**Abstracts for Friday**

**9:15 – KEYNOTE**   
Michael Brady (University of Glasgow) *– “A Philosophical Approach to Improving Empirical Research on Post—traumatic Growth”*

Post-traumatic growth (PTG) – the idea that people can undergo positive psychological changes as a result of adversity – has been a key topic of research by psychologists over the last 25 years (Infurna & Jayawickreme, 2019). The idea that a person can benefit from adversity has been around for much longer, however; discussions are found in all major religions, multiple schools of philosophy, and represented in famous works of art and literature (Tedeschi et al., 2018). In particular, Nietzsche’s famous dictum that “what does not kill me makes me stronger” (1888/1990) has become a cultural touchstone in mainstream American culture in recent years (Infurna & Jayawickreme, 2019), and notions of redemption and strength in the face of adversity are salient cultural narratives at a societal level (McAdams, 1993). More recently, a new wave of theoretical work in philosophy (Brady, 2018, Carel 2013, 2015; Kidd 2012) has highlighted the importance of adversity and suffering to the development of character traits, while research in psychology and neuroscience (Bloom, 2021) argues that adversity is vital to the good life. However, there has been, to date, little overlap between psychological research into PTG, and philosophical thinking about similar ideas. This is unfortunate, both because philosophers are not taking up potential sources of empirical support, and because psychological research into PTG is subject to a range of criticisms and concerns. We think that philosophical thinking can address these, and as a result put psychological research into PTG on a firmer theoretical footing.

In the first section of the paper, we will outline what psychologists have said about PTG. In the second section, we will highlight some methodological and conceptual worries that psychological research into PTG face. In sections three and four, we will argue that philosophy can contribute to answering these concerns, by explaining and clarifying three central ideas about PTG: the first concerns the nature of growth itself, the second is about the purported relation between adversity and growth, and the third focuses on whether growth is growth along one particular dimension or is best understood as growth all-things-considered. Our proposal, very briefly, is that PTG is best understood as growth in virtue, and that adversity provides important conditions for the development of a wide range of virtues. In section five, we will outline the implications of all this for future research into PTG, and describe some desiderata for future studies.

**11:15 – Room A**   
Diogo Carneiro - *Normative Reasons of Justice*

In this paper, I argue that there are normative reasons of justice that are relevant for claims of objectivity and that escape the traditional view that reasons are either subjective or objective (in the attitude-independence sense). These reasons, I propose, are *positional reasons*: these are normative and objective in virtue of the positions agents occupy in the world. In other words, I argue that one’s normative reasons of justice can be determined by the positions agents/citizens occupy (being it social, cultural, historical, biological) and that help construct their practical and evaluative standpoints, and that these reasons are also objective.

In more detail: in part 1, I propose that there are normative reasons of social justice that defy the traditional objective reasons/subjective reasons dichotomy. That is, the traditional way of conceptualising reasons by creating a dichotomy between subjective and objective reasons is mistaken — because it compares reasons that have to do with specific agents with reasons that have to do with the standpoint that any agent should occupy. Consequently, the dichotomy eclipses an important possibility: reasons that are dependent on the standpoint an agent occupies, but not necessarily agent-specific, nor the standpoint of *any* agent. Therefore, some reasons arising directly from the positions agents occupy (historical, cultural, social, biological) are taken to be normatively irrelevant. This is especially problematic when considering reasons/claims of justice because these arise from the lived experiences and the positions agents occupy. Consider the BLM movement: it presents reasons/claims of justice following directly from specific positions, perspectives, and lived experiences — these are the reasons of specific agents who occupy certain positions, not the reasons of *any* agent.

In parts 2 and 3, I propose we abandon the dichotomy and rethink how we understand the normative relevance and objectivity of reasons of justice.

In part 2, I propose we abandon the dichotomy and rethink how we understand the normative relevance and objectivity of reasons of justice. Drawing on Sen’s concept of positional objectivity, where the objectivity of a perspective is dependent on specific positions, I argue that historical, cultural, social, and biological contingencies (i.e.,positionality) not only help define our perspectives, but also our practical standpoints: positionality conditions the agents we are by conditioning how we exercise practical reason.

