arises a result of a conflict between these two modes of hoping. Having defined false hope, I next discuss its nature more fully. I distinguish between false hope, on the one hand, and wishful thinking and reasonable hope, on the other. I argue that false hope is neither a species of wishful thinking, nor is it an unreasonable hope. Preliminaries in place, I proceed to an illustration of false hope by drawing on historical and contemporary examples and situations. In particular, I focus on the transhuman hope that the progress of science and technology will result in a likewise progress in human well-being. I argue that transhumanism is a false hope, based on the illusion that the burden of existence can be alleviated in and by the world of physical objects. I

conclude that such false hopes, as exemplified by transhumanism, will result in the opposite of what they proclaim and betray the causes they champion.

Anna Hartford (UCT)

Mental Illness, Exemption & Moral Exclusion: the role of Interpretative Generosity

Assessments of moral responsibility are implicitly bound to evaluations of membership within, and exclusion from, moral communities established by mutual interpersonal demands and expectations. In turn, the withholding of blameworthiness is often bound to claims of diminished agency, and therefore to the abandonment of mutual and reciprocal moral relations (hereafter “symmetrical relations”). This poses a dilemma in navigating moral relationships with individuals with mental illness. While it is crucial for assessments of responsibility to be responsive to the significance of mental illness, must this responsiveness come at a cost to symmetrical relations? In this paper I argue, contrary recent critiques, that Strawsonian accounts of responsibility are able to navigate this dilemma, and can accommodate significant exculpation on the basis of mental illness while maintaining symmetrical relations. I understand this to be part of the larger recognition that while we have certain entitlements within our moral relationships, it is also possible to be *over-entitled*, and to expect too much of others. This account draws, in particular, on the moral significance of subjective difficulty. Difficulty is inherently scalar, and in drawing on this explanatory framework I explicate a theory of both excuse and exemption by degree. I argue for a significant realm of excuse on the basis of mental illness that is fully compatible with symmetrical relations. However, I also acknowledge the limits of this accommodation on Strawsonian grounds, and argue that these limits are justified and appropriate.

Werner Smith (Fort Hare)

Set and Setting: The Missing Factors in Chris Letheby's Psychedelic Philosophy

This paper gives a critique of Chris Letheby’s two-factor account of psychedelic therapy. The first factor is the induction of plasticity on neural, cognitive, and phenomenological levels. The second factor, which Letheby believes is crucial for lasting change, is the discovery of new forms of self-modelling within the psychedelic experience and the appropriate reinforcement thereof in the period of integration. I argue that even though this theory accounts for methods of action, it neglects to make mention of the importance of non-individualistic aspects of the experience and the influence hereof on the value the psychedelic experience holds for psychotherapy. Notably, in psychotherapy, the pioneering models for practical psychedelic therapy attempt to account for the importance of the environment in traditional settings and mimic this environment at treatment facilities. For the psychedelic experience, this interrelatedness between the subject and its environment is classically referred to as “set and setting”. “Set” is defined as the psychological aspects of the individual both in total and at the moment of drug ingestion, and the “setting” is the physical and social environment in which the substance is taken. The paper aims to show how a therapeutic approach to the principles of set and setting stands to critically inform Letheby’s theory.

Lisa Forsberg (Oxford)

Is consent to psychological interventions less important than consent to bodily interventions?

It is standardly accepted that medical interventions can be permissibly administered to a patient who has decision-making capacity only when she has given her valid consent to the intervention. But the requirement for valid medical consent is almost always discussed in relation to interventions that physically interfere with our bodies, such as touching and the incision or insertion of instruments into the body (‘bodily interventions’ or ‘BIs’). There has been very little discussion in the literature regarding whether or when a consent requirement obtains also in respect of interventions that interfere with the patient via psychological processes, such as psychotherapy and counselling (henceforth ‘psychological interventions’ or ‘PIs’). Moreover, conventional consent requirements in respect of PIs are laxer than the analogous requirements in respect of BIs. One possible explanation for this is that many endorse the Differential Importance View—the view that it is presumptively morally less important to obtain explicit valid consent for PIs than for BIs. In this article we argue against the Differential Importance View, by considering and rejecting three possible justifications one might offer in support of it, based on harm, implicit consent, and wrongdoing.

Chantelle Gray van Heerden (NWU)

Algorithmic Finitude and the Violence of Closed-Loop Epistemologies: Grappling with Surveillance, Surveyance and Digital Sufficiency with Foucault, Laruelle and Stiegler

In *The Order of Things* ([1966]2005), Foucault first articulates what he calls the empirico-transcendental doublet, a circular logic inaugurated by Kant according to which the subject, unlike other objects, can at once be an empirical object in experience and the transcendental conditions that make experience of the empirical possible, meaning the

subject functions both as the already given and as that by which the given is given. This doubling structure is, moreover, tied to what Foucault calls the analytic of finitude, a circinate pattern vacillating between a psychology of represented needs and an anthropology of the finitude of human life. The point, for Foucault, is that this paradoxical structure forms the historical a priori of knowledge in the modern episteme. Arguably, Deleuze's 'Postscript on the Societies of Control' (1992) is a description of the traces of a new episteme, marked by modulatory rather than enclosing conditions of possibility. Now, driven by an enchanted determinism, machine learning applications form recursive feedback loops with the rest of society, resulting in an algorithmic-transcendental doublet and its doubling apparatus: a recursive epistemological arrangement according to which we are continually assimilated into digital temporalities that provoke closed-loop epistemologies and grant the digital illegitimate authority over the radical immanence of life as lived. With this in mind, I turn to Laruelle's project on non-standard philosophy to propose an alternative posture – one which refuses a knowledge that doubles that world, or what might be thought of as the violence of sufficiency, whether philosophical or digital.

Luke Buckland (Fort Hare)

Mitigating AI Risk Through Zero-Knowledge Proof Cryptography

The growth of artificial intelligence (AI) promises to dramatically enhance the power of the institutions that purport to serve and govern us, posing risks to our privacy, security, and democracy. I argue that "Zero-Knowledge Proof" (ZKP) cryptography is a critical resource for redressing this power imbalance, bolstering our capacities to monitor, audit and control AI and AI-augmented institutions. A ZKP system allows one party to succinctly prove the truth of a statement to another party, without revealing any further information. One useful implementation of this involves proof systems that allow the correctness of any arbitrarily complex computation to be quickly verified. "Zero-Knowledge Machine-Learning" (ZKML) applies this capability to machine learning models, allowing one to quickly verify their authenticity and ongoing proper function with high confidence and without exposing the model parameters or input data. ZKML has obvious applications in AI risk mitigation, allowing those who use, for example, AI-enabled robotic companions, or AI search engines, the confidence that the models they interact with are as advertised: authentic, well-tested for reliability, uncompromised, unbiased and correctly functioning. In a very different application, ZKML allows model training and inference itself to be implemented by a globally distributed set of compute nodes, while ensuring the integrity of the final product. This decentralisation of the AI compute stack should help to mitigate the risk that AI advances are monopolised by the tech giants. Finally, ZKP enables the trustless authentication of the otherwise highly opaque processes of institutions and governance. Imagine a ZKP-enabled bank that provides an unforgeable cryptographic seal proving that customers' earnings were correctly calculated, or an electoral process that provides cryptographic assurance of vote inclusion and process validity. I thus illustrate a future in which ZKP systems affords humanity greater power relative to AI and AI-augmented institutions, thereby helping to mitigate AI risks.

Emmanuel Oboh (UJ)

The Role of Feminist Environmental Ethics In Curbing Gender Based Violence

In this essay, I propose the integration of feminist environmental theories, namely ecofeminism and care ethics, as effective measures to combat patriarchy, which is one of the underlying causes of climate change. Additionally, by addressing patriarchy, we can also make strides in reducing gender-based violence. I argue that climate change not only contributes to gender-based violence but also intensifies its impact. Therefore, by tackling climate change, we can partially alleviate the occurrence of gender-based violence. While the correlation between patriarchy and gender-based violence is widely recognized, this essay will specifically explore how environmental degradation, driven by patriarchal values, exacerbates gender-based violence. Firstly, I will introduce the key terms used throughout the essay. Subsequently, I will delve into the ways in which climate change and environmental degradation amplify gender-based violence. Moreover, I will introduce and discuss the two feminist environmental theories that will serve as the framework for this analysis: ecofeminism and care ethics. Ultimately, I will conclude by demonstrating how these environmental theories are instrumental in the fight against gender-based violence.

