

# WHAT REALLY MATTERS?

## Reflections on Human Values

Organised by the Centre for Ethics as Study in Human Value, University of Pardubice, Czech Republic

[Zoom Link to Conference\\*](#) | [Facebook Event](#) | [Centre for Ethics](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Organiser Contacts](#)

\*Zoom link is active 15 minutes prior to each session \*\*Text in BLUE is hyperlinked

### Conference Programme

#### Keynote Speakers

[Roger Crisp](#), Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford University

[Debbie Roberts](#), Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh

#### Schedule (all times are in Central European Summer Time, CEST)

#### TUESDAY, AUGUST 23

For those in town, there will be a pub 'meet and greet' at [Che's Cafebar](#) at 19:00.

#### WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24

**9:00-9:45 Yoga in the Park** – Led by Olena Kushyna in [Tyršovy Park](#). Yoga mats provided. ([Register Here](#))

**10:45-11:15 Coffee Reception & Registration** in the Historical Building

**11:15-11:30 Opening remarks and welcome introduction speech** by Patrick Keenan

#### First Panel & Keynote (Chair: [Peter Tuck](#))

**11:30-13:00 – KEYNOTE: Roger Crisp (Oxford University)** *What Matters in Survival?*

**13:00-13:30 – *Climate Duties and Moral Dilemmas*** presented by Ilias Voiron (University of Fribourg & Jean-Moulin Lyon 3 University)

#### 13:30-15:30 LUNCH BREAK ([RESTAURANT SUGGESTIONS](#))

#### Second Panel (Chair: [Vladimir Lukić](#))

**15:30-16:00 – *The Limitations of Speaking About 'What Really Matters' in Terms of Value*** presented by Philip Strammer (Centre for Ethics)

**16:00-16:30 – *I Don't Want to be Right, I Want to Live: A Pragmatist Approach to Value Theory*** presented by Aleksa Zdravković (University of Niš)

**16:30-17:00 – *Conditional Grounds: Realism, Anti-Realism, and the Unity of Normativity*** presented by Alexander Arridge (Oxford University)

17:00-18:30 WINE RECEPTION in the **Historical Building**  
19:00 DINNER at **U Bílého Koníčka**

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## THURSDAY, AUGUST 25

### First Panel (Chair: Philip Strammer)

10:00-10:30 – *The Value of Novelty Within a Perfectionist Theory of the Good Life* presented by Charles Coatsworth (Durham University)

10:30-11:00 – *The Value of Bad Literature* presented by Diana Kalášková (Centre for Ethics)

### 11-11:30 COFFEE BREAK

### Second Panel (Chair: Patrick Keenan)

11:30-12:00 – *A Critical Analysis of the Central Values in AI Ethics* presented by Rosalie Waelen (University of Twente)

12:00-12:30 – *The Role of Distance in What Matters* presented by David Rozen (Centre for Ethics)

### 12:30-14:30 LUNCH

### Third Panel (Chair: Diana Kalášková)

14:30-15:00 – *Corporality, Pleasure and Perfectionist Values in John Stuart Mill's Conception of the Good Life* presented by Elżbieta Filipow (University of Warsaw)

15:00-15:30 – *The Good of Growth* presented by Patrick Keenan (Centre for Ethics)

15:30-16:00 – *Different Lives, Different Values: A Case for Pluralism About Goals* presented by Peter Tuck & Vladimir Lukić (Centre for Ethics)

17:00 DRINKS at **Baroná Café** & TOUR of the castle (zámek) grounds

19:00 DINNER at **Galerie Café**

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## FRIDAY, AUGUST 26

### First Panel (Chair: David Rozen)

10:00-10:30 – *Faultless Moral Disagreement and Fundamental Value Pluralism* presented by Markus Seethaler (University of Graz)

10:30-11:00 – *The Acquaintance Principle in Ethics* presented by Radu Bumbăcea (University of Leeds)

### 11:00-11:30 COFFEE BREAK

### Second Panel & Keynote (Chair: Olena Kushyna)

11:30-12:00 – *The Value of Personal Autonomy* presented by Perica Jovchevski (Central European University)

12:00-12:30 – *A Comparison in Analytic Metaethics and the Possibility of a "First-Order" Pragmatic View of Genuinely Thick Concepts* presented by Matthew Dodd (Manchester Metropolitan University)

12:30-14:00 – **KEYNOTE: Debbie Roberts (University of Edinburgh)** *Thick Concepts and Access to Evaluative Reality*

14:30 **END-OF-CONFERENCE CELEBRATION | BBQ, DRINKS & PUB QUIZ at The Factory**

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August 24, 11:30-13:00 – KEYNOTE: Professor Roger Crisp

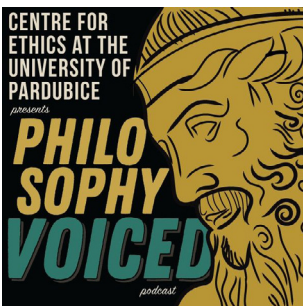
### WHAT MATTERS IN SURVIVAL?

In recent decades, reductionist views of personal identity have become increasingly popular, in part because of the influence of the views of Derek Parfit. Focusing in particular on Parfit, according to whom what matters is not identity but ‘survival’, this lecture concerns what a reductionist should say about what matters in survival. Its conclusion is that what matters depends as much on the correct theory of well-being as on that of personal identity. The first section is on mattering itself, showing how it is best seen as concerning well-being in particular. Reductionists need to explain how differences in connectedness over time relate to what matters, and many, including Parfit, have held what I shall call the *proportional* view, according to which the value of survival depends on the degree to which I am now connected to my survivor or survivors. I shall suggest in the second section that the proportional view fails to recognize the role of certain *particular* psychological continuities in well-being. I call this the *value-based* view of what matters. Cases of psychological ‘division’ raise the question of *whose* well-being is at stake. The third section of the lecture will argue that in such cases a reductionist must claim that there is a single ‘owner’ of the well-being in question, comprising both the individual before division and the resulting individuals. The lecture concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of different views of well-being for reductionist accounts of what matters.