Finally, in part 3, I propose that there are such things as normative and objective reasons that are determined by positionality, what I call *positional reasons*: reasons that are normative and objective in virtue of a process of construction that starts from one’s practical standpoints, with the relevant process of construction starting from evaluative perspectives.

In short, I propose that some reasons are normative and objective due to one’s positionality, to the extent that the status of objectivity of these reasons is determined by the positions one occupies. Some reasons of justice are exactly of this type, because of the normative importance of the positions one occupies in the world for the development of one’s practical standpoints, practical reasoning, and what one takes to be valuable. And these should not be ignored.

**11:15 – Room B**  
Sophie Kikkert *- (Dis)ability, Normality, and Intrinsicness*

A common distinction in the literature on abilities is that between general and specific abilities.  Specific abilities are abilities that an agent can exercise as things stand. General abilities are abilities that an agent retains even if they cannot exercise them in the circumstances in which they find themselves. Whether someone has a general ability is often seen as a matter of what that person is intrinsically like (Vihvelin, 2014; Vetter, 2015; Jaster, 2020). In this paper, I critically assess the portrayal of general abilities as just, or even primarily, dependent on the  agent’s internal constitution. I start from the observation that there exists an interesting contrast  between theories of general ability and the literature on disabilities. Whether someone has a  disability is typically thought to depend, at least in part, on features of the social world. argue  that general abilities, like disabilities, are always attributed against a background of social  norms and expectations. More precisely, I claim that whether an agent has a general ability depends on features of the society in which they are situated.

I follow tradition in proposing that an agent has the general ability to perform an act ϕ only if they can ϕ sufficiently reliably – that is, if they can ϕ in enough relevant possible  situations. Furthermore, I take it that the relevant situations are situations that are ‘normal’ for ϕing. But I depart from existing views of general ability with respect to what it means for a situation to be normal. I claim that which situations are normal depends both on which resources are *perceived as* standard aids to perform the relevant act, and on which factors are  *considered* unfair obstacles to its performance within a society. If it is true that general ability  attributions are a kind of social classifications, as I conclude, then we, as attributors of abilities,  collectively have both the freedom and responsibility to, at times, carefully renegotiate which  situations count as normal - and thus which agents count as generally able to ϕ.

**11:55 – Room A**  
Jordi Fairhurst - *Deep disagreements, moral progress, constructive dialogue*

Suppose we engage in a discussion about the morality of abortion. During our conversation we offer arguments and evidence to support our claims about the topic. Unfortunately, our argumentative exchanges are ineffective because there is not enough shared background to  mutually appreciate our respective arguments and evidence. At this point it becomes apparent  that our disagreement is not just a clash of beliefs: it is something deeper. We may be in a  systematic and persistent disagreement rooted in contrary worldviews, where there seems to  be no mutually recognized method of resolution because we reason and analyze evidence using  different frameworks or principles. These peculiar disagreements are what philosophers have called deep disagreements. Deep disagreements over moral issues (hereinafter, deep moral disagreements) may pose a threat to moral progress. They are instances in which our worldviews take us in different directions, thus preventing us from going together. Moreover, these disputes often polarize disputants, either by making the contents of their positions more extreme or held  with greater confidence (cf. De Ridder 2021), which may contribute to moral regress. Despite recent developments and increasing interest in moral progress (see Sauer et al. 2021) and the  epistemic implications, significance, and value of moral disagreements (see Rowland 2017;  2021), little attention has been paid to the implications of deep moral disagreements for moral  progress. My paper sets out to fill this knowledge gap by showing that deep moral disagreements can contribute to moral progress.

