

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PHILOSOPHY & MEANING IN LIFE

17 TO 19 JANUARY 2022
GMT +2



Introduction to the Fourth International Conference on Philosophy and Meaning in Life

Meaning in life is one of the most fundamental philosophical problems, discussed for centuries but having acquired considerable depth in English-speaking philosophy over the past 30 years. Is there any meaning in life? If so, how can we find it? Can life be meaningful if death is the ultimate end of our existence? How is meaning related to well-being and happiness? What are the moral implications of philosophical debates on meaning in life? Can life be objectively meaningful, or can it only be subjectively meaningful? What are the links between God and meaning? What do we mean by 'meaning' in the first place?

The aim of the conference is to address these fundamental questions from a wide range of philosophical perspectives, including both western and non-western traditions. Potential topics could include, but are not limited to: theoretical approaches to meaning in/of life; the relationship between death and meaning; anti-natalism and nihilism; procreation and extinction; spiritual, religious, and psychological implications of meaning; linguistic, metaphysical, and epistemological issues concerning meaning; meaning in applied ethics, such as bioethics, environmental ethics, and transhumanism; the roles of narrative, identity, and agency; comparative accounts of meaning in religio-philosophical traditions around the world; implications of meaning for health, well-being, or virtue.

Core conference information

- Department of Philosophy, University of Pretoria
 - <https://www.up.ac.za/philosophy/article/2974052/Conferences>
- Conference Website
 - <https://www.up.ac.za/cf-pcml2022>
- Conference Registration Page
 - https://up-ac-za.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAodeigqj8iH9Y7koXL_p9r1C1qcjMPFnNV
- Slack
 - https://join.slack.com/t/philosophyand-fqu1093/shared_invite/zt-1llja4mtt-AHV9450eTlbo1YRqU5ttaw
- Queries
 - philosophymeaninglife@gmail.com

DAY ONE: 17 JANUARY 2022

10:00 - 10:10 PROF THADDEUS METZ, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Opening and Welcoming

PLENARY SESSION 1 10:10 TO 12:00 GMT (+2)

BREAKAWAY 1: FILIPINO PERSPECTIVES

MODERATOR: DR ADEMOLA KAZEEM FAYEMI

10:10-11:00 **MR RENZ VILLACAMPA (UNIVERSITY OF BAGUIO)**

The Malay-Tao: A Filipino Phenomenological Experience of Consciousness

11:10-12:00 **MR JAIRUS ESPIRITU & MS MARIELLE ZOSA (UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN)**

A Filipino Theory of Meaning in Life

BREAKAWAY 2: RELATING TO THE OTHER

MODERATOR: PROF MASAHIRO MORIOKA

10:10-11:00 **MR KAZUKI WATANABE (THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO)**

Tragedy and Meaning: A Consideration on the Relation between Morality and the Meaning in Life

11:10-12:00 **DR ROLAND KIPKE (BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY)**

Meaning and Morality - a New Approach

BREAKAWAY 3: NARRATIVE & TIME

MODERATOR: DR REZA HOSSEINI

10:10-11:00 **DR TOBIAS TOLL (INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI)**

Time and Meaning: The Rhythms of a Meaningful Life

11:10-12:00 **MR MICHAEL GRANADO (SORA SCHOOLS AND STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY)**

Time and the Construction of Meaning

KEYNOTE

MODERATOR: PROF THADDEUS METZ

12:05-13:20 **PROF GUY KAHANE (UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD)**

Individuality

DAY ONE: 17 JANUARY 2022

13:20 - 14:00 Comfort Break

PLENARY SESSION 2 14:00 TO 16:50 GMT (+2)

BREAKAWAY 1: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES

MODERATOR: DR ARIBIAH ATTOE

14:00-14:50 **MR ABIDEMI ISRAEL OGUNYOMI (AUGUSTINE UNIVERSITY)**

Death and the Paradox of the Meaning of Life in Yoruba Existentialist Thought

15:00-15:50 **PROF CHRISTOPHER WAREHAM (UTRECHT UNIVERSITY)**

Life Extension Technologies, Meaning in Life, and African Ethics

16:00-16:50 **OPEN SLOT**

TBC

BREAKAWAY 2: SUBJECTIVISM

MODERATOR: DR CHARLES REPP

14:00-14:50 **PROF MICHAEL HAUSKELLER (UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL)**

Why We Need a Subjectivist Account of Meaning in Life

15:00-15:50 **DR FRANS SVENSSON (UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG)**

The Millian Account of Meaning in Life

16:00-16:50 **DR FRANK MARTELA (AALTO UNIVERSITY)**

Warranted subjectivism about meaning in life

BREAKAWAY 3: EMBODIMENT

PRESENTATIONS ARE PRE-RECORDED: QUESTIONS TO BE POSED IN SLACK

14:00-14:50 **DR HARI NARAYANAN (INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY JODHPUR)**

Pre-recorded: Attention and Meaning

15:00-15:50 **MS BERNICE N M BRIJAN (TILBURG UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY OF YORK)**

Pre-recorded: Being at Home in the World. On Embodiment, Belonging, and Meaning

DAY TWO: 18 JANUARY 2022

PLENARY SESSION 3 10:00 TO 12:50 GMT (+2)

BREAKAWAY 1: BIRTH, ANTI-NATALISM & POPULATION

MODERATOR: PROF MICHAEL HAUSKELLER

10:00-10:50 **PROF MASAHIRO MORIOKA (WASEDA UNIVERSITY)**

A Traumatic Rupture in Life and the Affirmation of Having Been Born

11:00-11:50 **DR KIRK LOUGHEED (LCC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY / UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA)**

Benatar and Metz on Cosmic Meaning and Anti-Natalism

12:00-12:50 **DR ROBERTO FUMAGALLI (KING'S COLLEGE LONDON; LSE; UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA)**

Dissolving the Repugnant Conclusion

BREAKAWAY 2: CARE & LOVE

MODERATOR: DR CORNEL EWUOSO

10:00-10:50 **MS IRIS PARRA JOUNOU (AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA)**

Care, Good Life and Meaning in Life: A Care Ethics Approach

11:00-11:50 **DR GUY MOSHE PINKU (KIBBUTZIM COLLEGE)**

Love as a Refuge for Meaning

12:00-12:50 **DR ANGEL ON KI TING (HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY)**

Virtues of Care and Solidarity, and Meaning in Life

BREAKAWAY 3: RELATING TO THE OTHER

MODERATOR: DR FRANS SVENSSON

10:00-10:50 **DR KAISA KÄRKI (UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI)**

Beyond Involvement with the Self

11:00-11:50 **PROF IDDO LANDAU (UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA)**

Competitive Value, Noncompetitive Value, and Life's Meaning

12:00-12:50 **DR ARIBIAH ATTOE (UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND)**

A Patient-centred Account of Meaning: Lessons from the African Perspective

12:50-13:30 **COMFORT BREAK**

DAY TWO: 18 JANUARY 2022

PLENARY SESSION 4 13:30 TO 16:20 GMT (+2)

BREAKAWAY 1: RELIGION

MODERATOR: DR ASHEEL SINGH

- 13:30-14:20 **DR ZOHEIR BAGHERI NOAPARAST (CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EICHSTATT)**
Pessimistic Hedonism of Omar Khayyam as a Solution to Meaning of a Godless Life
- 14:30-15:20 **DR DAVID MATHESON (CARLETON UNIVERSITY)**
A Naturalist's Perspective on Meaning in Religious Pursuits
- 15:30-16:20 **PROF JON GARTHOFF (UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE)**
Consciousness Is the Meaning in Life