Charla Smith (SU)

A new gender politics of affect – redistributing fear, anger and vulnerability

Fear, anger and vulnerability are attributed to and experienced by men and women in qualitatively and quantitatively different ways. Despite not being the sole objects of sexual violence, and the fact that men are more likely than women to be the victims of violent crimes, it is women who are encouraged to experience their bodies as weak/vulnerable, and to therefore be fearful, which impacts on their ability to flourish in public life. Conversely, men's bodies are associated with power/invulnerability and with anger/aggression. Political affect theory explains how the subjective

experience of fear is intimately intertwined with fear as a socio-political phenomenon and usefully makes visible the political strategies that utilise fear for control. I attempt to understand and then subvert the gendered scripts and narratives that distort reality, inaccurately naturalising women as pre-figured victims/fearful subjects and men as inviolable aggressors, and that thereby stabilise gender power asymmetries. I do so in three moves. First, by drawing attention to male vulnerability, and denaturalising the man-as-aggressor trope by examining male victims of (sexual) violence, the role context plays in the likelihood of perpetrating violence, and the inaccurate image of the penis as an all-powerful weapon. Second, by considering strategies for interrupting initiations of violence/routine terrorisation of women in everyday encounters by exploring both collective and individual action. Third, by arguing for the redistribution of fear, vulnerability and anger through creative, persistent, everyday collective action.

Monique Whitaker (UKZN)

Is most violence gender-based violence?

The concept of gender-based violence (GBV) is often taken to be synonymous with that of gender-based violence against women, or, simply, violence against women. This has developed out of an increasing awareness and understanding of gender inequality and the way in which women are often subject to violence by men, *because* they are women. It is in virtue of their gender specifically that they are targeted, and this is typically contrasted with other violence, such as someone being assaulted in the commission of a robbery. However, when we look at the demographics of both victims and perpetrators of all violence, there are significant gender differences. Men make up the vast majority of victims of violence, except in cases of domestic violence and rape, where women are the majority of victims. The perpetrators of violence are overwhelmingly male, in almost all cases. Unfortunately, there is little to no information available about other genders. Numerous theories—moral, psychological, biological, evolutionary, sociological, etc.—have been proposed to try to explain these differences. I contend that, firstly, whatever the explanation, gender clearly makes a very substantial difference in who perpetrates and is the victim in a large percentage of the violence committed in any given society. Consequently, the majority of all violence can meaningfully be termed gender-based violence; violence that results from the gender of those involved. Secondly, I argue that there is nonetheless value in maintaining a distinct category of violence, with respect to what is currently considered GBV, but that there is important explanatory power in a reconceptualised, wider notion of GBV. In fact, this latter concept may help to explain and offer more effective ways to address the narrower concept, focused on male violence against women.

Anné Verhoef (NWU)

The role and value of happiness in the work of Paul Ricoeur

The role and value of happiness in the work of Paul Ricoeur remains an understudied theme. It is especially Ricoeur's unique dialectical understanding of happiness, unhappiness and chance which brings a crucial and much needed insight and correction with regard to the understanding of happiness in our contemporary culture. For Ricoeur happiness is always in relation to unhappiness, and it appreciates chance within the striving-receiving tension that remains characteristic of happiness. This understanding of happiness provides an alternative to the destructive notions of happiness that leave us trapped in the hedonistic treadmill, the endless unsatiated desires of our existence, the narcissistic satisfaction of our needs, and the infinite unhappy pursuit of happiness.

Olerato Mogomotsi (UCT)

Culture Wars: Hegel's Bildung and the Emergence of New Ways of Being

Arguably, one of the most troubling malaises of the contemporary moment is the recent resurgence of culture wars, more so regarding minority sexual and gender identities. Here, contestations emerge regarding whether such identities should be granted general acceptability and normalised as part of the social world. My intention in this paper, is to first philosophically account for the nature and dynamics of culture wars regarding minority identities. My inclination is that Hegel's (1807, 1820) social theory in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Right* could be quite helpful in this regard. I argue that these cultural flashpoints can be recast in terms of the process of achieving actuality, which is underlain in the bildung of human subjectivity that Hegel identifies as self-realization of Geist. I adopt Marina Bykova's (2020) interpretation of Hegel's bildung as an "unending historical development of individual human subjects and of humanity at large" (Bykova 2020, 425).

I provide a "dynamic emergentist" reconstruction of bildung, as a looping process involving human individual subjects, Geist and Sittlichkeit. In this reconstruction, I argue that bildung is best understood as a process marked by an interaction between individuals and Geist (interpreted as the Idea of what it is to be human), between Geist and its embodiment in Sittlichkeit, and loops back to how individuals as vehicles of Geist reflexively respond and relate to

Sittlichkeit. I argue that culture wars emerge where Sittlichkeit ceases to be a “home” and no longer appears to be the most rational embodiment of Geist as the Idea of what it is to be human. In my view, a culture war has two central opponents, those who find complete and unalienated warrant in Sittlichkeit as is, and those who find rational warrant more broadly in being vehicles of Geist. The latter, in my view, find complete vindication retrospectively in world history, in so far as their success in achieving actuality will depend on whether their reasons for being in the world can achieve rational warrant and be subsumed into a new form of Sittlichkeit. I take Allan Wood’s (1990) discussion of *World Historical Men* to elucidate this tension well. This may help us understand why the development of new ways of being human (including emergent identities like trans and non-binary identity) find such difficulty in achieving actuality and complete self-determinacy.

The very nature of Sittlichkeit, as what Robert Pippin (2008) refers to a norm governed sphere of the social world, is the authoritative and hence *hegemonic* understanding of what it is to be human in this given point in history. For a social identity to attain actuality, it must first be recognised as a rational expression of being human and subsequently be part of Sittlichkeit. What makes it possible for new identities to succeed in being part of Sittlichkeit is precisely the fact that Hegel considers the rationality of the current shape of Sittlichkeit to be falsifiable, which means new ways of being that are rational will necessitate Sittlichkeit to take on a new shape. This is the process of how new social identities achieve (or fail to achieve) actuality: culture wars as the *Bildung* of new social identities.

Laurence Bloom (RU)

Hegelian dialectic in Kierkegaard’s *Either/Or*

In this talk I put forward a reading of *Either/Or* on which the ethical life emerges as the *completion* of the aesthetic life and not as its opposite. I suggest that Kierkegaard has written the text in such a way that the careful reader will see that, unbeknownst to the aesthete himself, his way of life can only be lived fully and completely by becoming its would-be opposite: the ethical life. Another way of saying this is that the true or complete aesthetic life—one that reflects fully and consciously upon itself—is not an aesthetic life at all, it is an ethical life. Yet another way of saying this is that *Either/Or* presents an *aufhebung* (or “sublation”)—in a particularly Hegelian sense of the word—of the aesthetic in the ethical. Thus, the argument is dialectical: the aesthetic, on its own terms, bears witness to the superiority of the ethical. I believe that my reading offers an original way of understanding both Kierkegaard’s conception of the relation between the aesthetic and the ethical as well as the deep Hegelian roots of his philosophy.

Book Panel Discussion: *The Incentivised University: Scientific Revolutions, Policies, Consequences*

Panellists: David Spurrett (UKZN), JP Smit (Stellenbosch), Kiasha Naidoo (Stellenbosch), Seán Muller (UJ)

In the recently-published book *The Incentivised University*, Seán Muller argues that modern higher education policy and funding is driven by the notion, and associated rhetoric, that scientific and intellectual progress can be incentivised. Within a standard realist framework applied to disciplines in the natural and social sciences, this amounts to a claim that truth approximation can be improved through incentives administered by external actors. Yet this assertion is rarely, if ever, explicitly substantiated. While there has been much criticism of the associated trends of neoliberalism and managerialism in higher education, very few analyses connect these issues to literatures in philosophy of science concerning scientific progress and the dynamics of scientific communities. As the sub-title indicates, the book seeks to remedy these omissions and bridge the gap between the higher education and realist philosophy of science literatures. In doing so, the core philosophical chapters make a number of new propositions on subjects such as the link between societal consequences and intellectual progress, ‘normal science’ as reflecting epistemically harmful dynamics within scientific communities, and the notion that the ‘marketplace of ideas’ resolves or ameliorates behavioural failures at the individual level. Later chapters consider some of the nuances of such epistemic concerns across contexts and disciplines, including engagement with the literature on epistemic decolonisation. The book concludes by arguing that the emphasis on incentives is misplaced and likely to be harmful, that ‘scientific revolutions will not be incentivised’ and that a better approach would be to focus on improving the norms and practices of scholarly communities.