Initially, I outline multiple strategies for constructive dialogue in deep moral disagreements. These strategies allow disputants to make progress towards increases in the amount of common ground shared, reducing the gap in their intersubjective understanding (cf.  Henderson 2020). Examples include reasoning and argumentation (Feldman 2005; Phillips 2008; Kappel 2012), rational persuasion (Godden & Brenner 2010) or Pritchard’s (2021; see WP3) side

on approach. I will not study strategies (e.g., coercion, violence) that are morally and epistemically problematic. Subsequently, I assess i) the requirements for the success of each strategy, ii) their contributions to moral progress and iii) the risks they may entail. Last, I defend that the choice of one strategy or more depends on the specific challenges of, and the unique  opportunities offered by, each deep moral disagreement. I argue that this requires focusing on four aspects of deep moral disagreements on a case-by-case basis. First, the characteristics of the disagreement, i.e., the object of their disagreement (e.g., propositions, epistemic principles,  rules) and the disputants’ attitude to this object (e.g., beliefs, certainty). Second, the character of disputants and whether they exhibit epistemic virtues or vices. Third, the common ground (e.g., beliefs, epistemic principles, conceptual frameworks, procedural commitments, competences) shared by disputants. Fourth, the social context of the deep disagreement. It is important to focus on limiting contextual factors, such as the social value and implications of the  available strategies for constructive dialogue, the power dynamics of the discussants, or the  trust in relevant social institutions.

**11:55 – Room B**  
Max Minden Ribeiro - *Affective to its bones: Integrating the objective and aesthetic in perceptual experience*

There are two aspects of perceptual experience (PE) that are often acknowledged separately but rarely brought together in a unified theory of perception. On the one hand, PE is objective. It aims for the truth of ‘how things are’ in the perceiver’s environment. PE presents the world as being a certain way, but it is also ‘answerable to the world’ (McDowell 1994, xii) for its correctness. On the other hand, PE is aesthetic. That is, aesthetic in the broadest sense, namely that the perceiver’s tastes and values are implicated in what they experience, such that the experience has a certain affective quality (Logue 2018; de Vignemont 2021).  My friend looks cool in her new outfit; Franck’s sonata sounds beautiful. Were we to  describe how we find perceptual experiences like these meaningful, we would have to appeal  to an affective vocabulary (valence, feel etc.) as much as a sensory one. Intuitively, the aesthetic aspect of PE relays not just ‘how things are’ but ‘how I am’ vis-à-vis the perceptual object. And unlike the objective aspect, we have strong reasons to doubt that there is an  objective fact as to whether Franck’s sonata really is beautiful, for instance.

In this paper I identify two broad approaches to accommodating the objective and aesthetic aspects of PE: Separatism and Singularism. Separatists claims that the objective and aesthetic aspects are strictly separable. Most contemporary accounts of PE –if they recognise its aesthetic aspect at all – are separatist. Their concern is usually with whether the aesthetic should be construed as adhering to content (Audi 2013; Fulkerson 2020) or attitude (de  Vignemont 2021), and how the objective and aesthetic components are combined in PE. I offer an argument against Separatism, appealing to a problematic consequence of the view: namely that there can be ‘meaning equivalence’ between two evaluative experiences, even when only one has an affective component. Instead, I develop a Singularist alternative.  Singularism holds that affectivity is not tagged onto perceptual states, but internal to them (Henry 1963). To be meaningful – to mean something to a perceiver – PE must implicate the perceiver’s values as well as their concepts. It follows that the objective and aesthetic are inseparable. I motivate singularism and defend it against some objections.

**13:35 – Room A**George Surtees - *The Use and Abuse of Oppression: Credibility Excess and Marginalised Identities*

Recently, there has been an increasing interest in the ways that social identity interacts with epistemic credibility (e.g. Fricker, 2010; Yap, 2017; Medina, 2013; Davies, 2016). In my talk, I argue that marginalised speakers can, under certain conditions, be given excessive epistemic credibility  when they use their experience of marginalisation to justify oppressing others from marginalised  groups. While related to other phenomena discussed in the literature, I argue that this represents a distinct contribution. Examining it is important, I suggest, because it feeds into several socio epistemic dynamics that further harm marginalised people. To illustrate this phenomenon, I take  J.K. Rowling’s anti-trans essay, and the positive media responses it received, as a prime example.