**Roger Crisp** is Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford University and Uehiro fellow and tutor in philosophy at St. Anne's College, Oxford. His work falls principally within the field of ethics.

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The Centre podcast (Philosophy Voiced) aims to provide lively, philosophically profound exchanges with leading philosophers of our time.

In **THIS EPISODE** of Philosophy Voiced, hosts Peter Tuck, Vladimir Lukić, and Patrick Keenan are joined through Zoom by Roger Crisp. We are discussing a paper written by Professor Crisp called “Towards a Global Hedonism”.

If you would like to read the paper we are discussing, you can access it at the following link:  
<https://academic.oup.com/book/39637/chapter-abstract/339599114?redirectedFrom=fulltext&login=false>

## THICK CONCEPTS AND ACCESS TO EVALUATIVE REALITY

In *Ethics and Limits of Philosophy* Bernard Williams, discussing meta-ethicists who think that there is a sharp distinction between facts and values and that values are not genuine features of the world, writes (my italics):

[F]act-value theorists who rely on linguistic means are bringing their distinction to language rather than finding it there and, in addition, are *unreasonably expecting that when the distinction is revealed it will be very near the surface of language. There is no reason to expect that to be so.* If we are engaged in a fraudulent or self-deceiving business of reading our values into the world, our language is likely to be deeply implicated.[1]

The particular bits evaluative language that Williams has in mind here are those that express thick concepts.

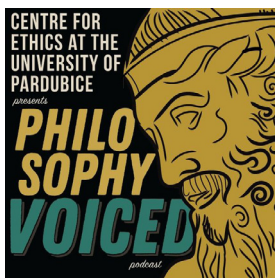
There has been much recent work on thick concepts and their significance which has, in different ways, taken Williams' message to heart. These are recent arguments designed to show that though the relevant fact-value distinction is not 'very near the surface of language' it can nonetheless be uncovered and that thick concepts don't have any distinctive significance in metaethical debates. In this paper I argue that these arguments have not sufficiently appreciated the phenomenon of embedded evaluation in thick concepts. Indeed, once this phenomenon is sufficiently appreciated, I argue, we have good reason to think that our values are just as much 'in the world' as the non-evaluative facts are. And there is no fraud or self-deception perpetuated in believing so.

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[1] Williams (1985: 130) my italics. See also Moore (2006: 214–216). Williams has Hare in mind here.



**Debbie Roberts** is a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. She works mainly in metaethics, and is particularly interested in the metaphysics of the normative.



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In **THIS EPISODE** of Philosophy Voiced, hosts Peter Tuck, Vladimir Lukić, and Patrick Keenan are joined through Zoom by Debbie Roberts. We are discussing a paper written by Dr. Roberts called "Depending on the Thick".

If you would like to read the paper we are discussing, you can access it at the following link: <https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/en/publications/i-depending-on-the-thick>

### **I Don't Want to be Right, I Want to Live: A Pragmatist Approach to Value Theory**

**Aleksa Zdravković** (University of Niš)

In this paper, I hope to demonstrate how an anti-theoretical approach to values relating to human life may bear more fruit when it comes to grappling with the issues of cultural relativism and the multiplicity of values. Using Dewey's Theory of Valuation, I will attempt to make a case for absolute intrinsic value denial as well as absolute intrinsic moral value denial.

Having established that there is no such thing as intrinsic value or even intrinsic moral value, I will go on to outline what I believe is the general problem of contemporary moral and ethical life. Much of this outline will be based on Van Den Akker's Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect, and Depth after Postmodernism. Having painted the rough outline of this problem, I will attempt to apply Dewey's pragmatic ethics in hopes of resolving the metamodern tension of cultural relativism and multiplicity of values.

I hope on arriving at a conclusion that takes a relatively strong anti-theoretical stance when it comes to values, demonstrating that it is not our ability to arrive at, scrutinize, or even glorify values vis-à-vis philosophy that allows for them to carry weight, rather, it is our ability to live them only in so far they allow for us so to live well.

### **Conditional Grounds: Realism, Anti-Realism, and the Unity of Normativity**

**Alexander Arridge** (Oxford University)

What distinguishes meta-ethical realism from meta-ethical anti-realism? This paper argues, first, that this distinction is best understood in terms of competing explanations of normative supervenience: namely, explanations of how descriptive facts come to be normatively marked-out in the world as the grounds of (fundamental) normative facts.

This paper then argues that the idea of a conditional ground is essential to our distinguishing realist from anti-realist explanations of supervenience. In brief, a conditional ground is not a ground that grounds conditionally (although it may be): a ground that grounds conditionally is a fact that grounds some further fact only if some condition extrinsic to the ground itself obtains. Importantly, if this condition does not obtain, this ground does not cease to be a ground as a result; it remains a ground, albeit a ground that fails successfully to ground anything. A conditional ground, by contrast, is a fact whose status as a ground is itself conditional on something extrinsic to itself; when this condition fails to obtain, the fact that could be a ground in the presence of this condition fails even to have the status of a ground. Its very status as a ground is conditional.

The idea of a conditional ground helps us to distinguish between realist and antirealist meta-ethical theories as follows:

Meta-Ethical Anti-Realism: for all descriptive facts that are the grounds of fundamental normative facts, that fact's status as a ground is conditional upon agents' relating to it, in some way, qua subject;

Meta-Ethical Realism: for all descriptive facts that are the grounds of fundamental normative facts, that fact's status as a ground is not conditional upon agents' relating to it qua subject in any way.

Whatever normative property(s) we take to be fundamental (value, reasons, goodness, etc.) this paper argues that we should understand the realist/anti-realist distinction in this way.