After an overview from the author, the panel will discuss these and other issues and arguments in the book from the different perspectives of the panellists’ own work and interests. Those include scientific realism, dynamics of scholarly communities, incentives and institutions, and neoliberalism as a governing rationality. That will be followed by a brief response from the author and a Q&A session with the audience.

Paige Benton (UP)

A Rawlsian Argument for the Need for the Ordination of Women in the Catholic Church

Susan Moller Okin levelled one of the strongest feminist critiques against Rawls's theory of justice, highlighting the injustice of restricting the principles of justice to the basic structure of the public sphere of society. Okin's critique led Rawls to critically re-evaluate his relation of the family to the basic structure as seen in *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* and the revised edition of *Political Liberalism*. The indirect application of the principles of justice to regulate the family, labour unions, and churches left her dissatisfied since this regulation for Okin (2005, 244) would not result in sufficient transformations of sexist social, economic, and political structures, given that comprehensive doctrines could still promote metaphysical inequalities between men and women.

In my paper, I argue that the revisions Rawls made to his theory of justice, can address Okin's concerns and provide women their "forty acres and a mule" necessary for free and equal participation in a liberal democracy (ibid., 246). I argue that the indirect application of the principles of justice must regulate comprehensive doctrines to the degree that the good that these moral doctrines promote cannot be in contradiction to or undermine the content of the principles of justice, namely the freedom and equality of individuals. Rawls states in *Political Liberalism* (2005, 471) "If the so-called private sphere is alleged to be a space exempt from justice, then there is no such thing".

The implication of this above quote is that the requirements of justice permeate throughout a Rawlsian society, an individual's freedom and equality must be categorically respected in both the public and the private sphere of society. Thus, I claim those comprehensive moral doctrines that form part of the background culture of society have to be regulated so as not to contradict the values of justice. The promotion of metaphysical inequalities between individuals due to the arbitrary feature of gender contradicts the political values of equality and freedom that have authority in both the public and private domain. Therefore, in this paper, I demonstrate why I claim that in a Rawlsian society, the ordination of women is a political and economic concern and not a decision confined to the metaphysical belief system of the comprehensive doctrine.

Patrick Aleke (St Joseph's Theological Institute)

God, Philosophers and Theologians in Africa

There is renewed interest in philosophical and theological investigations about God, religions and the implications of religious beliefs among philosophers and theologians in Africa. This development is itself profitable because, the question or the problem of God is a relevant discourse in Africa where the majority of her people are theists. However, unlike the exploration of the first generation African scholars – philosopher and theologians – whose primary objective is to show the symmetry between Christianity and African Traditional Religions (ATR), contemporary discourses arises within the clamour for decoloniality project. The investigations, with varied emphasis, opine for the decolonisation of the concept of God, epistemic decolonisation, decolonisation of Christianity and African Christian theology etc. In this essay, I critically examine the contemporary decolonial discourse about God, divine attributes, religious belief and the relation between African Christian theology and ATR. I argue that most of contemporary literatures are entangled in conceptual convolution and as such, they are not clear about what needs to be decolonised. Put differently most works do not clearly distinguish between reality (the person or phenomenon "God"), thought (the concept "God" and conceptions of God (language, that is the terms and images used in making assertion about God). Further, I argue that when conceptual clarifications are adequately attended to, there would not be need for decolonisation with regard to discourses about God, divine nature, divine attributes and relation between Christianity and ATR.

Anele Sithole (UKZN)

African and Western conceptions of Time

Time is undoubtedly a fundamental aspect of our experience of reality, of which the perception of change is an inseparable part. Change and time however have meant different things for Western and African temporal theorists. While theories of time in Western and African metaphysics are different, what both metaphysics seem to be preoccupied with is making sense of change. On one hand, for what I categorized as McTaggartian theories of time (which underpin most Western temporal theories) we can deduce that change and time are self-constitutional, happen on their own or are external to the perceiver and thus are objective features of reality. For Mbiti on the other hand (who provides one of the most controversial accounts of time in Africa), seems to hold that time is the constitution of events of our everyday experiences, and thus, time is constituted by the perceiver and the events in her day. For Mbiti the perceiver is the literal creator or producer of time, and she creates time by how she spends her day, and therefore not subject to it in the way her Western counterparts are.

I however hold that McTaggart's and Mbiti's theories of time are inadequate accounts of change and thus time. Both theories commit a category mistake, by claiming that their accounts of what time is suffice to adequately account for

how time operates, or that time is that which it is not, respectively. Specifically, McTaggart argues that mutually exclusive properties can account for a continuous experience of time and Mbiti argues that the composite events of time are in fact time itself. Both the temporal theories seem to conflate and/or confuse what time is and how time operates or what time is, and what constitutes time, thus committing a category mistake. I aim to provide a viable alternate theory of time inspired by the definitions of change and time provided by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (2008), and the contributions of both McTaggart and Mbiti's works. I will do this by reconsidering our experience of time, which is made possible by the perception of change, thus creating for both a continuous and yet fragmented experience. I will argue that what is required to adequately account for the common fact of the experience of time, i.e., change, are properties that can perform the double function of being distinct and yet inter-connected. I develop what I call the E-theory of time, arguing that the E-properties of the E-theory can capture and facilitate a more intuitive account of the experience of change and time.

Shea McBride (University of Freiberg)

Sensory pollution and the preservation of sensescapes

Sensory pollutants, which include anthropogenic noise, artificial light at night and chemical contaminants, impact the *Umwelten* (perceptual worlds) of humans and other species. A growing body of research indicates that sensory pollutants adversely affect a wide variety of wildlife by masking, distracting, or misleading them through ecological traps. However, sensory pollution remains one of the least understood sources of perturbation affecting biodiversity loss and ecosystem dynamics. In addition to the negative ecological effects, this insidious type of pollution also impacts human health and disrupts our sensory abilities, contributing to health inequities and environmental injustice, as well as to a growing sense of disconnect from the more-than-human world.

By polluting the environment with gratuitous sensory stimuli, humans are homogenizing the topography of the sensory environment and distorting the information it conveys. Dumyah and Pijanowski argue that soundscapes should be considered natural resources worthy of management and conservation (2011). In this paper, I expand upon their argument to include sensescapes more broadly, given that the protection of sensory-rich environments is essential for the well-being of humans and nonhuman nature. I explore how environmental aesthetics can promote environmental practices that protect a diversity of sensescapes. I do this by utilizing the notion of 'perceptual commons' (Berleant 2012) to emphasise the political and ethical implications of sensory pollution. Additionally, I draw upon Marta Tafalla's (2014) work on how anosmia decreases the aesthetic appreciation and meaning of gardens to elucidate how sensory impairments can constrain nature connectedness. Furthermore, by using insights from sensory ecology, I maintain that the aesthetic dimensions of design can be inclusive of multi-species experiences within our shared environments to reduce ecological traps (French, 2022). Finally, I discuss potential solutions and challenges to the mitigation of sensory pollution and the preservation of threatened sensescapes.

Emma Hay (NMU)

Towards an ecological pedagogy of repair: exploring the potential role of Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge in transforming environmental education

This paper explores some of the arguments, ethical directions, and implementation options that emerge when Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) is brought into critical dialogue with the mainstream approach to environmental education in South Africa. In response to the UN 2030 Sustainability Agenda and Goal Four (quality education), the main aim of the paper is to recognise, affirm, and promote the value of ITEK as a deeply ecological approach to environmental pedagogy that can also address ongoing epistemological injustices. Many Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge systems deeply embed ecological knowledge, yet findings from the 2014 Review of the 'Managed Indigenous Knowledge Systems Programme' show that this type of knowledge is not being translated into classroom curricula. Using a critical-ecological perspective that prioritises (inter)relationality and processes of co-implication, the intersecting injustices of traditional environmental education are exposed and addressed (in part) through the heuristic of an 'ecologies of repair'. This concept originates from a post-humanist perspective and responds to "damaged ecologies and communities" by subtly endorsing transformational processes. It is argued that by using this heuristic to connect the ethics of alterity with inter-relational African ethics, the value of embedding ecological philosophy and practices into environmental education is demonstrated. The implications are discussed in terms of how ITEK may theoretically contribute to increasing both ecological and diversity literacy, thereby enhancing inclusivity and enriching the environmental sustainability agenda within basic education.