BREAKAWAY 2: SCEPTICISM & PESSIMISM

MODERATOR: DR DAVID SCHOLTZ

- 13:30-14:20 **DR PATRICK O'DONNELL (OAKTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE)**
Philosophical Pessimism and the Contingent Badness of Human Life
- 14:30-15:20 **DR DREW CHASTAIN (LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS)**
Wholeheartedness within Ambivalence toward Life
- 15:30-16:20 **MS AMY LEVINE (UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO)**
The Problem of Meaninglessness from the Practical Point of View

BREAKAWAY 3: PHENOMENOLOGY & FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE

MODERATOR: DR JOHN SANNI

- 13:30-14:20 **MS FLORENCE WAI-MAN CHOI (HIGHER INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY, KU LEUVEN)**
The Importance of First-person Experience for Understanding Meaning of Suffering
- 14:30-15:20 **MS VIJOLE VALINSKAITE (VILNIUS UNIVERSITY)**
The Meaningless Future in Melancholic Depression
- 15:30-16:20 **DR MIRELA OLIVA (UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS)**
The Phenomenon of Birth

DAY TWO: 18 JANUARY 2022

BREAKAWAY 4: CONCEPT OF MEANING

MODERATOR: DR ARIBIAH ATTOE

13:30-14:20 **DR CHARLES REPP (LONGWOOD UNIVERSITY)**

Two Paradigms of Life Meaning

14:30-15:20 **PROF ERNESTO V GARCIA (UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS - AMHERST)**

Hybrid Theories of Meaning in Life vs. Hybrid Theories of Well-Being: What's the Difference?

15:30-16:20 **DR KIRSTEN EGERSTROM (WHATCOM COMMUNITY COLLEGE)**

Against the Failed Agent Model of Meaninglessness

16:20-16:45 **COMFORT BREAK**

KEYNOTE

MODERATOR: PROF THADDEUS METZ

16:45-18:00 **PROF CHESHIRE CALHOUN (ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY)**

Theorizing about Meaning in Life

DAY THREE: 19 JANUARY 2022

PLENARY SESSION 5 14:00 TO 17:50 GMT (+2)

BREAKAWAY 1: DEATH

MODERATOR: DR KIRK LOUGHEED

- 14:00–14:50 **PROF RIVKA WEINBERG (SCRIPPS COLLEGE, CLAREMONT)**
Death Doesn't Make Life More or Less Meaningful
- 15:00–15:50 **MR CHRISTOPHER FRUGE (RUTGERS UNIVERSITY)**
Value After Death
- 16:00–16:50 **PROF MARK RATHBONE (NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY)**
Life, death and happiness: De-commodification in the moral philosophy of Adam Smith
- 17:00–17:50 **PROF PIERRE M. DURAND (UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND)**
The Philosophy and Meaning of Life Seen Through the Lens of Programmed Death

BREAKAWAY 2: FINDING MEANING

MODERATOR: DR ABIODUN AFOLABI

- 14:00–14:50 **DR LAÏNA DROZ (BASQUE CENTER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE)**
Can Thinking of Oneself as Living Through Multispecies Societies Give Meaning to One's Life and Drive Sustainable Lifestyles?
- 15:00–15:50 **DR GEORGE BACKEN (SAINT CLOUD TECHNICAL AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE)**
Meaning in the Experience Machine
- 16:00–16:50 **MR JOSHUA CHANG (UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE)**
The Valuative Theory of Meaningfulness
- 17:00–17:50 **PROF ROBERT ALLINSON (SOKA UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA)**
Confucius and Aristotle: Does the Question of the Philosophy and the Meaning of Life Rest Upon a Mistaken Assumption?

DAY THREE: 19 JANUARY 2022

BREAKAWAY 3: INTERPRETING FIGURES & TRADITIONS

MODERATOR: DR VANESSA FREERKS

14:00-14:50 **OPEN SLOT**

TBC

15:00-15:50 **PROF KIKI BERK (SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIVERSITY)**

Is Beauvoir a Subjectivist about Meaning in Life?

16:00-16:50 **DR ASHEEL SINGH (UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG)**

Toward a Unified Theory of the Meaning of Life: Lessons from Indian Philosophy

17:00-17:50 **MS DANKA RADJENOVIĆ (UNIVERSITY OF KOBLENZ-LANDAU)**

Wittgenstein on the Problem of Life

BREAKAWAY 4: PLANNING & SPONTANEITY

MODERATOR: DR DAVID MATHESON

14:00-14:50 **OPEN SLOT**

TBC

15:00-15:50 **OPEN SLOT**

TBC

16:00-16:50 **DR JARED PARMER (RWTH AACHEN UNIVERSITY)**

Meaning and the Shape of a Life

17:00-17:50 **MR JING HWAN KHOO (SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY)**

In Praise of Being Just This, Merely This

KEYNOTE

MODERATOR: PROF THADDEUS METZ

18:00-19:15 **PROF BERIT BROGAARD (UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI)**

Respectability, Self-Disclosure, and Meaning in Life

COLLECTION OF ABBREVIATED ABSTRACTS



KEYNOTES



PROF GUY KAHANE (UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD)

Individuality

Today's culture tells us to respect, even celebrate, the many ways in which we are different from each other. These are moral claims about how to relate to people, given that they are different. But does it at all matter whether we are different in the first place? I will argue for the non-instrumental value to us of individuality, understood in terms of such differences. Past defences of individuality often unhelpfully conflate it with autonomy or authenticity. But these can come apart from individuality in some imagined cases. Nor can individuality in this sense be captured by the distinction between persons and non-persons, or in terms of mere numerical identity. Most current theories of well-being or meaning in life leave it open that lives utterly lacking in individuality might be wonderfully good and deeply meaningful. I will argue that, in this respect, such theories are seriously incomplete.

PROF CHESHIRE CALHOUN (ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY)

Theorizing about Meaning in Life



Constructing a satisfying theory of what meaningfulness in life consists in is difficult to do. My aim in this talk is to stand back from the business of constructing and evaluating a particular theory and instead do three things: 1) identify the principal difficulties that vex theories of meaningfulness generally, 2) diagnose why theories of meaningfulness run into those difficulties, and 3) suggest how we might proceed.



PROF BERIT BROGAARD (UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI)

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FILIPINO PERSPECTIVES



MR RENZ VILLACAMPA (UNIVERSITY OF BAGUIO)

The Malay-Tao: A Filipino Phenomenological Experience of Consciousness

Proposing that the notion of malay-tao is an exposition of a Filipino phenomenological experience, this paper discusses this indigenous concept and establishes its grounding to Filipino experience of consciousness. By an exposition of a Filipino phenomenological experiences, what the researcher means is that there is a looming claim that Filipinos have no unique experience in terms of engaging with phenomenological activity. This paper claims otherwise by delving on the malay-tao concept and its exposition of the Filipino phenomenological worldview. The aim is to provide a comprehensive discussion on malay-tao as discussed by those who are inside the Filipino normative circle. To do this, the researcher conducted KII to Filipinos who are established in their philosophical studies and as well as FGD among the philosophy students of the Graduate Program of Saint Louis University.