The final part of this paper questions the meta-ethical dogma that one's answer to the realism/anti-realism question must be all-or-nothing; in other words, the assumption that to be realist or anti-realist about normativity is to be so about all of normativity. This paper argues that this assumption is unwarranted: we have good reason to believe that some aspects of normativity are realist, whereas others are anti-realist. More specifically, this paper argues that whereas evaluative facts (goodness, badness, etc.) and deontic facts about evaluative attitudes more readily admit of a realist analysis, deontic facts about actions (rightness, wrongness, etc.) better suit an antirealist analysis.

### **The Value of Novelty Within a Perfectionist Theory of the Good Life**

**Charles Coatsworth** (Durham University)

Each year, millions of people rush out to buy the new iPhone. Simultaneously, millions of people condemn the practice. They do it just for the "novelty" it is often said, the implication being that novelty is specious: it presents as valuable on the outside, but is ultimately hollow on the inside. This annual cycle is representative of a broader cultural understanding of novelty as a temporary, disposable form of value – a kind of Millian "lower" pleasure. My aim is to put pressure on this view.

To truly get to know a work of art, it's often said, one must experience it repeatedly. To know Shakespeare, one must read, and then reread, Shakespeare. I do not deny that there is truth to this view, but in its privileging, our first encounters with such works are neglected. One may know the tragedy of Macbeth more intimately on the fifth, fiftieth, or one-hundredth reading, and this intimacy is rich and valuable in its own way; but it is unlikely that any such rereadings will reach the affective peaks that the first encounter generated.



We might also consider the value of novelty through travel. Travelling is distinct from holidaying or vacationing, for it necessarily implies exploration, discovery; it necessarily implies the new. The philosopher Emily Thomas couches this in terms of 'otherness'. To travel is to expose oneself to 'otherness', and through this unfamiliarity, our understanding of the world itself expands. And it is the novelty of the experience that makes this expansion possible.

My research aims to ground the value of novelty within a perfectionist theory of the good life. According to perfectionism, what is vital to human flourishing is the development of certain paradigmatic capacities. And without novelty – without the new – none of us would ever grow or develop as persons at all.

## **The Role of Distance in What Matters**

**David Rozen** (Centre for Ethics)

The role of distance in our value judgments has often been neglected. E.g. Singer, in his famous pamphlet, after suggesting that not giving all you have to charity for people starving in Bengali is basically the same as letting die a child you see drowning in a lake because you don't want to get your clothes muddy, slacks off this very fundamental issue by the following statement: "I do not think I need to say much in defense of the refusal to take proximity and distance into account." (Singer 1972). I, on the contrary, claim that there has to be said much about it, and in my contribution to the conference, I will focus on clarifying the role of distance in our evaluations from various perspectives.

First of all, it is necessary to distinguish at least a few ways of possible distance; moral phenomena can be distant to our (1) geological location, (2) time location, (3) understanding, and (4) interest. And in my presentation, I will show through several relevant examples how these ways of distance influence what really matters to us. Think about, e.g., the religious conflict in Afghanistan, the war in Syria, the war in Ukraine, the meat industry, and especially climate change, which usually combines all four ways of distance and therefore, it is incredibly complicated for us to approach it morally.

Generally, I will aim to describe our moral psychology concerning various ways of distance. But I will end my contribution with a normative consideration of the problem of distance in our ethical thinking, and I will present the key questions that are difficult to answer in this context. On the descriptive level, distance obviously matters to us, but the normative question of whether it should matter to us is profoundly difficult; my initial hypothesis is that, at least in some cases (especially concerning distance in time), it should.

## **The Value of Bad Literature**

**Diana Kalášková** (Centre for Ethics)

It is more or less accepted that our engagement with literature is valuable, be it for amplifying our knowledge, improving vocabulary etc. Yet, when it comes to the question whether literature can also be a valuable contribution to philosophy, the conclusion isn't entirely clear.

One of the biggest advocates for the place of literature within philosophy is Martha Nussbaum, yet in her account she emphasizes that literature benefits us morally because it cultivates our sensibility and awareness. While I do agree with her that literature can contribute to our moral understanding, I am suspicious about her claim that we learn from literature as it were by following examples of people acting morally well. My worry is that seeing literature this way requires having a prerequisite for what counts as morally good and therefore the possibility of moral contribution is limited to such works that fit the preestablished frame.

In my talk I want to explore the value of also those works of literature where no model worth following is presented (that is what I mean by bad literature), thus I will offer a modified view of how literature can be valuable for philosophy. Since I believe that it is very hard to make universal claims about all literature, I will provide a close reading of Curzio Malaparte's *Kaputt* (an intriguing novel dealing with the horrors of WWII) to hopefully prove that even in this piece of literature can be recognized as being of philosophical value.

## **Corporality, Pleasure, and Perfectionist Values in John Stuart Mill's Conception of the Good Life**

**Elżbieta Filipow** (University of Warsaw)

In John Stuart Mill's ethical theory, utilitarianism and perfectionism are not separable and they may be combined in a total approach to his thought. According to Thomas Hurka's view, it renders a pluralistic theory unifying perfectionist values with non-perfectionist principles of utility. The perfectionist dimension is attributed to a number of issues and perfectionist values are one of them. Living in accordance with those values would be fuller and more successful than living based just on the experience of a subjective mental state of satisfaction.

The presentation aims at presenting the interpretation of John Stuart Mill's conception of good life, which combines hedonistic and perfectionist elements, in accordance with the principles of psychological realism. Thus, I am to show that the presumed lack of consistence in his theory between those elements does not incapacitate it but, on the contrary, speak volumes for its acceptance.

According to the principles of psychology, we need both a subjective mental state of satisfaction and some values that provide our lives with a deeper meaning. Thus, those two elements are necessary to develop a well-rounded, informed adult. That stance is supported by many factors, including the fact that pure perfectionism, with no satisfaction nor positive emotions, would render no fulfilment, which is exemplified by anhedonia. What would make another consequence of underappreciation of pleasure is losing contact with one's own corporality, which deflates the sense of taking care of such values as, for instance, one's health. However, the subjective mental state of

satisfaction only, with no life plan compliant with perfectionist values, would be, in fact, an enslavement by contingent pleasures and would not let to form a fully developed moral agent that makes informed, deliberate life choices.