Jaco Kruger (St Augustine's)

Energy, value and a first personal perspective in ecology

The rise to prominence of Systems Thinking in the twentieth century is widely regarded as a methodological breakthrough that inaugurated a new era of interdisciplinary scientific research. Systems ecology, as a sub-field of systems thinking, has for its part been on the forefront of addressing the crises facing our planet today. While these developments are exciting and necessary, it can be asked whether systems theory is interdisciplinary enough. The interdisciplinarity extends to a cooperation between the natural and social sciences, but not yet penetratingly enough to the humanities. The systems perspective remains predominantly third personal, whereas a humanities perspective, which comprises expression, reflection on and interpretation of the inner experience of subjectivity could be described as first personal. By thinking about the relation between “energy” and “value”, this paper attempts to discern how a first-personal perspective in ecology can complement the third personal approach characteristic of systems ecology. Whereas systems ecology, as evidenced for example in the work of Howard T. Odum, thinks in terms of concentrations of matter-energy and the flow of energy, a first personal approach would conceive of those same realities in terms of matter-value and the interactions of gift exchange. From such an enhanced interdisciplinary perspective, systems may turn out to be even more intensely relational and interdependent than is usually thought.

Lindokuhle Gama (UP & RU)

Towards the Possibility of a Non-Gendered Value Theory

Blackwomxn exist in an unbearable social condition. Their social ontology reveals that they hold a sub-person status within African communities and social structures. They are configured this way precisely because under a racialized heteropatriarchal order their personhood status is inferior to that of cis-heterosexual men. Evidence of their sub-person status is revealed in their differential valuation in society. It limits Blackwomxn because it disempowers them on the basis of their racialized gender. Heeding to Kwame Gyekye’s assertion that normative theories should practically intervene in social ills, I turned to Afro-personhood theories to motivate for a direct intervention in this social condition. I turned to these theories because they purport to defend the moral worth of all persons owing to their gender-neutral nature. Upon closer examination, I find that Afro-personhood theories are gendered in pernicious ways that would exacerbate the social condition Blackwomxn are in rather than be ameliorative. As such, I argue that the contradiction in the theory throws into sharp relief the political and pragmatic value of the theories as social tools. What is the use of a moral theory that is mute on racialized gendered oppression to Blackwomxn today? Motivated by this contradiction, I contend that we need a non-gendered value theory for our context that speaks to the ethical exigency to challenge racialized heteropatriarchy in our communities.

Lemohang Tebeli (UKZN)

Intersecting Identities: Matolino’s Limited Communitarianism and its Implications for LGBTQ+ in African Communities

In many African communities, identity is profoundly intertwined with communal values and ethics. Individuals strongly associate with families, clans, tribes, or ethnic groups, so to shape their sense of self and belonging. Identity is a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the community, grounded in equality and mutual understanding. Bernard Matolino’s limited communitarianism offers a unique lens for understanding the balance between these communal values and individual rights. It underscores the importance of balance between them, forming a profound theoretical foundation for exploring LGBTQ+ rights in African society. LGBTQ+ individuals within African communities face various challenges, navigating complex interplay between communal values and diverse sexual and gender identities. Recognizing this diversity underscores the significance of individualized identities within the collective narrative. This paper will delve into the ethical complexity at the intersection of these identities, highlighting instances where LGBTQ+ individuals grapple with conforming to communal values at the cost of their rights and authentic identities. This exploration highlights the tension between societal norms and individual autonomy, intensified by the discourse on cultural relativism and universal human rights, within Matolino’s framework. This paper aims to comprehensively examine whether Matolino’s limited communitarianism accounts for the rights and complexities of LGBTQ+ individuals while seeking a balance between communal and individual identity dimensions. It acknowledges intricate ethical challenges within this intersection and seeks paths toward harmonizing communal values, individual rights, and LGBTQ+ identities in African society. The primary goal of this research is to contribute to the discourse on identity, ethics, and human rights within African communities. By understanding these complexities, it aspires to inform more inclusive and equitable approaches to identity and rights in Africa.

Chris Allsobrook & Motsamai Molefe (Fort Hare)

Human Dignity in an African Context (book launch)

The book focuses on human dignity in an African context. Our introduction to the collected volume aims to convey a sense of the scope of African conceptions of human dignity, their contested nature and their importance for the broader literature on human dignity. It also motivates and justifies our focus in the book on perspectives and voices from an African context in relation to the subject of human dignity. Finally, it gives the reader a sense of the contributions made by various theorists in this volume on African conceptions of human dignity. We begin by noting the contested character of human dignity, distinguishing different senses of the concept and three functions of the term for constraint, empowerment and universal equality. We hope this volume will open many further avenues in African political thought to show that dignity is far from meaningless or useless in Africa and that such abstract and conceptual consideration of its meaning and use in African political theory proves a fitting testament to its effect and impact on the practical lives of Africans across the continent.

Mosito Seabela (UNISA)

Global capitalism and the commodification of breastfeeding: An investigation of its impact on the African conception of family life and motherhood

Breastfeeding in public has become a contentious issue in contemporary society. Mothers are often subjected to unfair discrimination and harassment for simply responding to their maternal instinct to breastfeed their infants. The unwillingness of society to accept public breastfeeding as a natural, non-sexual act is partly influenced by the imposition of a pornified and hypersexualised Western culture, which was imported to Africa through colonisation, enforced by the apartheid regime, and is now perpetuated by Western media.

The imposition of the modern nuclear family on Africans, and the coerced aspiration to subscribe to bourgeois values, has eroded the moral standing of the traditional African family and its cultural values. Western-centric perceptions of African women have altered the experience of motherhood for many, commodifying the practice of breastfeeding. As a result, the use of bottles and infant formulas is often perceived as the preferred method, while breastfeeding in public is viewed as primitive, immoral, and unacceptable.

This normative study seeks to answer the question of what ought to be done to preserve the dignity of African motherhood and protect their right to breastfeed in public. The African philosophy of Ubuntu is employed to advocate for the right to breastfeed in public. This moral philosophy posits that the western perception of a person seeks to isolate people from their environment and culture, thereby undermining the process of acquiring humanity, which fosters social cohesion. The Ubuntu philosophy embodies the aphorism, “umuntu ngumuntu nga bantu”, meaning “a person is a person through other persons”, signifying people’s interconnectedness and interdependence.

The application of the key principles of Ubuntu, such as “survival, the spirit of solidarity, compassion, respect, and dignity” can improve human interaction and unite the public to support the government’s efforts to increase exclusive breastfeeding rates and reduce infant mortality rates. A doctrine called “Ubuntu Lactivism” is what the author proposes as a means to advocate for breastfeeding rights in fulfilment of African traditional values.

Elsie Bokaba (NWU)

Ecomaternalism: The contribution of grandmaternal values to environmental discussions in the Global South

Various peculiar approaches were introduced after the period of 1974 when Françoise d’Eaubonne first coined ecofeminism. This concept has since stirred increased attention in research and writing, however, this study is still relatively new in environmental philosophy. Ecofeminism seeks to challenge the perception of the domination of women in relation to the domination of nature. Despite the vast array of theories and knowledge produced by the ecofeminist movement, African ecofeminists highlight that this knowledge is predicated on Western ideologies and understandings of gender - which is problematic. This is supported in that gender is a social construct rooted in the historical context of colonialism to encourage specific socio-economic agendas and goals that the West had. And so, it is important to consider that gender in the African context has been forced to change and adapt its meaning to the legacy of colonialism. From an African perspective using the theory of ecomaternalism popularised by Siwila, this paper argues that maternal values held by grandmothers and often passed on as educational knowledge through rituals and customs in African homes and communities can also be used to address environmental issues. This is motivated in the paper by considering the colonial consequences on the family structure in African homes by analysing how grandmothers have completely disappeared in society. Grandmothers have always played various important roles in homes and communities in order to ensure a sense of harmonious living, however, the patriarchal system adopted post-colonialism has diminished their value in the greater societal structures. The knowledge persevered by

grandmothers and shared down the generations is essential in aiding new strategies when it comes to environmental issues that are globally faced. The paper will also additionally advance its argument by considering the work of Wangari Maathai and her Green Belt Movement.