MR JAIRUS ESPIRITU & MS MARIELLE ZOSA (UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN)

A Filipino Theory of Meaning in Life



Much has been written on Filipino values in anthropology, sociology, history, psychology, and philosophy. One central concept among these values is the concept of loob, literally translated as “inside” in English. Loob, however, is almost untranslatable as the inside-ness that the concept implies does not only refer to a physical interior space. In the Filipino social sciences, loob has nonetheless been explored in numerous ways such as being a “cave” of Filipino thought, an emotive state, a true self, a center of personality, a world of being, and a core indigenous value (Pe-Pua, 2017). However, in recent ethical philosophy, loob is sometimes used in contexts where it can aptly be translated as “relational will” since it is a will directed towards others (Reyes, 2015). The phrase utang-na-loob, on the other hand, is a central ethical concept which entails an obligation that cannot be repaid (Mercado, 1974; De Castro, 1995; Reyes, 2015). There seems to be a consensus among philosophers, therefore, that loob is an ethical interiority which is constituted by good will towards others. It led Jeremiah Reyes to conclude that loob is a central concept in what he calls a Filipino virtue ethics based on the precolonial communal and animistic culture, and the Aristotelian-Thomistic influence of Catholic-Spanish colonization.

RELATING TO THE OTHER



MR KAZUKI WATANABE (THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO)

Tragedy and Meaning: A Consideration on the Relation between Morality and the Meaning in Life

In this paper, I will examine the relation between morality and meaning inspired by the moral philosophy of Bernard Williams, and propose practical considerations on the topic from his argument. Based on the claim that one's meaning in life is ultimately independent of the control of morality, I will argue that moral philosophers should take seriously the importance of the cases of tragedy in which our meaning in life is crushed. This paper consists of three parts. First, I will examine the argument from the depth of meaning and reconstruct a Williamsian defenses of it. Second, I will cast light on Williams' overlooked discussion of tragedy. Third, I will propose some practical considerations from the discussion of tragedy.

DR ROLAND KIPKE (BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY)

Meaning and Morality - a New Approach



The relationship between meaningfulness and morality remains unclear within the philosophical discussion of meaning in life (provided an at least partly objectivist understanding of meaning). On the one hand, the difference between meaning and morality is emphasized. Accordingly, meaning is understood as an independent normative category, a third value beyond happiness and morality. On the other hand, moral behavior is often seen as something that confers meaning on life. That is contradictory. In my lecture I present a new proposal: meaningfulness is not one value among others, but the fundamental value of life, so that morality is only a sub-area of meaningfulness. This proposal does not only solve the mentioned contradiction, but can also answer other questions about the relationship between meaningfulness and morality.

NARRATIVE & TIME



DR TOBIAS TOLL (INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI)

Time and Meaning: The Rhythms of a Meaningful Life

In this paper I investigate the connection between time and meaning. Meaning can be formed through profound connections between a person and their environment but these connections take time to form. Although many philosophers (perhaps most famously Martin Heidegger) have analysed this process, I propose that Henri Lefebvre's Rhythmanalysis provides us with a particularly fruitful analysis for understanding meaning in life through time. I will contrast the meaning that emerges from rhythm analysis with 'narrative meaning'. I will mostly use Antti Kauppinen's concept of coherent projects as a model for 'narrative meaning'. I will argue that in order to find meaningfulness one must first engage with and overcome one's narrative understanding of self and context, which has served us well as culture savvy adults. One needs to begin a transformative life. One does that by affecting one's world and being affected by it in return. Henri Lefebvre defines a rhythm as a repetition with a difference, and as we repeatedly interact with aspects of our world, always the same and always differently, it changes in our minds, and we change in return, resonating and co-transforming. Such a curious and sincere engagement with one's romantic notions melts the contours of fixed categories, and helps dereify our world. I will draw from depictions of eternal life from popular science fiction. This illustrates which imagination of eternal life may be meaningful, and which may not be. By then bringing back death into the picture we may see which scenarios still remain meaningful to us in our finite lives.

MR MICHAEL GRANADO (SORA SCHOOLS AND STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY)

Time and the Construction of Meaning



The individual affirmation that Life is meaningful rests on a host of psychological processes operative within the individual. As Gilad Hirschberger explains, the creation and maintenance of meaning compromises a sense of self-continuity, a connection between the self, others and the environment and the feeling that one's existence matters. This paper will address issues regarding the philosophy of time; specifically, what sort of metaphysical framework of time would help to explain the construction of meaning within the context of an individual's life? This understanding of time will be developed through the framework of Gaston Bachelard who argues for the reconstruction of the phantom of the past or the illusion of the future, as well as the inherent discontinuous nature of time.

AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES



MR ABIDEMI ISRAEL OGUNYOMI (AUGUSTINE UNIVERSITY)

Death and the Paradox of the Meaning of Life in Yoruba Existentialist Thought

This paper discusses the phenomenon of death as observable in human existence and the kind of paradox it generates regarding its relation to the question of the meaning of life in existentialist Yoruba thought. It adopts the methods of rigorous exposition, conceptual clarification and hermeneutics, drawing its arguments, assertions and contentions from relevant oral, proverbial and textual sources thereby engaging the information derived from those sources critically. That death is real in human existence is incontrovertible: any human being living has, at one time or another, lost a person or persons. This may range from his/her immediate relations to co-workers, friends, enemies, etc. Accordingly, the phenomenon of death in human existence pressurizes certain fundamental questions about the meaning of life itself. If human beings are born into the world and they must die eventually no matter the number of years they spend in it, what meaning is there in life? Can we say that human existence is meaningful at all? What gives life its meaning if it has a meaning at all?

PROF CHRISTOPHER WAREHAM (UTRECHT UNIVERSITY)

Life Extension Technologies, Meaning in Life, and African Ethics



The topic of enhancement is roughly, making use of biotechnologies to improve above the "normal" is high on the agenda in western bioethics. By contrast, African theorists have had had less to say about this subject. Nonetheless, recent African contributions have valuably pointed to problematic relational features of enhancement technologies that tend to be overlooked in more prominent western discussions. In this paper, I apply African theory to the topic of a substantial, or a considerable life extension. While this particular form of enhancement is yet to be directly tackled by African theorists, I make the case that African theories give rise to two specific sorts of concern about meaning that are distinct from similar objections in western literature.

SUBJECTIVISM



PROF MICHAEL HAUSKELLER (UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL)

Why We Need a Subjectivist Account of Meaning in Life

Despite some disagreement about the details, the currently dominant philosophical view about meaning in life is objectivist: the vast majority of those working in the area suggest that the subjective experience of meaningfulness is not needed at all for a life to be meaningful. All that is needed, they argue, is that our lives in some way or other promote, contribute to, or connect with, something that deserves to be valued and is in that sense objectively valuable. There are of course problems with objectivist accounts of meaning, but they are generally declared to be less substantive than the problems that a subjectivist faces. I disagree with this assessment and will present a robust subjectivist account of meaning and defend it against the standard objections.

DR FRANS SVENSSON (UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG)

The Millian Account of Meaning in Life



My aim in this talk is to defend a subjectivist account of what makes a person's life meaningful. More specifically, I will defend an experience-based account that is inspired by some remarks by J. S. Mill, and which I will therefore call the Millian account of meaning in life (or MAM, for short). According to MAM, a person's life exhibits meaning when, and to the extent that, it contains an experience of being part of something greater and more lasting than oneself.



DR FRANK MARTELA (AALTO UNIVERSITY)

Warranted subjectivism about meaning in life

How can life be meaningful? I will here propose an account of meaningfulness I call warranted subjectivism, that aims to navigate the space of not postulating any objective values while not falling victim to the troubles traditional forms of subjectivism have run into. While subjective evaluation of meaningfulness is taken as a necessary condition for a life to be meaningful, it is not sufficient, as one also has to arrive at this evaluation through an inquiry that is sufficiently warranted to make such a subjective conclusion justified. I will demonstrate how warranted subjectivism can have most of the qualities that have made objectivist naturalism attractive, while avoiding the traditional troubles of objectivism.