In the presentation, I am to show why it is possible to unify hedonism and perfectionism according to the principles of psychological realism in John Stuart Mill's ethical theory. To do so, I am to present the interpretation of JS Mill's conception of good life and scrutinize the perfectionist values that make a crucial element of his conception.

## **Climate Duties and Moral Dilemmas**

**Ilias Voiron** (University of Fribourg & Jean-Moulin Lyon 3 University)

If there is a debate in climate ethics on how demanding individual climate duties can be and on how far they can override self-interest, the fact that individual climate duties also compete with other duties has so far received little consideration. Yet competing duties can generate moral dilemmas, i.e. unresolvable moral requirement conflicts. Do individual climate duties actually generate moral dilemmas?

My hypothesis is that they do. Drawing on Walter Sinnott-Armstrong's conceptual framework of moral dilemmas, my argument will follow three steps. First, I will argue in favour of the two presuppositions of this paper's question: there are individual climate duties, and moral dilemmas are possible.

Second, I will determine the necessary and sufficient conditions under which individual climate duties would generate moral dilemmas. I will focus on the two normative conditions: (1) the agent faces (at least) two different binding moral requirements – at least one of which in our case being a climate duty –, and (2) neither is overridden by the other. Two possible explanations of unresolvable moral conflicts, i.e. of the non-overriddenness of each conflicting moral duty, are (1) symmetry and (2) incomparability between the conflicting moral requirements.

Third, I will assess whether those conditions under which individual climate duties generate moral dilemmas are actually met or not. I will consider whether there is indeed symmetry and/or incomparability, either between climate duties themselves, or between climate duties and other duties. On this topic, I will argue (1) that there can be symmetrical cases where climate duties conflict with other climate duties, but (2) that symmetry between climate duties and non-climate duties is doubtful, and however (3) that there can be non-symmetrical cases in which climate duties and other duties are incomparable. I will conclude from this that individual climate duties, together with other (climate and non-climate) moral duties they conflict with, can and do generate moral dilemmas.

## **Faultless Moral Disagreement and Fundamental Value Pluralism**

**Markus Seethaler** (University of Graz)

Many moral disagreements, as disagreements in general, seem to be based on mistakes the involved parties have made and can (at least theoretically) be resolved by pointing out and correcting these mistakes. However, it is often argued that some moral disagreements, for example those especially persisting, don't seem to be based on such mistakes. At least some of them seem to be faultless moral disagreements. While it is usually assumed that the best explanation for faultless moral disagreement is relativism, I argue that a better explanation is a fundamental ethical pluralism. Such a pluralism claims that there is a plurality of moral values at the most fundamental level which may conflict and cannot be reduced to just one value or arranged in a general hierarchical order. I show that more moral disagreements than usually assumed are ambiguous because they involve various fundamental moral values. Therefore, they allow different people to either identify different values or weight and balance mutually recognized values differently. They are faultless because everyone has true and justified – although opposing – beliefs. Since faultless moral disagreements are not based on mistakes, we are justified to remain steadfast in our beliefs in such disagreements. However, in order to do so, we need to acknowledge that the beliefs of those disagreeing with us are also justified. This speaks in favor of an approach to conflict resolution that stresses the importance of a tolerant and open-minded attitude as well as the commitment to a continued rational discourse in case of long-lasting and irresolvable moral disagreement.

## **A Comparison in Analytic Metaethics and the Possibility of a “First-Order” Pragmatic View of Genuinely Thick Concepts**

**Matthew Dodd** (Manchester Metropolitan University)

The prevailing pragmatic view regarding the nature of thick concepts, like 'lewd', 'kind', 'painful', 'entertaining', 'funny', 'exciting', 'grotesque', etc., is that the conceptual meaning of these words are evaluative only by virtue of importing their relevant evaluative properties via the context in which they are used. Call this view: the first-order pragmatic view of the evaluative nature of thick concepts. Yet, there is but another view buried in this first. This subsequent view understands that because the evaluative concept is imported there is no way that thick concepts, like the ones mentioned above, are able to be genuinely thick (where genuine thickness comes from being both evaluative and non-evaluative). Call this view: the second-order pragmatic view of the evaluative nature of thick concepts. The question that is of interest when investigating both the prevailing pragmatic and genuinely thick views of thick concepts is: whether there can be a credible first-order pragmatic account of genuinely thick concepts?

## **The Good of Growth**

**Patrick Keenan** (Centre for Ethics)

GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is a measurement of economic ‘progress’ where a certain understanding of ‘growth’ indicates the health of a particular kind of society. As an economic metric, the growth that GDP measures doesn’t reflect the values or the actual well-being of individuals in that society. GDP cannot measure “the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play,” as Robert F. Kennedy famously said. Essentially, GDP cannot account for aspects of the human experience which we consider to be the most valuable: art, family, knowledge, community, the environment, spirituality, and so on.

Despite this, GDP functions subversively well as an ideological construct of value. And is therefore frequently used as a political and social tool. GDP targets can be met and celebrated, all while overall well-being is declining. At the core of GDP are two related concepts of ‘growth’ and ‘progress’, which are used in service of a capitalist conception of value. But what is the good of this kind of growth, especially when it is widely recognized that it is precisely this capitalist paradigm which is causing irreparable harm to the planetary ecosystem? Thankfully, there is an alternative to GDP which exists in the country of Bhutan. They use a metric called Gross National Happiness (GNH), a measurement that actively considers well-being, and which constitutionalized carbon neutrality and environmental conservation, underscoring a “commitment to nurturing our future citizens,” said King Wangchuck, the 5th King of Bhutan.