The relationship between social identity and epistemic credibility has received a lot of attention.  Most relevant to my talk is the work of Emmalon Davies (2016). As she argues, marginalised speakers often receive a credibility excess that harms them, by foisting on them the role of  ‘spokesperson’, even if this is undesired and unwarranted by their particular expertise (Ibid). This is  a good example of oppression causing marginalised people to receive an excess of credibility.  However, while Davies is concerned with how this credibility excess harms the speaker themselves, I  am concerned with how this excess credibility can be used by the speaker to harm other  marginalised people. As I suggest, there are cases where a speaker’s marginalised identity can be  invoked to justify testimony that oppresses others.

My talk is structured as follows. I explain Fricker’s concepts of credibility deficiency and excess and outline how this has been developed further by Davies. I explain my argument for there being  certain cases in which credibility excess can accrue to those with marginal social identities who use  this social identity to justify oppressing other members of marginalised groups. To illustrate this, I give the example of J.K. Rowling’s essay (2020) in which she justifies transphobic public policies by reference to her own experience as a cis woman who has survived domestic violence. I explain why her argument for this position is unsuccessful. I examine the excessive credibility she has received, arguing that this is partly due to her weaponising her identity as a cis woman and survivor of domestic violence. By foregrounding marginalised aspects of her identity, she attempts to convince others to treat her testimony with a level of credibility that exceeds what her testimony deserves, given the essay’s numerous flaws.

I consider how weaponising one’s oppression in this way can be useful for defusing criticism of the speaker’s testimony. I suggest that it allows three negative accusations to be levelled at those who critique the speaker’s words. These are, that doing so is tesitmonially unjust to the speaker, that it involves being callous towards the speaker’s suffering, and - by doing either of these - evinces  hypocrisy. I end with some tentative ideas for how we might combat these socio-epistemic dynamics.

Bibliography

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**13:35 – Room B (ONLINE)**  
Linda Maqutu - *African Principlism: An African Approach to Bioethics*

Bio-medical practitioners are regularly faced with ethical dilemmas. Without a strong ethical framework, decision-making in these instances could prove difficult and result in ethical failures. Tom Beauchamp and James Childress developed a bioethical theory, Principlism, as an ethical framework for decision-making in medicine. I contend that field of bioethics is context-specific and requires an ethical framework that reflects the values and moral norms of the country in which it operates. For this reason, I contend that the use of Principlism in South African healthcare is inappropriate, as it is a Western-dominated approach unreflective of South African moral beliefs. In this paper, I argue for an African approach to bioethics that consists of the salient moral ideals of the cultures in South Africa, such as Ubuntu. I present my novel African bioethical account, African Principlism, and explain why we should favour this approach over Beauchamp and Childress' Principlism. I illustrate that African Principlism is an ethical framework for healthcare professionals and encompasses South African moral values like Ubuntu. African Principlism consists of three central principles that determine how physicians ought to act in healthcare, (1) Medical Ubuntuism, (2) Contextual Relational Autonomy, and (3)Social Consciousness. I contend that the African Principlism approach is not only context-specific but is uniquely African in its approach and application, which are necessary features of any bioethical framework.

**14:20 – Room A**   
Aisha Qadoos - *Non-volitional Transformative Experience*

L.A. Paul develops the notion of transformative experiences. She distinguishes between personally transformative experiences and epistemically transformative experiences (Paul, 2014; Paul, 2015). Personally transformative experiences change what it’s like to be you;  epistemically transformative experiences give you knowledge that cannot be obtained without  the experience. Experiences like pregnancy, according to Paul, are both personally and  epistemically transformative, while other experiences like consuming a new fruit are mildly  epistemically transformative. Paul’s exploration of transformative experiences is intimately tied with decision theory. At points in our lives, we arrive at junctions where we must decide whether to undergo a particular experience. But, if we are to make a rational decision, we  cannot draw on other past experiences or on what we think it will be like because we cannot  possibly know in virtue of the kind of experience, namely, one’s that we must experience to  know what they are like because, as Paul claims, what is relevant to these experiences are  ‘phenomenal values’ – values concerning the what-it-is-likeness which are epistemically  inaccessible prior to undergoing the experience. To make a decision, then, Paul argues we must decide based on whether we want to undergo new experiences, gain new knowledge, and potentially have new preferences, desires, beliefs etc.