EMBODIMENT



DR HARI NARAYANAN (INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY JODHPUR)

Attention and Meaning

Building upon the view enunciated by Lain McGilChrist regarding two modes of attention, this paper argues that meaning of life becomes a problem to be solved when we get disconnected from the real world and understand ourselves as separated entities. Embodied approach to meaning especially conceptual metaphor theory and simulation semantics provide a plausible account of the phenomenon of meaning as such. This leaves open the possibility that we can dissolve the problem of meaning if we live with the fact that we are embodied, embedded beings and regain direct connect with the world. This can also be understood in terms of different metaphors used to understand the concept of life and it will be argued that the metaphor of journey is inappropriate for life as a whole and once we overcome this metaphor alternate ways to understand life appear plausible.

MS BERNICE N M BRIJAN (TILBURG UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY OF YORK)

Being at Home in the World. On Embodiment, Belonging, and Meaning



The question of meaning in life is ultimately related to the question of who we are as human beings. One of the most exciting elements of human existence is, as Martin Heidegger describes it, that only in human beings there is a realization and an understanding of what it means to be. Human beings do not only exist, like a stone, a tree or an owl exist, but they are also conscious of their existence. Consciousness creates a certain distinction between us and our given situation, an opening which enables to relate ourselves consciously to the surrounding world, among presences that are at once oddly familiar and uncannily other. This results in one of the biggest abilities of human beings and, at the same time, in their biggest vulnerability: to sustain a life of belonging, a feeling of being at home in the world or, in contrast, living life in the absence of this. In this presentation the ability of human beings to feel at home in the world, the feeling of belonging to the world or to the universe, is the point of the departure for further reflection. The central question the presentation aims to answer is what a conceptualization of belonging contributes to an understanding of meaning in life.

BIRTH, ANTI-NATALISM AND POPULATION



PROF MASAHIRO MORIOKA (WASEDA UNIVERSITY)

A Traumatic Rupture in Life and the Affirmation of Having Been Born

I have advocated the idea of birth affirmation, which means to say yes to one's having been born, as one of the fundamental concepts for the philosophy of life's meaning. This idea goes back to Friedrich Nietzsche and Viktor Frankl. This line of thought faces a difficult problem of how we can affirm one's life when we encounter devastating ruptures in our lives such as the sudden killing of our family members in traffic accidents, natural disasters, and violent crimes. At first sight, it seems almost impossible for us to affirm our having been born to lives in which our loved ones may be brutally killed. However, there may be ways to survive such tragic lives and affirm our having been born.

DR KIRK LOUGHEED (LCC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY/ UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA)

Benatar and Metz on Cosmic Meaning and Anti-Natalism



David Benatar argues that one important consideration in favour of anti-natalism is based on something all humans lack. Namely, we lack cosmic meaning; we will never transcend space and time such that we will have an impact on the entire universe, forever. It's wrong to bring persons into existence knowing they will never have this type of cosmic meaning. Instead of denying Benatar's claim that we lack cosmic meaning, Thaddeus Metz recently argues that our lack of cosmic meaning matters far less than Benatar suggests. One reason for this, according to Metz, is that we ought not to regret lacking a good that we could not have in the first place. He explains this principle in modal terms: the closer the world in which one could access a benefit, the more reasonable are attitudes such as sadness, disappointment, regret when one does not acquire it. I argue that this principle faces a serious counterexample in the form of death. The possible worlds in which one doesn't die are incredibly distant. Yet, it is appropriate to express deep sadness, disappointment, and regret at the fact that one must inevitably face death. Metz is wrong that we shouldn't regret lacking a good unavailable to us in the first. His criticism of Benatar therefore fails.



DR ROBERTO FUMAGALLI (KING'S COLLEGE LONDON; LSE; UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA)

Dissolving the Repugnant Conclusion

This paper articulates and defends a novel dissolution of the so-called repugnant conclusion, which focuses on the notion of life worth living figuring both in Parfit's formulation of the repugnant conclusion and in most responses to such conclusion. The proposed dissolution aims to demonstrate that the notion of life worth living is plagued by multiple ambiguities and that these ambiguities, in turn, hamper meaningful debate about both the issue whether the repugnant conclusion can be avoided and the issue whether the repugnant conclusion is actually repugnant.

CARE & LOVE

**MS IRIS PARRA JOUNOU
(AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA)**

Care, Good Life and Meaning in Life: A Care Ethics Approach



In the last few years, the concept of care has become nuclear in many different research areas such as philosophy, politics, or gender studies among others. This change has been possible due to the efforts to rethink care and the traditional roles related to it. Nowadays, caring involves at the same time, an attitude and a practice, which allows a certain degree of speculation, and at the same time, a view deeply rooted in our everyday lives. Ethics of care promotes an alternative sociopolitical approach to modern theories in which autonomy and competitiveness define human beings. According to this ethic we should establish a new relational, social model, related to the vulnerability. Life is based on the acknowledgement of a link and an interdependency between individuals. Based on the definition given by Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher (1991), caring should be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible.



DR GUY MOSHE PINKU (KIBBUTZIM COLLEGE)

Love as a Refuge for Meaning

There is a controversy regarding the objectivity and subjectivity of meaning in life (Wolf, 2010). I want to suggest that loving relationship creates a meaningful space, where the question of objective worth is irrelevant. This claim is based on the distinction between appraisal and bestowal (Singer, 1984). Bestowal and the care accompanying it are vital elements of loving relationships. In addition to appraisal which can be analyzed and conceptualized, the lover bestows subjective value on the beloved. Accordingly, the question of the beloved's objective worth becomes irrelevant. So, one may say that love is a refuge for meaningfulness from an external, objective point of view.

DR ANGEL ON KI TING (HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY)

Virtues of Care and Solidarity, and Meaning in Life



This paper aims to argue that the virtues of care and solidarity are two important virtues that contribute to a meaningful life. Humans are vulnerable in nature. As there are always circumstances that are out of our control, we are susceptible to different degrees of physical and mental harms, whether those harms are caused intentionally or accidentally; or by external factors or due to our inability to protect ourselves. In other words, we are all disabled to some extent and require the protection from others, while at the same time provide protection in return. For this reason, humans are interdependent rather than independent.

RELATING TO THE OTHER



DR KAISA KÄRKI (UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI)

Beyond Involvement with the Self

This paper questions the link between gaining external recognition and leading a meaningful life in Axel Honneth's theory of recognition. Based on empirical research on meaningful life, I question whether (1) the crave for recognition Honneth's theory of recognition talks about is a general need of all adults in different societies, and (2) whether the fulfillment of this crave for recognition is going to lead to a meaningful life, well-being – or even self-esteem like Honneth argues. This is because in psychology a link between meaningful life and gaining external recognition of others has either not been found or gaining recognition has been found to have only minor effects on meaningful life. Instead, the ability to self-transcend is strongly linked with meaning and psychological well-being. This is something Honneth's theory of recognition and the following ideas of social pathologies have trouble with.

PROF IDDO LANDAU (UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA)

Competitive Value, Noncompetitive Value, and Life's Meaning



Competitive value (CV) is the psychological or social value gained from winning in a competition, the ego gratification sensed when one feels that one has won against others or that one's social status vis-à-vis others has been heightened. Noncompetitive value (NCV) is the value of what is attained with no relation to CV. Advantages of CV for life's meaning include: CV motivates people to do/be their best; CV relates to shared values, standards, and actions, and thus brings people together, diminishes loneliness, and enhances a sense of community; many enjoy CV.