This presentation and subsequent paper aim to explore the concepts of ‘progress’ and ‘growth’ which have taken ideological root in GDP by contrasting it with Bhutan’s GNH. I would like to revisit some old questions on happiness and eudaemonia in the context of GNH. I would also ask: What final value is at the root of GNH? Can the two systems really be compared? What is the value of a functioning economy if it isn’t supporting ‘the good life’ in any meaningful sense? What does happiness mean to the Bhutanese? How can we actually measure in any universal sense “that which makes life worthwhile”? My talk will try to make sense of these questions in the wider context of human values.

## **The Value of Personal Autonomy**

**Perica Jovchevski** (Central European University)

In this paper I offer a novel defense of the view that the value of personal autonomy is constitutive of the “ideal of living well”.

Starting from Ronald Dworkin’s distinction between “living well” and “living good” I first discuss two prominent arguments about the value of personal autonomy which tie this value to the ideal of living good: one contextual, which considers autonomy to be constitutive of the ideal of living good in particular social contexts and the other universal, which considers autonomy necessary but not sufficient condition for living good irrespective of the social context in which one acts.

I claim that both arguments are defective, the first one in the major, the second one in the minor premise and claim that overcoming these defects requires an argument for the value of autonomy as constitutive of a different ideal, that of “living well” as referring to people who pursue their autonomously formed conceptions of the good in a righteous and just manner.

I distinguish further the ideal of living well from the “ideal of living a moral or righteous life” as well, demonstrating explicitly the features of autonomy as value within the ideal of living well. I claim that within this ideal personal autonomy forms an interlocking relation with the value of justice: namely that justice puts certain constraints on valuable autonomy, but also autonomy puts certain constraints on devising principles of justice. In the last part of my paper I provide a justification for the interlocking relation and few examples of its application.

## **Different Lives, Different Values: A Case for Pluralism About Goals**

**Peter Tuck/Vladimir Lukić** (Centre for Ethics)

Final value is a term, used in philosophy, that belongs to the thing, or those things, that human beings should orient themselves towards: the telos, or teloses. This concept is often elided with intrinsic value, the value that ‘things have only because of their own properties, and not the properties of any other things’. In the more recent literature these two concepts have been distinguished, on the grounds that their conditions, while perhaps overlapping, are not identical.

Final value can have either a monistic or pluralistic bent, but in either case, one or more candidates for things that have final value are proposed. Our claim in the first part of this paper is that none of the proposed candidates in the literature (e.g. wisdom, health) meet the conditions of the concept of ‘final value’. All of them can be reduced to the concept of ‘the good life’ which is putatively the only valid candidate. If final value exists at all, it is monistic.

The second part of this paper therefore deals with a view which is opposed to the monistic interpretation of “the good life”. We distinguish between two versions of telos – the telos and a telos. The first, the telos is in line with naturalist teleology which tends to give a monist view on the value of the human life. The second view of telos is linked with the pluralist, contextual realm and is closely related to the practices that we pursue. By making this differentiation, we will show why the first view is untenable and, in the process, eliminate the notion of final value. By accepting a second view of teleology, we will still retain value judgments linked to the particular teloses and the goods that they encompass, and, following from that, embrace value pluralism.



## **The Limitations of Speaking About 'What Really Matters' in Terms of Value**

**Philip Strammer** (Centre for Ethics)

In my paper, I will subject to a critical discussion the concept of value as it has currency in large parts of contemporary moral philosophy. To this end, I will proceed in a twofold way: Firstly, I will develop a brief sketch of the historical development of the concept of value as a distinctively moral-philosophical terminus technicus out of the concept of value as it played a central role in the bourgeois economic theory of the 18th and 19th century.

In doing so, I will trace how the concept of moral value has retained some vital features of its economic origins, above all its tendency to present what is subsumed under it as reified, comparable and substitutable. By reverting to Kant's well-known distinction between relative and absolute worth, a distinction that can be understood to mark the radical break between an economic and a moral way of thinking, I will then transition to my second concern, namely to sketch a brief phenomenology of the language involved in talking about what is of greatest moral importance – of what really matters – to us.

In doing so, I will illustrate how the 'jargon of value', precisely due to its economical, objectifying overtones, does not help us to get a better understanding of these phenomena but rather obstructs us from doing so.

## **The Acquaintance Principle in Ethics**

**Radu Bumbăcea** (University of Leeds)

In aesthetics, the acquaintance principle is the claim that in order to judge a work of art, one needs to be acquainted with it, for instance by seeing it in the case of a painting. In this paper, I want to argue that a version of the acquaintance principle applies in ethics as well. To do this, I focus on phenomena of attachment, such as love and friendship. I argue that grasping a concept that denotes a type of attachment, such as 'friendship', does not put one in a position to judge the value of friendship, and that the value of individual friendships is revealed in those instances.

The main argument for this is that what makes one instance more or less valuable is highly idiosyncratic, related to the particular emotions the agent has, to how they relate to the rich common history with the other, and so on, and not to the common essence of all instances of the attachment, which is rather minimal. A general value judgment regarding one type of attachment would then be an assemblage of many individual judgments that one has made, and this judgment is inevitably only tentative, pending further acquaintance with instances.

To conclude, if we accept the acquaintance principle, we can then see the importance of being acquainted with remarkable lives, whether in real life or in novels or films.

## **A Critical Analysis of the Central Values in AI Ethics**

**Rosalie Waelen** (University of Twente)

Values are central in discussions about ethical technology, including ethical Artificial Intelligence (AI). Popular methods to ensure that technologies are 'ethical' are value-sensitive-design or values-in-design approaches, but also ethical guidelines based on moral values and principles. Values that are considered to be important in the context of AI are for example privacy, transparency and fairness.

I will argue that, at least in the context of AI ethics, these values are not fundamental values, but derivatives from a more fundamental value: emancipation. I defend that AI ethics is driven by a fundamental concern for human emancipation in the face of new, very powerful technologies, and that AI ethics values and principles derive from this concern. More precisely, I show how we can define these values in terms of power and understand them as inherently serving emancipation.