Christine Hobden (WITS)

Equality in Negotiation as a Principle for International Cooperation

International cooperation is both essential and fragile: states seek to co-operate in the face of vast global challenges yet inevitably find themselves in competition, or in the middle of others' competition, for status, access, and resources. Contestations for power cloud international cooperation despite its institutions' oft proclaimed commitment to state equality. Growing understanding of the need for international cooperation in confronting global pandemics, climate change, cyber security, and more, highlights the need for more just and effective norms of international cooperation. Within this context, this paper introduces and motivates for a principle of equality in negotiation in our international cooperation practices. This paper begins from the widely accepted norm of state equality. First, the paper accepts that this norm is frequently only espoused performatively, but provides argument as to why state equality is a plausible normative commitment, offering both an instrumental and intrinsic case. Following this, the paper draws upon and adapts Elizabeth Anderson's theory of democratic equality (1999) to develop and motivate for the principle of equality in negotiation as a principle that upholds the fullness of the commitment to state equality in cooperation. Equality in negotiation holds that states should have effective access to the tools of negotiation and states ought to have a reasonable degree of parity in bargaining power such that one state does not have the power to unduly influence negotiations within cooperative practices. Where states engage in negotiations without these conditions, they ought to give special consideration to the weaker parties such that they are compensated for the effects of their inequality on the negotiation and the arrangements move them closer to being a participant of equal standing in the practice. The paper concludes by arguing that this principle, rooted in equality, has significant advantage over its more common philosophical counterparts, namely 'fair terms of cooperation' and 'nonexploitation'.

John Patrick Giddy

Rethinking Secular Public Policy

In her much-discussed account of secular public policy, *Liberalism's Religion* (2017), Laborde argues that it is not exactly true to say that the liberal state must remain neutral on matters of religion. The liberal state must affirm and express its sovereignty and in the case of a claim that God, or the Pope or the Qur'an, has sovereignty over a particular domain and that the liberal state must be constricted accordingly, this must be opposed. Liberalism, for all its claim to neutrality, "cannot dispense with an ethical evaluation of the saliency of different conceptions, beliefs and commitments". Religion must be disaggregated and all versions cannot be regarded "as equally unreasonable", i.e. unfit for participating in the public sphere.

We can see in this slant, a shift in the debate away from assuming as framework an uncontested liberalism, with the dispute being about the rights of religion in the areas of teaching, dress, laws, etc. The problem with liberalism's secular policy, argues Laborde, is that not only the content of the good life, but the meaning of 'equal justice' may itself be reasonably contested. So 'liberalism' as frame of thinking, is not entirely coherent.

Building on Laborde, I argue that the emergence of the liberal democratic state and its ethical framework took two basic directions, tracking the way in which the new dispensation diverged from the specific religious bodies at issue, the Anglo-Saxon focus on individual freedom of choice and state neutrality in contrast to any one version of the good life (liberalism), and the Francophone focus on human freedom as autonomy, self-consciously symbolized – against any religious heteronomy – by the state (republicanism).

In the former case the central insight of modernity is seen in terms of a break with the metaphysical picture of human nature, the Copernican revolution disabusing us of the 'obviously true' nature of the positioning of our viewpoint at the centre of the universe. There is a suspicion about 'grand narratives'. For this reason, the liberal state must needs give everyone, and every group, including the religious, equal respect in terms of their particular view of things. This frame of thinking would reflect a particularly Protestant version of the Christian religion, namely the idea of the imperfect or flawed human condition under God. Protestantism sees the core of the religion in terms of the individual's choice before God and God's 'solution' to the problem of human frailty in the redemptive figure of Christ. Seen in a secular framework, this central insight into human frailty determines the scepticism of the culture towards any absolute, final, version of the truth and gives rise to the provision of each individual and group's equal rights to venture their version of this. The slogan for this way of understanding the liberal state's attitude to religion could be, Leave them alone.

In the latter case, an insight into the overarching frame may be had through considering the impact of the secularisation thesis on French thinking. Gauchet (1997) and others have it that religion, in particular Christianity, has morphed into liberal democracy itself, individual freedom, exploitation of nature, shared authority, etc. But the humanizing impetus of the religion itself is resisted in some forms of the religion, holding onto heteronomy, and those need to be resisted by the republican state, whose duty it is to symbolize and provide the framework for the actualization of human capacities. The slogan for this version of public policy towards religion could be, Leave us alone.

Understanding these cultural sources of contemporary public policy allows us to interrogate Laborde's argument that secular public policy should not be *defined* as putting religion to one side.

Doreen Sesiro (University of Botswana)

Could a Transhuman be the Same Person Through Time?

I will tackle, from the metaphysical aspect of the *Botho* perspective, the issue of the conditions under which transhumanism would affect personal identity in the context of enhanced persons, i.e., when enhancement would have any impact on the identity of a person as distinct from that of other persons. *Botho* is an indigenous philosophy prominent in Botswana that expresses the essence of being a person, where immateriality and relationality are necessary and sufficient for a person's continued existence. I will apply this *Botho* account of personal identity to hypothetically enhanced human beings and argue that an individual with a different body or no particular body could remain the same person. I will also indicate when enhancements would in contrast mean the loss of a person. I will further demonstrate that the *Botho* standpoint on how enhancements would affect personal identity is philosophically plausible relative to a standard transhumanist perspective. Scholars in African philosophy have largely ignored the debate about personal identity in the context of transhumanism, having focused on ethics. My work will therefore add new knowledge by critically discussing the metaphysical implications of enhancements in an African context. In addition, global scholarship about transhumanism has taken characteristically Western approaches to metaphysics for granted, and it would be of interest to consider a reasonable alternative to them from the African context.

Tomasz Żuradzki (Jagiellonian University in Kraków)

Could I Have Had a Different Father? Against Material-Origin Essentialism About Human Identity

The standard view in philosophy and bioethics distinguishes between "person affecting" interventions that may harm or benefit particular individuals (e.g., by genome editing) and "identity affecting" interventions that determine which individual comes into existence (e.g., by genetic selection). This distinction is based on a form of material-origin essentialism (Kripke 1980), which has been commonly accepted on the grounds of its alleged "intuitiveness" by many bioethicists and philosophers writing about the nonidentity problem (Parfit 1984), as well as legal scholars commenting on wrongful life lawsuits (Shiffrin 1999). In particular, it is widely assumed that a person with a specific genetically-based disability could not have existed without that disability because her genetic make-up is the essential product of a particular sperm and egg. Many authors also assume that this distinction has crucial normative significance (Sparrow 2022).

In contrast, an anti-essentialist view inspired by "flexistentialism" proposed by Dasgupta (2018) postulates giving priority to ethical judgments about harm and wrongdoing as a guide to metaphysical claims about the identity of the entities that matter. This view assumes that there is no intelligible distinction between essence and accidents. It also accepts that some counterfactuals (e.g., about someone's disability or someone's father) can be literally true even if that person actually lacks the power to change their disability or parent in the way the counterfactual describes. In this paper, I will also provide empirical data suggesting that a substantial minority of English native speakers agree with counterfactuals that are incompatible with an important version of material-origin essentialism. In conclusion, I argue that material-origin essentialism is a contested metaphysical view that neither enjoys a consensus among philosophers nor captures how non-philosophers speak about counterfactual possibilities.

DAY THREE

Susan Hall (SU)

Fair treatment? Sex verification and the eligibility regulations for female classification

On the 11 July 2023, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in favour of Caster Semenya in her long legal battle against The Eligibility Regulations for the Female Classification put into place by World Athletics. These regulations require athletes with 46XY differences of sexual development to lower their blood testosterone levels to 2.5nmol/L or less in order to qualify to compete in the female category. This reduction of testosterone levels is to be achieved by means of medical intervention. Despite Semenya's legal victory, the regulations remain in place pending appeal.

In their defence of the regulations, World Athletics insist that they are not intended to serve as a form of sex verification. They also emphasise that the requirement to lower testosterone levels cannot be considered to be overly burdensome, as the means by which this would be achieved constitutes ordinary, and even beneficial, medical treatment. On the other hand, the World Medical Association has objected to the regulations precisely on the grounds that the interventions required are in most cases not related to any medical need, and therefore do not constitute legitimate medical treatments.

This disagreement raises the question about what medical treatment is. This is significant as the IAAF appears to be exploiting a normatively loaded notion of medical treatment in order to make the case that the Eligibility Regulations are beyond reproach. I will argue that the notion of medical treatment implicitly employed by the IAAF most closely resembles a model of treatment outlined by Normal Daniels in his delineation of the treatment-enhancement distinction. This model ascribes the moral importance of medical treatment to the role which it plays in promoting fair equality of opportunity, which derives from its protection of normal, species-typical functioning. However, the way in which the Eligibility Regulations employ this model is flawed, both with respect to its conception of normal function, and its normative commitments. These flaws in turn reveal a return to a form of sex verification which the IAAF claims to disavow.