Disadvantages of CV for life's meaning include: there is a lower chance of attaining CV than NCV; CV does not really relate to what we take to be meaningful in life; CV depends to a large degree on what other people do rather than on our own actions; CV is more likely to lead to hoping that others fail, gloating, stress, discontent, hypocrisy, cheating, and violence. I suggest that in many, though not all, cases CV is less advantageous for life's meaning than NVC. Since both CV and NCV are relevant to life's meaning, many have much to gain from noticing the distinction between CV and NCV in their lives, from carefully examining for themselves the extent to which they are moved by both, and from sincerely assessing how helpful for maintaining or augmenting life's meaning the present ratio of these two types of value in their lives is. Unfortunately, this is seldom done.



DR ARIBIAH ATTOE (UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND)

A Patient-centred Account of Meaning

The literature on the question of life's meaning has largely, if not primarily, focused on agent-centred paths to meaningfulness. This path usually involves an individual making a concerted effort towards achieving meaningfulness in life. Thus, even in defining meaning or presenting a concept of meaning, philosophers often approach such a description from an agent-centred perspective. In this essay, I point to the possibility of a patient-centred approach to meaning from the African philosophical perspective. Drawing chiefly from the African relational viewpoints, I draw out a patient-centred variable that ought to be included in any definition of meaningfulness.

RELIGION

DR ZOHEIR BAGHERI NOAPARAST (CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EICHSTATT)

Pessimistic Hedonism of Omar Khayyam as a Solution to Meaning of a Godless Life



Theism is the view that an omniscient, omnipotent, loving God has created the world and preserves it and will bring about ultimate justice in the afterlife. In contrast, naturalism is the view that nature is all that there is and the only method to scrutinize nature is the scientific method. Whether nature is all that there is or reality is more comprehensive than nature lies at the heart of the disagreement between Theism and Naturalism. It may seem that the disagreement between these two worldviews could be stated in one proposition. However, this disagreement has implications for almost all aspects of our lives.



DR DAVID MATHESON (CARLETON UNIVERSITY)

A Naturalist's Perspective on Meaning in Religious Pursuits

As an ontological doctrine, naturalism amounts to the view that the natural world exhausts reality - that "reality consists of nothing but a single all-embracing spatio-temporal system" (Armstrong 1978, p. 261), that "the spacetime world is the whole world" (Kim 2003, p. 90), or, more simply, that "everything is physical" (Papineau 2001, p. 21). To embrace naturalism in this sense along with the thought that there is such a thing as the meaning of life is to commit to the further thought that meaning implicates no world but the natural one. For naturalists about meaning, in other words, it is a matter of "earthly existence" (Baier 1957, p. 28) and wholly "constituted by physical properties" (Metz 2013, p. 164; cf. 2019, p. 6-7).



PROF JON GARTHOFF (UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE)

Consciousness Is the Meaning in Life

Secular accounts of the meaning in life face a dilemma. If they explain meaning by reference to a highest good distinct from mundane, familiar values like well-being or moral conscientiousness, then they engage in speculations which sacrifice the epistemic merits of secularism. But if instead they explain meaning in life by reference to familiar values, then they appear to explain meaning away rather than to provide a ground for it. This essay resolves this dilemma by developing a distinction between the source of value and the greatness of value. In traditional theological ethics these are identified: God is both the greatest good and the source of all that is good. Even as they do not presuppose God, contemporary views often preserve this identity: Neo-Kantian views may propose good willing as both highest good and condition on all goodness, or Neo-Aristotelian views may claim the natural human function explains both which values are highest and why there is any worth in human life.

SCEPTICISM & PESSIMISM

DR PATRICK O'DONNELL (OAKTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE)

Philosophical Pessimism and the Contingent Badness of Human Life



Philosophical pessimism is associated with two stark claims. First, the chances that any given human life will be a happy one are quite low, and perhaps even illusory. Second, human life is an ultimately insignificant, absurd, or otherwise meaningless enterprise playing itself out amidst the indifferent vastness of the cosmos. Given that human beings generally desire happiness and meaning above all else, the world's consistent refusal to satisfy those desires makes human life a very bad prospect indeed. Many find philosophical pessimism repugnant or even immoral. One source of this censure is the longstanding association of pessimism with fatalism, defeatism, or complacency about the sufferings that characterize the human condition. Another is the perception that philosophical pessimism only offers guidance about individual personal conduct rather than guidance about how suffering can be collectively addressed by shared participation in cultural, political, and economic systems. This paper offers a qualified defense of philosophical pessimism which endorses neither fatalism or individualism.



DR DREW CHASTAIN (LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS)

Wholeheartedness within Ambivalence toward Life

I'm ambivalent toward life. I'm not an absolute optimist and I'm not an absolute pessimist, and I'm also not a "realist" who says "life just is," refusing to make a value judgment. My ambivalence toward life produces difficulty in my own life, both because my openness to pessimism produces drag in my motivation, and also because managing the ambivalence itself is a source of cognitive challenge. Nonetheless, I want to show that it still makes sense to deal with the difficulty of ambivalence toward life which, may, in any case, be unavoidable for the reflective mind. Among other things, I also want to show that, being ambivalent (not only pessimistic), we still have good reason to express optimism when times are tough, and also that ambivalence toward life more broadly does not entail universal ambivalence toward everything in life, still allowing for wholeheartedness toward the relationships and projects that provide meaning in life.

MS AMY LEVINE (UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO)

The Problem of Meaninglessness from the Practical Point of View



Philosophical discussions of meaning in life position themselves as distinct from discussions of the meaning of life, which are usually understood as concerned with the question of whether individual human lives have any significance from a cosmic perspective. Accounts of meaning in life characterize a value which can be present in some human lives, and to which we can aspire. Paired, accounts of meaning in life provide an anti-skeptical response to the normative skeptical problem of meaninglessness. However, the problem of meaninglessness can arise from my own perspective and not just from an external point of view. What if none of the things that matter to me really matter? I will argue that this is not a problem that either an account of meaning in life, as an account of the conditions under which a life is meaningful, nor the anti-skeptical response that such an account can make to the problem of the meaning of life, can solve. When I raise this kind of question, I recognize both that I am aiming to live a meaningful life, and that I do not know whether I have correctly understood what it would mean to live a meaningful life, and so what I am aiming at. Rather than see meaning as an end that I pursue alongside other ends, my conception of what it is to live a meaningful life shapes my pursuit of projects implicitly and in the background. In the kind of anxious questioning that I described, I worry about whether I have gotten this implicit background conception right. The skeptical problem of meaninglessness can arise from the fantasy that I have an individual purpose, from the point of view of the universe. I will characterize this concern from an agential perspective: it arises from my own uncertainty about what my life is for, and so how to spend it.

PHENOMENOLOGY & FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE



MS FLORENCE WAI-MAN CHOI (HIGHER INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY, KU LEUVEN)

The Importance of First-person Experience for Understanding Meaning of Suffering

There is an ambiguity of our expectation to the role of the first-person experience for understanding the meaning of suffering. Consider that knowing what you mean can be my friend's empathetic response to my dreadful experience of losing a baby. Yet this response can make me feel very uncomfortable if my friend is a happy mother holding her baby in her arms. It is because not only the lack of her corresponding first-person experience makes her response groundless, but also her background makes the response hurtful. Then, what is the role of understanding subjectively? On the other hand, we seldom expect that a psychologist responds with her first-person experience. Apart from the fact that a psychologist cannot experience everything personally, we believe that her knowledge attained academically and her experiences gained by meeting other patients make her response to my personal suffering well grounded. Then, what is the role of understanding objectively?