This insight is valuable, because until now it is not clear what drives the field of AI ethics and what unites different values advocated by AI ethicists. I will end my presentation by briefly exploring 1) what kind of value emancipation is and why we value it so and 2) to what extent the thesis that values like privacy, transparency and fairness can be reduced to a more fundamental value of emancipation, holds outside of the field of AI ethics.

## Conference Organisers



*Olena  
Kushyna*

**Dissertation subject:** Rethinking Mortality Through Existential Concept of Natality

**Dissertation abstract:**

We are all born, and we are all going to die. My dissertation aims at reconciling these oppositions by tracing the relation between natality and mortality. My hypothesis is that taking into account the features of our existence constituted by being born can reshape our perception of personal mortality and equip us with helpful strategies for dealing with the fear and anxieties caused by death.

In order to tackle this hypothesis, I work on defining the natal features of human existence through excavating the discussion in contemporary feminist philosophy and bringing it into the context of philosophy of existence. In doing so, I aim at explicitly distinguishing the scope of various relationships with the Mother, portraying the Mother's figure accordingly, and acknowledging trans\* and male representations of the Mother's figure. Moreover, I complement the views on natal gender difference by addressing intersexuality. Finally, I implement this widened concept of natality in reconsidering the strategies of coping with mortality.



*Peter Tuck*

**Dissertation subject:** Normative Particularism Applied to First-Order Theories

**Dissertation abstract:**

Moral particularism has been criticized on the grounds that it may be, or is, impossible for the particularist to give a satisfying account of moral education, moral competence, or moral justification, and my project will provide a positive response: that particularists very much can do so. However, these are questions that can only be meaningfully asked of first-order theories, whereas particularism is predicated on a single second-order claim. To address these points, I must first ask whether particularist accounts can be given of the three main strands in first-order theorising: virtue ethics, consequentialism, or deontology. My hypothesis is that particularism cannot be reconciled with virtue ethics, and that the choice is instead between consequentialism and deontology.

For particularism (which is also predicated on a rational view of morality) to be amenable to deontology, there must be the possibility of identifiably normative reasons that point towards some obligatory moral action, that have nothing to do with anything of value. If this is not the case, and all moral reasons have something to do with some evaluation, and therefore, some value, only consequentialism will survive. Therefore, to be able to address the criticisms that inspire this project, I must first consider whether any such reasons exist.



*Vladimir  
Lukić*

**Dissertation subject:** Narrative Procedure of Political Deliberation

**Dissertation abstract:**

There is a paradigm that the core of our political deliberation originates from our rational comprehension of rights. Such is the paradigm of the Rawlsian tradition. However, I would like to propose an alternative that is based on the notion of the narrative. Recent studies from the fields of neuroscience and moral psychology have given us a lot to work with when it comes to the role of narrative in our lives. We are, I believe, first and foremost - narrative beings who construct their world view as a story by processing the social constructs. In that regard, by presupposing the meta-ethical position of social constructivism and the priority of good over right, I would like to argue that the narrative procedure of political deliberation has a lot of explanatory power. The philosopher who will prove to be a big influence to my aim will be Alasdair MacIntyre and his conception of narrative as a form of uniformity of life. Of course, I would dare to alter his conception in order for my goal to be fulfilled.



*Patrick  
Keenan*

**Dissertation subject:** The Challenge Creative Computers Present to the Good Life

**Dissertation abstract:**

If it could one day become the case that computers were creative in the most robust sense of the word, i.e., computers showing real mastery of any creative domain (that is any problem-space in which creativity realizes its solution), be it in science or the arts, then this would represent a paradigm shift unlike anything before in human history and would compel us to rethink our fundamental philosophical conceptions of the good life and their practical applications in the real world. Present case studies of the effect of automation mistakenly imply that creative spaces are "off-limits" for computers, but this may not be the case. This thesis shows that creativity in computers is inevitable (or highly likely) and investigates some changes which could be made to public policy which account for this possibility, such as pushing the case for a citizen's dividend, a universal basic 'income' as a right, which frees up people to lead more meaningful lives -- lives which are full of work, but absent of labor (or the dependence on labor for survival). In the course of this thesis I will also look at Nietzschean and Arendtian conceptions of the individual, the role of technology as totalitarian, creativity as spontaneity and action, and the necessity of Utopian philosophy to reemerge with the individual and the miracle-making faculty of 'action' at its core.



David Rožen

**Dissertation subject:** Attitudes towards the Environment, their Ethical Relevance and the Possibilities of their Transformation

**Dissertation abstract:**

The aim of my dissertation is to clarify our contemporary – seemingly paradoxical – situation that we *know* that many ecosystems are collapsing as a result of human activities, that their collapse will have significant negative consequences for human societies and, in many aspects, we also *know* how to improve their condition. Yet on both a political and personal level this environmental knowledge in most cases does not lead to significant environment-preserving behaviour. Our contemporary situation reveals – contrary to the common assumptions – that (1) *the disruption of planetary ecosystems cannot be taken as a purely technical issue* and that (2) *our environmental behaviour is not primarily determined by our environmental knowledge*. In order to understand (and perhaps change) our contemporary situation, we need to see it perspicuously in a relevant context – we need to go under the misleading technical surface of our environmental discussions and capture clearly with all significant connections what is determinative for our environmental behaviour.

As a starting point for this investigation, I use Wittgenstein's term "attitude" – a basal, often unreflected way of relating to a given issue which defines the scope of our way of seeing connections in the world and therefore also of our behaviour – which I develop in relation to the environment and claim, that (3) *our environmental behaviour is primarily determined through our "attitudes towards the environment"*. My research is a loosely Wittgensteinian investigation of the problematics of the disruption of planetary ecosystems which manifests itself in that I understand the above-mentioned problem as *unclarity* which needs to be *dissolved*: (4) *our problem consists in that we do not see that what we in fact need to deal with are attitudes and that environmental issues are related to the overall framework of human lives and that hence they are primarily not technical, but philosophical and ultimately ethical issues*. Therefore, I see my philosophical task in the clarification of our situation – (5) *it is necessary to examine the constitution and functioning of our attitudes towards the environment in the context of other aspects of our lives with which they are related*. It can be summarized that the aim of my dissertation is to ultimately *cultivate* our way of seeing connections in relation to the environment. topic in a broader perspective.