Shirah Theron (SU)

Sexual Pleasure: Morally obligatory, morally optional, or only (somewhat) praiseworthy?

Embedded within the intricate realm of sexual ethics, Alan Soble's philosophical inquiry delves into the under-researched terrain of sexual duties and sexual supererogation (first published as "Sexual Gifts and Sexual Duties" in 2019). Typically, the discourse surrounding moral obligations in the realm of philosophy of sex and sexual ethics gravitates toward the negative by delineating instances where there is a duty *not* to engage in the sexual act under question. However, Soble ventures into uncharted territory by questioning whether there could ever exist positive duties to partake in sexual acts with others (a duty to *give* them sexual pleasure) or even instances of sexual supererogation, where engaging in the sexual act and giving them sexual pleasure would be going "beyond the call of duty". This presentation seeks to unpack the nuanced arguments and examples for establishing these different moral categories, as put forward by Soble, to eventually arrive at the point that makes even the very possibility of sexual duties and sexual supererogatory actions particularly difficult: a positive and beneficial sexual encounter, rooted in the subjective experience of sexual pleasure, can only be determined as such *retrospectively* – there is no input-output course of action for the moral agent that would promise a sexually good and pleasurable experience for the moral patient. Without such a guarantee, there can be no duty or call beyond duty to engage in a sexual act. However, I conclude that if one wishes to discuss moral praiseworthiness on the part of the agent who engages in a sexual act with the intention, motivation, and commitment to facilitate a positive and sexually pleasurable experience for the moral patient, such actions may be considered *pro tanto* praiseworthy.

Kayleigh Timmer (UKZN)

OnlyFans as an Oppressive Digital Environment

Much work has been done on the effects of pornography on its users, as well as those who produce it. In this paper, we focus on the latter—using a Marxist-feminist lens to analyze how online digital environments can negatively affect female sex workers. It has been argued that OnlyFans, as well as similar (but now less prominent) platforms (such as ModelHub), benefit sex workers by promoting more autonomy as well as more controlled and empowering sexual environments—especially when compared to more traditional sex work. We argue that, while this is not entirely incorrect, many other negative effects (old and new) can also be observed. Harms include 'presence bleed' (where work life 'bleeds' into off-hours), sexual objectification, the bi-directional internalization of problematic views and long-term psychological harm. We use OnlyFans as a case study for how new ways of distributing sexual content continue to promote oppression and present new challenges for the internalization of harmful views. Primarily, we argue that the presence of social media elements on OnlyFans contributes to a type of 'mind invasion', whereby agents' norms, goals and values can be hijacked by an organized structure (Slaby, 2016). As a workspace, OnlyFans creates an affective niche that contributes to the normalization of harmful patriarchal views, such as sexual ownership and the objectification of women. We then show that this idea is intertwined with what Liao and Huebner (2020) term 'oppressive things'. We argue that a great deal of the content on OnlyFans leads to an 'oppressive digital environment', meeting Liao and Huebner's criteria of being "*biased in the same direction* as other manifestations of an oppressive system"; "*causally embedded* in the respective oppressive system"; as well as demonstrating other bi-directional causal

connections (Liao & Huebner, 2020, p.9). Finally, we conclude by suggesting ways that OnlyFans could mitigate harm and become a safer, less 'affectively invading' workspace.

Edmund Terem Ugar (UJ)

Revisiting the Fair Inning Framework for Allocating Healthcare Resources: A Case of South Africa

Scarce medical resource allocation within medical economics relies on frameworks designed to ensure fairness, maximize overall benefits, and equitably redistribute resources. These frameworks are often based on Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALY), incorporating concepts like "life-years saved" or "fair innings." This paper focuses specifically on the fair inning framework. The fair inning concept posits that everyone possesses a right to a "fair share" of public healthcare resources to enable them to live a reasonable natural lifespan. The central argument for the fair inning is that when distributing scarce medical resources, priority should be granted to the worse-off; the worse-off, here, refers to those who have not experienced various life stages or those with fewer life-years. Consequently, medical interventions should begin with the youngest and proceed to the oldest. This view underscores age as a yardstick for healthcare prioritisation. This paper argues that while the fair inning approach may be suitable in some contexts, its application could exacerbate existing historical social injustices within certain marginalized groups. I highlight three significant challenges faced by the fair inning framework. Firstly, proponents of fair innings do not show what ages fall within the threshold of a biological/natural lifespan, and they do not consider socioeconomic variables as influences of an individual's lifespan. Secondly, the fair inning argument can perpetuate injustices for historically marginalized groups that have faced limited healthcare access, notably apparent in regions like South Africa. Lastly, the fair inning perspective overlooks contextual nuances. In societies such as sub-Saharan Africa and Confucian communities, older individuals play pivotal roles unattainable by younger counterparts. A careful consideration of these concerns is crucial when implementing this approach to the allocation of scarce medical resources in places like South Africa.

Aida Terblanché-Greeff (NWU)

Developing the Metzian Ubuntu Inventory through Empirically Engaged African Philosophy

Cultural values - the building blocks of culture – are characteristically prescriptive, normative, and evaluative of how people act, feel, and think, indicating that cultural values relate to morality. One such cultural value is social self-construal, which refers to the evaluative and/or non-evaluative traits that effect the individual's sense of self, relatedness to others, and being-in-the-world by influencing affect, behaviour, and cognition. Social self-construal is often categorised on a spectrum as individualism or collectivism. A plethora of instruments exist to measure this cultural value; however, these instruments are situated in a Western paradigm and are considered universal. Consequently, nuanced context-specific presentations of social self-construal are often overlooked, e.g., Confucian collectivism prevalent in China. Based on the aforementioned oversights, mixed-method research was conducted in South Africa using empirically engaged African philosophy. As a result, an emic instrument – the Metzian Ubuntu Inventory (MUI) - was developed to measure a nuanced social self-construal, viz., Ubuntu collectivism. Grounded on the work of Thaddeus Metz, Ubuntu collectivism is based on reciprocal forms of harmonious interaction, viz., identity and solidarity. The former refers to a shared way of life achieved through coordination and a sense of belonging; the latter refers to caring for others and their quality of life through offering aid and exhibiting sympathetic altruism. Accordingly, the items of the MUI were developed based on the dimensions of identity and solidarity as identified by the researcher. This theoretical basis was used to develop and validate the MUI with a sample of 316 respondents. This final scale consists of nine items and is reliable and valid in South Africa. The paper I will present is based on empirically engaged African philosophy and will deviate from the standard philosophy paper presentation. That is, the philosophical and theoretical basis for the item development will be posed, followed by the more quantitative aspects of the scale development process. To conclude, some suggestions regarding the value and applicability of such a scale will be discussed.

Jaco Louw (SU)

Considering African philosophy as a way of life through the practice of philosophical counselling

Contributions of Pierre Hadot pertaining to the notion of philosophy as a way of life have had a profound and enduring influence upon philosophical counselling theory and practice. Various philosophical counsellors, such as Robert Walsh and Arto Tukiainen, have embraced this imperative by *living* their philosophical counselling practice. Nonetheless, a prevailing trend among these practitioners lies in their exclusive reliance upon either the ancient Greek philosophical tradition as expounded by Hadot, or in their adaptation of contemporary Western philosophies. Regrettably, a conspicuous omission prevails with respect to the incorporation of contemporary African philosophies, notably their philosophical praxes as a way of life/living, within the discourse of contemporary philosophical counselling. The

integration of African philosophies into the discourse of philosophical counselling literature holds significant promise, particularly concerning the potential to impact ways of living within a Southern African context. Within the wider landscape of contemporary African philosophy, certain authors have already conceptualised ubuntu philosophy as a way of life/living. This talk, notwithstanding, undertakes to introduce two different African philosophies, namely, hermeneutic African philosophy and conversational philosophy. A novel interpretation of these philosophies will be advanced, positioning them as praxes for philosophical counselling. Emphasis is placed on an interpretative actualisation in response to lived experiences, contextualised within a conversational framework. The implications for philosophical counselling are threefold: firstly, the disclosing of alternative ways of life/living and being/becoming, along with the creation of new concepts; secondly, a profound accentuation of the relational dimension in philosophical counselling, underscored by the notion of collaborative philosophising that emerges from the dynamic interaction between the philosophical counsellor and the counselee; thirdly, a reworked understanding of philosophical counselling that moves beyond methodological constraints while embracing the transformative potential of reflective, creative, and critical conversations.