MS VIJOLE VALINSKAITE (VILNIUS UNIVERSITY)

The Meaningless Future in Melancholic Depression



The 20th century phenomenologists' ideas on temporality of human existence continue being profoundly influential on phenomenologically oriented psychopathology and psychiatry. One of the most paradigmatic cases of those ideas' application appears in the studies on melancholic depression. Since the moment when French psychiatrist Eugene Minkowski in his famous book *Lived Time* has emphasized that the melancholic patients often perceive the future as blocked, it has become established to consider a disturbance of temporality as an intrinsic trait of melancholic depression. The recent studies on melancholic depression analyse this disturbance drawing on Husserl's account of time consciousness: first it shows how melancholic patients perceive the modes of time, second it explicates the structures of that experience as its condition of possibilities. Husserl's account of time consciousness reveals temporality as a basal level of intentional experience therefore not only an alteration of perception of time but also other characteristics of melancholic depression could be seen as dependent on a disturbance of temporality.



DR MIRELA OLIVA (UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS)

The Phenomenon of Birth

Is my life meaningful if I did not give my consent to be born? We usually recognize meaning in activities, events, or states of affairs that involve some kind of rational and free agency and are accessible to our experience. However, birth escapes our self-awareness. We cannot reflect on our birth before our birth. We were not asked to be born, and we could not reflectively analyze our conception. In this sense, birth poses a more difficult challenge than death. Although being mortal was not our decision either, we can, at least, prepare for death. Before the moment of our death, we can reflect on it and, in extreme cases, even plan it. This paper will inquire into the meaning of birth by using the phenomenological method. I will examine how our birth appears to us and, following this description, address the question of life's meaningfulness.

CONCEPT OF MEANING

DR CHARLES REPP (LONGWOOD UNIVERSITY)

Two Paradigms of Life Meaning



When we talk about meaning in life, what sense does the term meaning carry? In *Finding Meaning in an Imperfect World*, Iddo Landau distinguishes two possible senses. One is the "semantic" sense in which we attribute meaning to linguistic utterances -- as, for example, when we say, "Nieve means snow." The other is the "value" sense we use when we say things like, "You mean a lot to me." In the semantic sense, "meaning" is synonymous with "signifying," while in the value sense it is roughly equivalent to "mattering." Many contemporary theorists, including Thaddeus Metz and Landau himself, translate talk of life meaning into talk of meaning in the value sense. For Metz and Landau, this approach leads to thinking of a meaningful life as one that contains a sufficient amount of value simpliciter or some particularly important kind(s) of value. By contrast, those who identify life meaning with meaning in the semantic sense generally think that finding meaning in life is a matter of grasping or making sense of life under some interpretation. Once disparaged for mistakenly lumping lives into the same conceptual category as words and sentences, this interpretivist approach has gained growing support over the last few years. Metz and Landau have recently posed several challenges for this view, however. In this paper I will be focusing on one form of interpretivism that Metz and Landau criticize and show how it is capable of meeting some of their objections.



PROF ERNESTO V GARCIA (UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS - AMHERST)

Hybrid Theories of Meaning in Life vs. Hybrid Theories of Well-Being: What's the Difference?

Hybrid approaches – which usually involve both subjective and objective elements – are highly attractive for analyzing both meaning in life and well-being. On Susan Wolf's view, (1) meaning in life consists in "active engagement in projects of worth". And on Robert Adams' and Shelly Kagan's views, (2) well-being consists, respectively, in "enjoyment of the excellent" or "enjoying the good". At first glance, it's hard to tell what the difference is between Wolf's hybrid theory of meaning in life (i.e., "active engagement in projects of worth") and Adams' and Kagan's hybrid theories of well-being (i.e., "enjoying the good/the excellent"). My paper has two parts. First, I argue against Wolf's claim that the main difference between meaning in life and well-being (or what she calls 'happiness') is that the latter is essentially egoistic and hedonistic. Contra Wolf, I contend that this assumes an overly narrow and contentious conception of well-being. If we reject Wolf's view, what options are left? Second, I argue that the best way to explain the difference between meaning in life and well-being is that, while both apply to our human lives in general, (a) the primary bearers of well-being are subjects of experience, whereas (b) the primary bearers of meaning are activities. In conclusion, I maintain that the realization of these two elements – viz., the more active dimension of our lives (related to 'finding' or 'achieving' meaning) and the more passive dimension of our lives (related to being subjects who can 'enjoy' and/or 'possess' well-being) – constitutes human flourishing.

DR KIRSTEN EGERSTROM (WHATCOM COMMUNITY COLLEGE)

Against the Failed Agent Model of Meaninglessness



Most philosophers writing on meaning in life tacitly adopt a theoretical understanding of meaninglessness as the absence of meaningfulness. I refer to this understanding as the Standard Account. If, for example, fulfillment is a necessary and sufficient condition for living a meaningful life, then (on the Standard Account) a meaningless life is one where fulfillment is absent. Philosophers who adhere to the Standard Account accept that the worst-case scenario (from the perspective of meaning in life) is a life devoid of positive meaning. In contrast, a handful of philosophers have argued that we can differentiate between the following: positive meaning (i.e. conditions that add meaning to a life), the absence of positive meaning, and negative meaning (Thaddeus Metz 2013; Stephen Campbell & Sven Nyholm 2015). Negative meaning is not merely the absence of meaning but a positively bad state to be in one that can detract from the overall meaningfulness of a life. In this presentation, I take seriously the possibility that the Standard Account is incorrect. I will provide reasons for thinking negative meaning is more than a philosophical fiction. But my focus will be on articulating the nature of negative meaning.

DEATH



PROF RIVKA WEINBERG (SCRIPPS COLLEGE, CLAREMONT)

Death Doesn't Make Life More or Less Meaningful

It is often said that death gives life meaning and takes it away. Death is argued to give life meaning by lending our lives stages, a shape, and the coherence of a narrative, with a beginning, middle, and end. It's argued to undercut life's meaning by annihilating us, limiting the impact and significance of our efforts, and eventually wiping all vestiges of our lives away. In this paper, I argue that death does not play a leading role in making our lives more or less meaningful. I argue that it is time, not death, that is both necessary for meaning yet undermines meaning.

MR CHRISTOPHER FRUGE (RUTGERS UNIVERSITY)

Value After Death



Does our life have value for us after we die? Despite the importance of such a question, many would find it absurd, even incoherent. Once we're dead, the thought goes, we are no longer around to have any wellbeing at all. However, in this paper I argue that this common thought is wrong. In order to make sense of some of our most central normative thoughts and practices, we must hold that a person can have wellbeing after they die. A person must retain value after death in that they can continue to possess value at times after death of occurrences that happened before they died. Therefore, in order to make sense of central normative commitments, we have to reject the narrow condition on possessing value at times that a person can only possess value at times while they are alive. In its place, we have to hold a more permissive condition that allows a person to possess value at some so long as they have been alive at some other time.