## PhD Students at Centre for Ethics



Aneta  
Koboutová

**Dissertation subject:** Ethics of public space

**Dissertation abstract:**

Following from my deep interest in working with public space, my work deals with its definition, and some of the ethical questions that relate to it. This term is commonly used in public discourse, but it can be assessed from the point of view of different theories to achieve new conclusions.

My starting point will be Michael Foucault's idea of power and space. Foucault claims that space involves socio-functional properties and goals and has cultural-symbolic and representative layers. In Foucault's concept of power/knowledge, space is denoted as the medium of - and the instrument for - the practice of power. In addition to Foucault's theory I will consider different kinds of approaches to citizenship, activism, urbanism and public space advocated by Henry Lefebvre, M. De Certeau, Mark Paterson, etc. In their works these approaches interact and merge with each other. Groups of people with given approaches can share interests or be in conflict with one another. The groups of people share public space and impose their attitudes, expectations and intentions onto the space. From this, the question follows whether there could be any universal ethics of public space. The premise is that usually, one of the approaches becomes dominant in a given space and this approach comes to dictate the ethical rules implemented in that space. The core problem I would like to address in my work, is how alternative approaches to and experiences of public space can change how public space is used. I will analyse, in a number of concrete cases, how different tools and approaches can work in practice, how they build the ethics of public space or how they can relativize it. In general, the approach of those who hold formal power can be considered as dominant in public space. However, for the conclusion of my work it will be important to observe that the effort of an individual can help to disrupt this power monopoly.



Diana  
Kalášková

**Dissertation subject:** Moral Power of Literature

**Dissertation abstract:**

My dissertation discusses the many various forms that philosophical argumentation may take. One of my guiding thoughts, therefore, is that we will attain a too narrow view of argumentation if we think of it as clear logical inferences only. I want to examine the various ways in which works of literature also can be considered as a form of philosophical argumentation, even if they lack the standard form of a philosophical argument. The literary argumentation engages our imagination, which enables us to see and understand a particular situation in different ways. By reading a work of literature we are confronted with rich images of our complex world which may be convincing in their own right. Narrative literature, therefore, may be said to provide us with different points of view, and can thereby help us see the reality of others: such images of particularities and different points of view are often extremely convincing, and may therefore be worth seeing as forms of argumentation.





İrem Güven

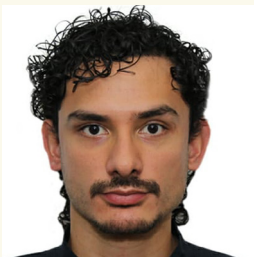
**Dissertation subject:** Eco-Ontology: The Flesh in Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze

**Dissertation abstract:**

The world went through several near-extinction phases in which life as we know it changed drastically. Today, we are again faced with such a crisis, in which human activity has played an important role. A philosophical approach to the environmental problem could be via the criticism of the long-standing notion of man “as the measure of all things”, and a questioning of the way we understand the environment as objects given to his usage. In this project, I intend to provide a critique of anthropocentrism by searching for the terms of an ontology which calls attention to the embodied existence of the *anthropos*, and explores the possibility of a posthumanist subjectivity (or rather a-subjectivity), and a posthumanist community.

To this aim this project (1) will have recourse to Merleau-Ponty’s concept of flesh as a bodily principle, and its significance in establishing a posthumanist ontology; (2) explore the post-structuralist critique (particularly by Deleuze, but also by Derrida) of this concept as a transcendence in which singularity is annihilated, (3) show how the conceptions of self in Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze both work against the traditional conception of self as that which is kept immune from the contamination of non-human others; (4) investigate how to rethink the community as the co-existence of human and non-human entities, or as a place of contamination and becoming.

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Jorge Ernesto  
Arjona

**Dissertation subject:** The Origin of Evil in Plato

**Dissertation abstract:**

In the *Timaeus*, Plato introduces an ontological principle as the mediating instance between the Forms and their instantiations (52a8-b2). Namely, the receptacle, the place where the inscription of the Model Forms on their sensible copies takes place. It is neither sensible nor intelligible. It can only be apprehended by a numbness of the senses and a spurious use of reason. Its existence can only be trusted, not deduced or perceived. Some have argued that the receptacle stands for matter, some that it stands for space, and some others that it stands for both. In any case, the everlasting consequences of these identifications are hard to overstate. Even though Plato himself never explicitly identifies the receptacle with matter, Aristotle suggests that receptacle and matter are the same (*Physics*, 4, 209b11-17). Plotinus takes up Aristotle’s suggestion and develops his own theory of matter as source of evil in *On the Impassibility of Incorporeal Natures*. Even Augustine’s theory of evil can be understood as a response to the cosmogony of the *Timaeus*. In this dissertation I am interested in tracing the textual evidence that justifies or denies the existence of a specifically platonic rationale for the Western association of matter with evilness.

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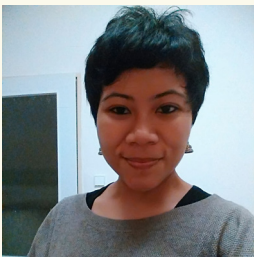
Lyra Koli

**Dissertation subject:** Iris Murdoch’s distinction between philosophy and literature

**Dissertation abstract:**

Iris Murdoch was a philosopher and a novelist who insisted on regarding philosophy and literature as two separate activities. “Philosophy”, she said, “aims to clarify and explain”. Literature, on the other hand, “is full of tricks and magic and deliberate mystification.” Despite this, much of the philosophical as well as literary research on Murdoch has attempted to overcome the divide, often by interpreting her novels as roundabout expressions of her philosophy. Contrary to this tendency, my PhD project aims at digging deeper into her distinction, by engaging with questions such as how literature “is essentially more free and enjoys the ambiguity of the whole man”, what it means that literature (and not philosophy) “is connected with sex” and should be considered as “close dangerous play with unconscious forces”, how she in writing her own novels had the self-conscious ambition of creating works of art as something different from doing philosophy, and why she nevertheless considered Sartre’s *La Nausée* to be a “good philosophical novel that I admire very much”.