Jack Morgan Jones (University of Manchester)

Self-Legislation and the Limits of Ambition

The Paradox of Self-Legislation arises out of a Kantian conception of autonomy. On this conception, autonomous agents exercise the freedom of the will, or the capacity to commit themselves to actions, which brings agents into a state of internal coherence through practical reasoning. In this talk, I'll address the question of whether the Paradox of Self-Legislation which results from this conception can be dealt with using resources available to Christine Korsgaard's Neo-Kantian account of morality. Put briefly, the Paradox of Self-Legislation is that although some principle of self-legislation must govern the will, or else there would be no way for the will to self-legislate, if such a principle already binds the will, then the will is not free to self-legislate. Korsgaard's way of dissolving this paradox is via the categorical imperative, or the principle that an agent must choose a law which is universalizable. The appeal of the categorical imperative is that, on the one hand, the free will is not completely lawless because it must act in accordance with the principle that generates maxims; while, on the other hand, the will is not made less free because it is constitutive of the freedom to legislate that acts of legislation accord with this one guiding principle. Tom O'Shea (2015) has objected to this way of resolving the paradox. O'Shea raises two questions. First, why should an agent self-legislate? Second, how should an agent self-legislate? O'Shea's problem is that Korsgaard's way of answering the first question leaves her with no way of answering the second question, and he appeals to cases of conflict and underdetermination to make this clear.

Adrian Romeo (UWC)

Narrative and the experiential self

Narrative theory is a popular means with which to explain selfhood and the identity of the self in philosophy. One reason for its popularity is that narrative is a natural and easily accessible vehicle for selfhood, as fictional stories and indeed the stories we tell about our lives are instrumental in the way we understand the world and each other. However, among the many theories of narrative selfhood, the extent to which the self is explained by narrative theory is up for debate. Some theories claim that the self just is narrative in nature while others claim that the self can be expressed in narrative form but it in fact has other constitutive properties.

The works of Dan Zahavi and Samantha Vice will be presented to show that we should understand the self as independent from narrative. The primary reason for this line of thinking is that if the self is understood purely as narrative in nature we end up losing a basic but important feature of selfhood: first person experience. Vice and Zahavi both propose that losing first person experience through narrative has negative consequences for our selfhood, with Vice claiming that we come to think of ourselves too much like characters in a story and Zahavi claiming that questions which purportedly focus on the self as only narrative in nature are in fact questions about persons. Ultimately, I will suggest that the claims of Zahavi and Vice are, in fact, complementary and that this strengthens the case of the self as independent from narrative.

John Mancini (University of Virginia)

Calling all Deflationists

Elizabeth Barnes (2017) charges metaphysical deflationism with lacking the ability to objectively 'privilege' definitions of 'woman.' For, she writes, whereas metaphysical realism argues that "disputes in metaphysics are disputes about the world" -- and so a privileged definition is the one that captures 'woman's' essence -- metaphysical deflationism claims that metaphysical "disputes . . . [concern] our words or concepts" (p. 2418). Asking deflationists what 'woman' is thus asks what 'woman' *means colloquially*; deflationists only care about 'woman's' in defining it. So, once deflationists

grasp what people mean by 'woman,' they can define it on that basis. Herein, however, is why Barnes levels her charge against deflationism: There are many uses of 'woman.' Hence, there are many ways to define it. More specifically, on deflationism, there are many *equally-correct* ways of defining 'woman' because 'woman' is defined based on its use of which there are many. And if all definitions of 'woman' are correct, on deflationism, then no definition can be deemed the metaphysically right or 'privileged' one because they are *all* metaphysically right. It seems to me that deflationists agree with Barnes's charge that no definition of 'woman' is more metaphysically correct than any other. They, however, resist that they cannot privilege definitions of 'woman.' For they have found ways to do so not according to truth but according to normative considerations. The 'right' definition of 'woman' for deflationists, that is, is "morally and politically right" rather than metaphysically or truthfully right, as Jennifer Saul writes (2012, p. 204). After detailing such a deflationist theory of privilege by Stephanie Kapusta (2016), I argue that deflationist methods of privilege are fundamentally flawed. For they are only compelling if deflationism about 'woman' is true. That is, we are compelled to consult norms for privileging one of 'woman's' uses only in the event that 'woman' is a term with many definitions. Otherwise, since all definitions of 'woman' are metaphysically acceptable, we cannot know which definition of 'woman' we should use. This, however, poses a problem for deflationists: They need to prove 'woman' a term with many definitions before they can demand that we abide by normative considerations regarding 'woman's' use. They cannot, however, provide such proof, due to such a quest being realist in nature -- the antithesis to deflationism. And because deflationists cannot prove deflationism about 'woman' correct, they cannot demand that we consult normative considerations to privilege definitions of 'woman.' Therefore, after considering and responding to some ways around this objection from Robin Dembroff (2018) and Esa Díaz-León (2016 & 2018), I conclude that deflationist methods of privilege should be abandoned.

Amy-Jean Viljoen (UWC)

The Philosophy of Empathy: Defining Empathy in a Multicultural Context under Pandemic Conditions.

Various philosophical debates exist around the importance of empathy and its functionality in optimal human behaviour. Empathy, as a construct, is often defined as having both affective and cognitive aspects, however, researchers and scholars alike, have yet to reach a consensus as to how empathy develops. Empathy was first defined by Titchener, in 1909, who coined the term empathy as a process of humanising objects, of reading or feeling 'ourselves' into them. Here, it is evident that empathy is used more so as a universal term, which should be included in all human interactions. Thus, empathy is seen as a social skill that can be improved upon over time. However, academic literature fails to discuss empathy as a non-Western philosophy as there is limited multicultural research regarding the impact of contextual factors on empathy development, across cultures and contexts. This philosophical construct of empathy is worth exploring in the South African context, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, where social isolation could have impacted the development of social skills.

Therefore, this research study aims to explore the various factors which influenced the conceptualisation and development of empathy, where social interaction was limited. In this study, the participants were postgraduate psychology students at a South African university. The rationale for the selection of this sample is based on the fact that these students should have developed empathy within their various psychology programmes, under pandemic conditions, as the course content should have been structured to accommodate social development. Before the data was collected, all ethical considerations were strictly employed to ensure confidentiality, whereby the researcher protected the information and details of each participant. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) at the Higher Educational Institution (HEI). The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using the ATLAS.ti 23 qualitative data management software to thematically explore emerging patterns. From the findings, it was evident that empathy is multi-faceted and context-specific, as various factors impacted the development of empathy in a multicultural context. In terms of the recommendations, more Western-based constructs should be de-bunked and re-defined within multicultural contexts. Furthermore, it could be useful to explore the linkage between past experiences (rooted in historically disadvantaged communities) and empathy development, in future research.

Miles Collison (UWC)

Defending the practicality of procreation ethics

Is it morally permissible to bring children into existence? This is a question that has been addressed by numerous academics, or what we may call 'procreation ethicists'. In a response to this very controversial debate, Nicholas Smyth, makes the surprising claim that procreation ethicists (both anti- and pro-natalists) are in fact not doing ethics at all. Smyth argues for a shift in moral philosophy that rests on the claim that each moral philosopher ought to answer two

important questions: 'What actions should I take?', and 'Why?' Smyth contends that procreation ethics in general fails to address these two aspects, and so fails as a moral philosophy. I oppose his thesis based on three major issues; his notion of applied ethics is flawed, he does not present a clear way to address the questions of practicality and authority, and finally that the 'existential grounding' concept he presents is problematic and presents deeper issues for the moral philosophy he advocates.

Gabriele James (UCT)

Natalist and epistemic injustice

Natalism is an attitude of social bias in favour of gestational motherhood (Petropanagos, 2017), which can be expressed formally, in public policy, or informally and often subtly in the social fabric. It has drawn criticism for unjustly constraining the autonomy of women, violating liberal neutrality (when it is expressed in state policy), and for encouraging population growth in the face of climate crisis and scarce natural resources.