PROF MARK RATHBONE (NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY)

Life, death and happiness: De-commodification in the moral philosophy of Adam Smith

The purpose of this article is to highlight the ambiguous nature of death as source of the de-commodification of life in the work of Adam Smith. Smith's book "The theory of moral sentiments" (1759) contains many references to the importance of death as a catalyst for meaningful living and happiness. Death as catalyst refers to the fact that the fear of death has to be overcome in order for our existence to be without anxiety of our demise. The anxiety associated with life is also related to the fact that life can be viewed as a commodity that can be reduced to money value (e.g. labour). It is the most basic possession and as is the case with anything valuable there is the risk of loss e.g. critical illness, accidents, or even murder. The ability to be released from the anxiety associated with the risks of ownership is an important starting point for happiness; although not in all circumstances. For some life can be a source of misery due to material constraints that fills a person with anxiety.

PROF PIERRE M. DURAND (UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND)

The Philosophy and Meaning of Life Seen Through the Lens of Programmed Death



Life and death are usually considered antonyms and biologists typically define death by referring to the cessation of one or other life process. But is this necessarily so? Recent advances in philosophy of biology suggest that death is not always the opposite of life. Causes of death may be extrinsic to the organism, for example, predation, illness, or physico-chemical damage. However, there are also non-incident, endogenous causes of death. These are heritable, genetically programmed kinds of organismal death. Programmed forms of death (PD), and particularly programmed cell death (PCD), manifest in individuals across all scales of life from prokaryotes and unicellular eukaryotes to multicellular organisms and social insects. In some cases, single celled organisms initiate their own demise, which maintains microbial populations or communities. PCD also facilitated the evolution of more complex kinds of individuals, for example, multicellular plants and animals, and in social animals behavioral suicide or PD of the entire organism may benefit relatives. What has emerged is that PCD, and occasionally PD, is a facilitator of life and lies at the heart of complexity evolution in biological individuals. Life and death are not necessarily oppositional and occasionally even exhibit features of coevolution. To fully appreciate the meaning of life, therefore, we must also understand the meaning of death.

FINDING MEANING



DR LAÿNA DROZ (BASQUE CENTER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE)

Can Thinking of Oneself as Living Through Multispecies Societies Give Meaning to One's Life and Drive Sustainable Lifestyles?

Meaningfulness has been shown to be a key concept for understanding committed action for sustainability. Natural elements (such as forests and rivers), abstract representations of Nature, as well as other-than-human living beings can give meaning to one's human life in different ways. To be part of a greater context, such as Nature's web of life can be a source of meaning. One's life story can appear more beautiful and make more sense when told as interwoven with narratives of living along with other species and admiring the beauty and diversity of life on Earth. Moreover, in the case of environmental activism, to act for nature, make a positive difference in the world, and design one's life in a sustainable way can give purpose to one's life. To live sustainably and engage in advocacy for nature can give rise to joy and a sense of achievement while pushing away darker feelings such as climate anxiety or ecological grief. This paper explores how we are living through and mutually dependent on diverse other species at different scales from the human microbiome within our individual bodies to the fresh air produced by healthy ecosystems. It sketches the idea of multispecies societies and explores how this idea could influence one's view of the self, give meaning to one's life and foster commitments for sustainability.

DR GEORGE BACKEN (SAINT CLOUD TECHNICAL AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE)

Meaning in the Experience Machine



Experience machine scenarios refute subjectivists accounts of value. Consequently, if life is meaningful, objective value is either necessary (hybrid accounts) or necessary and sufficient (objectivist accounts). I hope to reverse this thinking. Given the Absurd, objectivist and hybrid accounts focus on meaning in life than meaning of life. This move is untenable, since fallacious and fails to satisfy the function of meaning theory. Further, a type of subjectivism, unitive subjectivism, is necessary and sufficient for meaning. This is a state of self-transcendence or ego dissolution. Such an existence is effortless, rewarding, compassionate, and liberated from the creep of nihilism.



MR JOSHUA CHANG (UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE)

The Valuative Theory of Meaningfulness

This presentation is derived from my dissertation, which concerns life's meaning. I start by briefly analyzing the concept of meaning in life, which I construe as a type of final value obtained through sense-making, purpose-formation, and being important. This first part analyzes meaning while the second part probes into life. Regarding this second stage, I make a distinction concerning an individual human life between who one is and the life one lives—that is, facts about one's identity, the 'self,' and facts about one's living, the 'lived life.' Focusing on those aspects of the self with valuative implications, the essential idea of this theory is that a meaningful life is one that bridges the absurd gap between who we are with the life we live towards a greater value.

PROF ROBERT ALLINSON (SOKA UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA)

Confucius and Aristotle: Does the Question of the Philosophy and the Meaning of Life Rest Upon a Mistaken Assumption?



What is the mistaken assumption that the question of the Philosophy and the Meaning of Life rests upon? My paper examines the ethics of both Confucianism and Aristotelianism with respect to answering this question. I have spent half of my teaching career in the West and half in the East, where I was Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the sole Westerner in a Department of Chinese professors. My paper presents the arguments compiled from a lifetime as a professional philosopher teaching both in Asia and the USA (including as a Senior Visiting Professor at Waseda University) that are found in Confucius' Analects and Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, to indicate that the question of the meaning of life does not arise, and why.

INTERPRETING FIGURES & TRADITIONS



PROF KIKI BERK (SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIVERSITY)

Is Beauvoir a Subjectivist about Meaning in Life?

Simone de Beauvoir's views on meaning have received very little attention in the contemporary analytic debate. In a previous paper, I began addressing this oversight by offering a systematic account of Beauvoir's view on meaning in life based on various writings from her vast oeuvre. This paper builds on this previous work. In particular, it answers the question of how Beauvoir's view on meaning in life ought to be categorized within the standard theoretical framework in analytic philosophy. According to this framework, theories of meaning divide into four main categories: supernaturalism, nihilism, subjective naturalism, and objective naturalism. Contemporary philosophers typically classify Existentialists (e.g., Sartre, Camus, and Beauvoir) as subjectivist naturalists (e.g., Thaddeus Metz [2013]), and some of Beauvoir's own writings seem to support this interpretation. A careful and systematic examination of Beauvoir's work, however, does not support this view. In this paper I argue that Beauvoir's position combines both subjectivist and objectivist elements and so is best categorized as a hybrid position. However, as I explain in the paper, this position is significantly different from other views that have been classified in this way, such as that of Susan Wolf (2010).

DR ASHEEL SINGH (UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG)

Toward a Unified Theory of the Meaning of Life: Lessons from Indian Philosophy



Philosophers of meaning in the English-speaking analytic tradition tend to adopt the manner of divvying up reality that arose in the Western tradition (as it developed in its singular fashion). But terms like naturalistic, supernatural, theistic, atheistic, and even a spiritual, do not always find easy equivalents in other philosophical traditions. Take, for example, Advaita Vedanta in classical Indian philosophy, which, on the face of it, may appear theistic, as it argues, roughly, that the universe has a creator.

However, using the extant Western categories, it would be more accurately categorised as non-theistic. And, while it may seem axiomatic to consider it among the world's spiritual traditions, there is fact no concept of spirit as such in this tradition. Adopting what is at once a transdisciplinary and multi-traditional philosophical approach, I attempt in this talk to demonstrate that these aforementioned divisions supernatural, spiritual, etc. are at this stage of the discussion of life's meaning needlessly limiting, and that the field should take seriously the potential for the sort of Copernican revolution that alternative paradigms could inspire. To this end, I summarise what is mostly an ancient unified theory of ultimate meaning chiefly inspired by Indian philosophy, attempting to showcase its potential for revolutionising the contemporary English-speaking tradition on meaning.