In this paper, I argue that there is another set of experiences that are personally and epistemically transformative but that we cannot construe or consider in the same way as the  kinds of experiences that Paul considers. These are what I call non-volitional transformative  experiences. There occurs a necessary departure from decision theory because the nature of the experiences are such that the agent in question who undergoes the transformative experience does not arrive at the crossroads whereupon she must make a decision; there is no decision  involved in whether to undergo the experience. These are experiences such as those of a  traumatic nature, like physical or sexual abuse. Drawing on the relevant literature and, using the example of a forced pregnancy, I argue that traumatic experiences are both personally and epistemically transformative. Traumatic experiences change one’s essential self, how one relates to other people, the beliefs one has about oneself, other people, the world, the foundational  assumptive worldview and self-view that one had prior to the traumatic experiences. They also, crudely, give one knowledge of the what-it’s-likeness of the traumatic experience.

I argue that such non-volitional transformative experiences, by the fact of their being non volitional, have an additional element that the kinds of experiences Paul explores do not. This  being that they are forced upon the agent and so she must reckon with her changed self and new  knowledge and reckon with the diminishment in her agency. Finally, I argue that we need not abandon decision theory like Paul suggest we do. Rather, it can be used to form post-hoc  preferences; additionally what guides our decision making can be values other than phenomenal  values.

**14:20 – Room B**  
Daniel Elbro - *Two Ways to Argue About Moral Standing*

If we are serious about meeting all of our obligations, we need to know whether we have  obligations to non-human animals, whether they have ‘moral standing’. How can this question be answered? Philosophers usually proceed by arguing over grounding properties. Call the property that grounds moral standing, whatever it turns out to be, G. On the one hand, philosophers in the natural law, contractualist and Kantian traditions generally argue that G is  *personhood*, which they argue has the merit of linking the possession of moral standing to the  capacity to understand and be bound by moral reasoning. On the other hand, animal advocates generally answer that G is *sentience*, which they argue has the merit of overcoming problems  with the personhood criterion, such as speciesism and the problem of ‘marginal cases’.

However, comparatively little attention has been paid to this question: how exactly is a putative grounding property supposed to explain why its bearers have moral standing? Despite the lack of attention, one’s answer to this question is crucial. For, given some G, an account with one kind of explanation of the relationship between G and moral standing might be  significantly more convincing than another with a different kind of explanation. To address this lack of attention, I distinguish two explanatory structures found in the literature, and argue that  we should prefer to use one rather than the other.

In general, accounts of moral standing purport to explain whose interests we are obliged not to frustrate; that is, whose interests are ‘significant’. *Value-first* accounts hold that individuals with G are valuable, and that their interests are significant in virtue of their being  valuable. *Interests-first* accounts hold that some or all interests are *intrinsically* significant: we are obliged not to frustrate them, regardless of the other properties of their bearers. On an interests-first account, we use G simply to tell us which individuals have intrinsically  significant interests.

Interests-first accounts have some advantages over value-first accounts. For instance, an animal advocate who employs a value-first account has her work cut out for her, because she must somehow *extend* arguments originally designed to justify moral standing for human  persons, such as Kantian arguments for the value of rational nature, to apply to animals. Interests-first accounts avoid this problem by focusing on the harms to which an individual is vulnerable, and thereby promise to help us avoid prejudicial thinking of all kinds.

Nevertheless, I argue, we should prefer value-first accounts. Properly understood, value first accounts are no less explanatorily powerful than interests-first accounts, and at the same time can much more easily convince a sceptic about animal moral standing. I argue that interests-first accounts beg the question against the sceptic, but value-first accounts challenge sceptics on their own terms, since such sceptics usually employ value-first accounts  themselves. Despite the difficult work it will take to give a value-first account of animal moral standing, only on that basis can we explain convincingly what our obligations to non-human  animals are.

**15:15 - KEYNOTE**  
Manjeet Ramgotra (SOAS University of London) – *TBC*

Abstract TBC.