One of the social operations of natalism is the production of a variety of stereotypes. Research suggests that non-parents (especially voluntarily child-free women) face stereotypes of selfishness, emotional instability, being unfulfilled, and lacking warmth (Bays, 2017). A relatively unexamined consequence of these stereotypes is the role they play in the denial of credibility to non-parents, who are treated as faulty perceivers (due to their vicious character), and/or untrustworthy reporters, of their own experiences and values.

In my paper I will utilize these insights to develop a novel critique of natalism: that it tends to generate systemic epistemic injustices (Fricker, 2007) towards both parents and non-parents. I will argue that through the operation of these and other various stereotypes regarding the social roles of parents and non-parents, as well as what is considered the 'normal' experiences of parenting, natalism generates testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. Furthermore, I contend that it is voluntarily child-free women who are the most significant victims of this injustice.

Jess Lerm (UWC)

Doing what's right because it's right: a second chance for the *de dicto* account of moral praiseworthiness

When is an action morally praiseworthy? There are two rival accounts. The first, traditional account is largely ascribed to Kant, and holds that an action is morally praiseworthy when it is performed out of a sense of duty, just because it's moral, or -- as the contemporary literature puts it -- out of *de dicto* moral concern. This *de dicto* account of moral praiseworthiness has been largely supplanted in contemporary metaethics by the *de re* view. According to this latter view, an action is morally praiseworthy when it is performed out of an appreciation of the reasons that *make* it moral in the first place: justice, or honesty, or compassion, or *ubuntu*, etc. In this paper I critically analyze the main arguments that have been put forward in favour of the *de re* view and against the *de dicto*: Williams' "one thought too many" argument, Arpaly's error argument, Arpaly's Huckleberry Finn argument and Smith's fetishism argument. I aim to counter each, concluding that support for the *de re* view is not quite as strong as it might have seemed, and that the *de dicto* account of moral praiseworthiness deserves at least a second chance.

Ivan Bock (SU)

Towards A Nonideal Theory of Virtue Ethics: Clarifying the Situationist Challenge and Discussing a Preliminary Path Forward

Proponents of virtue ethics argue that the *psychological realism* entailed by theories of virtue has certain advantages and strengths that make it preferable over the alternatives. In light of this psychological realism, criticism has been raised against virtue ethics, which argues that its psychological realism presupposes a *highly integrated* deliberative capacity thanks to *robust global character traits*, and psychological research and findings undermine this presupposition. This threat is called *situationism* - owing to the fact that morally irrelevant situational factors can influence an agent's behaviour in significant ways. In this talk, I will argue that the situationist critique succeeds in problematising classical conceptions of virtuous character, but a revised theory of virtue can retain the strengths that virtue ethicists usually appeal to. I start by explaining and clarifying the psychological realism that is so useful for evaluating agents and assisting in moral deliberation while paying special attention to the challenge of situationism. I then briefly highlight the many responses given by virtue ethicists and discuss why they fail at providing a complete answer to the challenge. I focus on the responses from philosophers such as Merritt and Alfano, who accept some of the empirical findings of situationism but argue that we can reform and structure situations, institutions, and organisations such that they are conducive toward virtue - what Alfano calls *factitious virtue*. I argue that this is only a partial response and provides what can be called a theory of *social virtue*. I also argue that the suggestions/practices

to reform and select situations conducive toward virtue are themselves vulnerable to the situationist challenge if taken to be behaviours the agent needs to practice. A theory of *individual virtue* must also be provided to respond to the situationist challenge fully. In the final section, I discuss a preliminary set of suggestions to reform our understanding of virtuous character and provide an account of what I call *nonideal virtue theory* - borrowing the terms *ideal* and *nonideal theory* from political philosophy - that relies on a similar set of practical suggestions for making the world more conducive toward virtue but focusing these suggestions on the steps individuals can take for moving closer to virtuous character. My proposal relies heavily on the empirical research concerning Cognitive Behavioral Therapy as a natural off-shoot of Stoic virtue theory and a promising and empirically feasible account of cultivating virtuous character.

Minka Woermann (SU)

Conceptualising flow experiences as a channel of creativity

We have all – at points in our lives – experienced the exhilaration of seamless, seemingly automated, yet completely focused, activity in a specific practice. This experience, which is referred to as ‘flow’, was pioneered as a field of research in positive psychology by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and has recently become a topic of interest in neuroscience. Little has, however, been written on flow experiences in philosophy, even though the flow experience presents us with a very different type of experience to our normal phenomenological engagement with world and with the objects of practice. In this talk, I shall, following Csikszentmihalyi, give a broad overview of flow characteristics, before turning my attention to flow in creative activities specifically. Although ‘creative flow’ is a subdomain of flow studies in general, in psychology the interest is in whether, and to what extent, the general characteristics of flow hold for flow experiences in the creative domains specifically. What is not interrogated, and what is of interest in this talk, is whether, and under what conditions, flow experiences can act as a channel of creativity as such. I shall argue that flow can stimulate creative output, but only given a very specific understanding of the nature of the flow experience. To make my argument, I draw on insights from the psychology, neuroscience, and philosophy. I also draw on the anecdotal accounts of the creative process offered by some of the greatest minds in our intellectual history.

JP Smit (SU) & Stan du Plessis (SU)

Philosophical Elements of University Finance

In this paper we sketch the problem space encountered when thinking about university finance. We look at two issues specifically. First, the goals that a university should pursue are unclear, and ideals commonly viewed as desirable are of dubious value. Second, the agency that universities have to increase their income is constrained in a way that has perverse effects in practice. We also look at the relation between the contemporary university and its funding model, and explore different ways of thinking about university finance.

Tarryn Harding (UCT)

Paradoxes of Infinity and Beyond: the case of Cantor’s Domain Principle

A central tenet of Cantor’s set theory is what Michael Hallett (1986) dubs the Domain Principle: “[e]ach potential infinite, if it is rigorously applicable mathematically, presupposes an actual infinite.” This principle is foundational in securing the infinite sets (and the ‘real, whole’ numbers corresponding to them) that populate Cantor’s realm of the transfinite. The Domain Principle is encapsulated especially vividly in Cantor’s second ordinal generating principle – whereby, given any unending sequence of ordinals, there is an infinite set containing them all, which itself corresponds to a new, unique ordinal. However, to apply the second ordinal generating principle to one particular unending sequence of ordinals – the ordinal sequence in its *entirety* – is to generate Burali-Forti’s Paradox of the greatest ordinal. Consequently, it is incumbent on those who, in the face of the contradiction, wish to restrict Cantor’s second ordinal generating principle, to justify why the ordinal sequence as a whole constitutes the relevant exception. Cantor’s own attempt at such a justification hinges on his account of the Absolute, where this is a species of infinity – corresponding to the ordinal sequence as a whole – that evades mathematical determination (and so is, *a fortiori*, an exception to Cantor’s second principle). This paper will be concerned with how we are to view the Absolute: specifically, I will argue that, if we are to understand the Absolute as a potential infinite, then Cantor’s purported solution is vulnerable to a dilemma, concerning whether Absolute is subject to the Domain Principle. If it is, then it seems *ad hoc* to deny that the actual infinity thereby obtained is not a set (and so, capable of being assigned an ordinal number). Conversely, if the Absolute is *not* subject to the Domain Principle, we are left wanting for an account of why the Domain Principle engenders paradox in this particular instance, as opposed to the other potential infinities of the transfinite realm.

Erik Persson (Lund University)

Towards a family resemblance definition of 'life'

Finding a good definition of 'Life' is a task that has turned out to be very difficult. Some say, it is even impossible, or at least meaningless. We believe both that it is possible, and that it is important to achieve at least a tentative definition of 'Life', especially when searching for the origin of life on Earth or for extraterrestrial life, and when trying to create life in the laboratory. We do not believe, however, that trying to make a list of necessary properties that together makes up a sufficient set of criteria for being alive (a *de re* definition), is the best way of approaching the task. The main problem with this type of definition is that it is inherently essentialistic. It is doubtful, however, that life as it is understood today, that is, in Darwinian terms, can be meaningfully said to have an essence. Instead, we suggest a cluster definition inspired by Wittgenstein's *family resemblance definition*. According to this approach, something is alive if it has a number of properties that are associated with being alive though it does not have to have all these properties and it does not have to have exactly the same set of properties as any other living entity.

We use a combination of philosophical theory, biology, and mathematical modelling to produce a list of properties closely associated with life, and combinations of these properties, such that it is necessary and sufficient to possess one of the combinations but not necessary to possess all the properties (or all the combinations) to be an instance of Life.