MS DANKA RADJENOVIĆ (UNIVERSITY OF KOBLENZ-LANDAU)

Wittgenstein on the Problem of Life

In my talk I trace various remarks on problem(s) of life in Wittgenstein's writings. The span of more than 30 years, in which these remarks occur, indicates that the topic had maintained its significance throughout Wittgenstein's life and work. This observation prompts us to investigate whether there was an interesting development in his thoughts on the problem(s) of life, as well as whether and how that development relates to the overall shifts in Wittgenstein's philosophy. The central part of the talk will consist in the discussion of these remarks. This includes also the discussion of the question as to what sort of problem *the problem of life* is or appears to be. In the end my inquiry will be related to contemporary discussions on meaning in life, probing the relevance of Wittgenstein's work for these discussions.

PLANNING & SPONTANEITY

DR JARED PARMER (RWTH AACHEN UNIVERSITY)

Meaning and the Shape of a Life



In a Checklist Life, we exercise our agency predominantly to complete tasks and move on from them. In taking a wider view on her Checklist Life, a person is apt to have a crisis of meaning, fearing that her life amounts to a mere accumulation of deeds. This crisis is useful for thinking carefully about meaningfulness as a desirable quality our lives might have. Now, Kieran Setiya's (2014) diagnosis and prescription for this crisis has been challenged by Antti Kauppinen (forthcoming), but both accounts suffer from the same problem: neither offers a prescription for this crisis that enables us to live in accord with the desire that our lives go somewhere. In my larger project, I develop an alternative account that does. In so doing, interestingly, it turns out that somewhere is less of a place and more of a direction. In this talk, I show why Kauppinen's narrativist theory, and narrativist theories more generally, fail to offer such a prescription: narratives are no proper guides to living our lives since, to put it roughly, narratives can just about go anywhere.



MR JING HWAN KHOO (SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY)

In Praise of Being Just This, Merely This

In thinking about what meaning in life consists in, there are at least two models of meaning that we might be familiar with. According to what I call “the Project View,” a meaningful life is one that is committed to a ground project. In contrast, according to “the Momentary View,” a meaningful life is one that is lived in the present moment. In contrasting these two views, it might be tempting to think that the latter model is somehow too trivial and frivolous to address the existential concerns from which the problem of meaning arises in the first place. In this paper, I defend the Momentary View from such worries by showing how this model offers an unforeseen existential payoff: living in the present moment, insofar as it involves an appreciation and celebration of what is good in the world, involves a distinct kind of meaning that connects us to something beyond ourselves. Furthermore, I argue that this kind of meaning is foundational to the kind of meaning we find in projects, insofar as the value of our projects is often derived from the value of the meaningful moments that such projects enable. Underlying the distinction between both views are thus two fundamentally different stances we can adopt towards what is good in life, both of which are equally legitimate and crucial to meaning.

ORGANISING COMMITTEE



NOBUO KURATA, HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

Nobuo Kurata is a Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at Hokkaido University, Sapporo, Japan. His research focuses on Applied Ethics (especially Bioethics and Environmental Ethics), normative Ethics, ethics of Kant, and metaethics. He has written many articles on applied ethics, including 'Guardians of Responsibility: Human Embryo Research and the Question of Human Dignity' in A.Perry et al(eds), New Perspectives in Japanese Bioethics(2015). As for the meaning of life, his present research zooms in on the relation between objective normativity and the meaning of life.



THADDEUS METZ, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Thaddeus Metz is often credited for having helped develop life's meaning as a distinct field in Anglo-American philosophy. His books on the subject include Meaning in Life: An Analytic Study (Oxford University Press, 2013) and God, Soul and the Meaning of Life (Cambridge University Press, 2019). As a fun fact, he was once featured as a clue on the American game show Jeopardy: 'Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry written by Thaddeus Metz, or a movie co-written by John Cleese' was the answer to the question 'What is the Meaning of Life?' (8 December 2016).



MASAHIRO MORIOKA, WASEDA UNIVERSITY

Masahiro Morioka is a professor at Waseda University. He specializes in the philosophy of life, applied ethics, and metaphysics. His English books include: Painless Civilization (2003), Manga Introduction to Philosophy (2013), What is Antinatalism? and Other Essays (2021), and others. He is the director of Tokyo Philosophy Project and the editor-in-chief of Journal of Philosophy of Life.



TATSUYA MURAYAMA, TOHOKU UNIVERSITY

Tatsuya Murayama is Associate Professor of Ethics at Tohoku University, Japan. His research focuses on French Philosophy and Ethics (especially the meaning of individual life). Besides his work on Descartes, Pascal, and other French philosophers, he has published many articles on Bergson, including 'Portrait de famille: Bergson et le dernier Wittgenstein' in Annales bergsoniennes V (PUF, 2012) and 'Bergson on Virtuality and Possibility' in Sinclair and Wolf (eds.), The Bergsonian Mind (Routledge, 2021). As for the meaning of life, his present research zooms in on the history of the phrase 'the meaning of life'.



YUJIN NAGASAWA, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Yujin Nagasawa specialises in the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of mind and applied philosophy. He is the author of Maximal God: A New Defence of Perfect Being Theism (Oxford University Press, 2017), Miracles: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford University Press, 2017), The Existence of God: A Philosophical Introduction (Routledge, 2011) and God and Phenomenal Consciousness: A Novel Approach to Knowledge Arguments (Cambridge University Press, 2008). He is Editor of Religious Studies, Co-Director of the Birmingham Centre for Philosophy of Religion and former president of the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion.

SESSION MODERATORS

ALL KEYNOTES



PROF THADDEUS METZ, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

PLENARY SESSION 1 10:10 TO 12:00 GMT (+2)

BREAKAWAY 1: FILIPINO PERSPECTIVES



DR ADEMOLA KAZEEM FAYEMI

BREAKAWAY 2: RELATING TO THE OTHER



PROF MASAHIRO MORIOKA

BREAKAWAY 3: NARRATIVE & TIME



DR REZA HOSSEINI

SESSION MODERATORS

**PLENARY SESSION 2
14:00 TO 16:50 GMT (+2)**

BREAKAWAY 1: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES



DR ARIBIAH ATTOE

BREAKAWAY 2: SUBJECTIVISM



DR CHARLES REPP

BREAKAWAY 3: EMBODIMENT



**QUESTIONS TO BE POSED IN
SLACK DUE TO THE
BREAKAWAY BEING ENTIRELY
PRE-RECORDED**

SESSION MODERATORS

PLENARY SESSION 3
10:00 TO 12:50 GMT (+2)

BREAKAWAY 1: BIRTH, ANTI-NATALISM & POPULATION



DR CHRISTOPHER WAREHAM

BREAKAWAY 2: CARE & LOVE



DR CORNEL EWUOSO

BREAKAWAY 3: RELATING TO THE OTHER



DR FRANS SVENSSON

SESSION MODERATORS

**PLENARY SESSION 4
13:30 TO 16:20 GMT (+2)**

BREAKAWAY 1: RELIGION



DR ASHEEL SINGH

BREAKAWAY 2: SCEPTICISM & PESSIMISM



DR DAVID SCHOLTZ

BREAKAWAY 3: PHENOMENOLOGY & FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE



DR JOHN SANNI

BREAKAWAY 4: CONCEPT OF MEANING



DR ARIBIAH ATTOE

SESSION MODERATORS

PLENARY SESSION 5
14:00 TO 17:50 GMT (+2)

BREAKAWAY 1: DEATH



DR KIRK LOUGHEED

BREAKAWAY 2: FINDING MEANING



DR ABIODUN AFOLABI

BREAKAWAY 3: INTERPRETING FIGURES & TRADITIONS



DR VANESSA FREERKS

BREAKAWAY 4: PLANNING & SPONTANEITY



DR DAVID MATHESON