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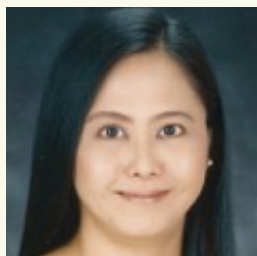


Matti Syiem

**Dissertation subject:** The Role of Shame and Guilt in the Moral Development of Children

**Dissertation abstract:**

The aim of the study is to critically examine the role of shame and guilt in the moral development of children. This work will involve a philosophical analysis of these emotions, and an exploration of the differences between how adults and children experience them. Crucial to this study will be the role that shame and guilt play in moral development in relation to other moral emotions like anger, compassion, disgust and gratitude. Questions that will be explored pertaining to this topic are: are all kinds of shame feelings and guilt feelings morally relevant? To what extent are these emotions important for the moral education of children? I intend to place this study within the philosophical framework of Virtue Ethics by examining whether these emotions contribute to or are detrimental to a morally fulfilling life.



Mira Reyes

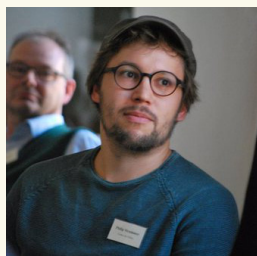
**Dissertation subject:** Otherwise than Anthropocentrism: Levinas Face-to-Face with the Animal

**Dissertation abstract:**

This project searches for a non-anthropocentric animal ethics based upon the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas' critique of onto-theology evades substance and reasonsponsored animal ethics that marginalises other avenues of seeing truth in value such as relationship and emotions. The problem, however, is that Levinas does not grant the animal the status of Face. He explained that animals belong to the Darwinistic struggle for life which is preoccupied with a life of appropriating for the self.

This thesis takes the challenge of:

1. demonstrating that Lévinas' central concepts affirm that the animal does have a Face;
2. showing that Levinasian ethics could sponsor a relational and care approach to animals that is an alternative to the rights, interest, and egalitarian species discourse;
3. criticising that the notion of 'humane' is not feasible without regard for the nonhuman Other.



Philip  
Strammer

**Dissertation subject:** The Transformation of Moral Standards in the Everyday

**Dissertation abstract:**

My PhD project aims at an investigation of the concept of *moral creativity*. Taking the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant as a starting point, I want to show how a moral theory that seems to reject a notion of creativity in the realm of universal morality can, on the basis of its own premises, be shown to be compelled to pave the way for an enriched concept of moral creativity. In attempt to further develop this concept, I will combine a genealogical and a systematic approach, examining to which extent Kant's immediate successors contribute to the project of understanding moral creativity. In this, I will firstly turn to Friedrich Schiller to show how an amalgamation of the moral and the creative 'after Kant' can be envisioned, before turning to G.W.F. Hegel's theory of Sittlichkeit as an attempt to unite morality and creativity as dialectical moments in an encompassing philosophical system. With Hegel, it becomes possible to develop an understanding of the dialectical relationship between the individual and the universal in ethical life, and, thus, of the role the individual plays in creatively restructuring the moral world it inhabits. This insight will then, eventually, be applied to Stanley Cavell's moral perfectionism, further illuminating how we, as individuals, can understand ourselves as continuously partaking in an open-ended process of moral transformation of self and Sittlichkeit. In proceeding thus, I attempt 1) to approximate two domains of normative theory, namely moral philosophy and aesthetics, while 2) converging Classical German philosophy with the primarily Anglophone philosophy of ordinary language going back especially to the late Wittgenstein.

## MAPS & PHOTOS

How to Find Your Way Around Pardubice

### CONFERENCE VENUE

August 24-26



The historical building of the University of Pardubice, Nám. Čsl. Legií 565, Pardubice, Room 03004

### CHE'S CAFE BAR

Meet & Greet | Tuesday, August 23, 19:00



Pernštýnské nám. 63, 530 02 Pardubice I



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## YOGA IN THE PARK

Pre-Conference | Wednesday, August 24, 9-9:45

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Tyršovy sady, 530 02 Pardubice I (in front of Galerie Café)

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## U BÍLÉHO KONÍČKA

Dinner | Wednesday, August 24, 19:00

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Pernštýnské nám. 60, 530 02 Pardubice

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## BARONÁ CAFÉ & CASTLE (ZÁMEK)

Drinks & Tour | Thursday, August 25, 17:00

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Zámek 2, 530 02 Pardubice  
(Baroná Café is in the Zámek Courtyard)

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## GALERIE CAFÉ

Dinner | Thursday, August 25, 19:00

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Sukova tř. 2876, 530 02 Pardubice I

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## THE FACTORY

BBQ, Drinks, Pub Quiz | Friday, August 26, 14:30

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Pernerova 444, 530 02 Pardubice I  
*\*Plant-based BBQ\**

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## RESTAURANT SUGGESTIONS

that are close-by for lunch

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[Hospoda U Čížků Menu](#) | [Map](#)

Traditional Czech cuisine

[Tasty Menu](#) | [Map](#)

Traditional & modern cuisine with seasonal menu

[Falafelova Map](#)

Authentic falafel, take-out but with some seating

[Sangrila Menu](#) | [Map](#)

Indian/Nepalese restaurant with lunch buffet

[Yobi Menu](#) | [Map](#)

Asian fusion, large menu