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SCOTS  
PHILOSOPHICAL  
ASSOCIATION

International Association for the Philosophy of  
DEATH  
& DYING

# RELATING TO DEATH, RELATING TO THE DEAD

*CONFERENCE SCHEDULE*



**2-3 MAY  
2024**

USHA KASERA  
LECTURE THEATRE  
UNIVERSITY OF  
EDINBURGH

Contact the organisers:

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University of Edinburgh Philosophy Department

# Key Information

**Address:**

Usha Kasera Lecture Theatre  
Old College  
University of Edinburgh  
South Bridge,  
Edinburgh  
EH8 9YL

**2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024**

**9:00 am – 5:30 pm**

**Contact:**

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**Notes:**

A light lunch will be served between the hours of 13:15 and 14:30 on both conference days on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of the Dugald Steward Building. It is a short walk of approximately 6 minutes from the conference room.

A conference meal will be held at on the evening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> May (location TBC).

# OLD COLLEGE, SOUTH BRIDGE



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The Old College is located within what is referred to as the Central Area South Campus of Edinburgh University and extremely well served by bus.

The nearest railway line is at Waverley Station in the city centre.

The main pedestrian access to the Old College, which lies between South Bridge and Chambers Street is from South Bridge.

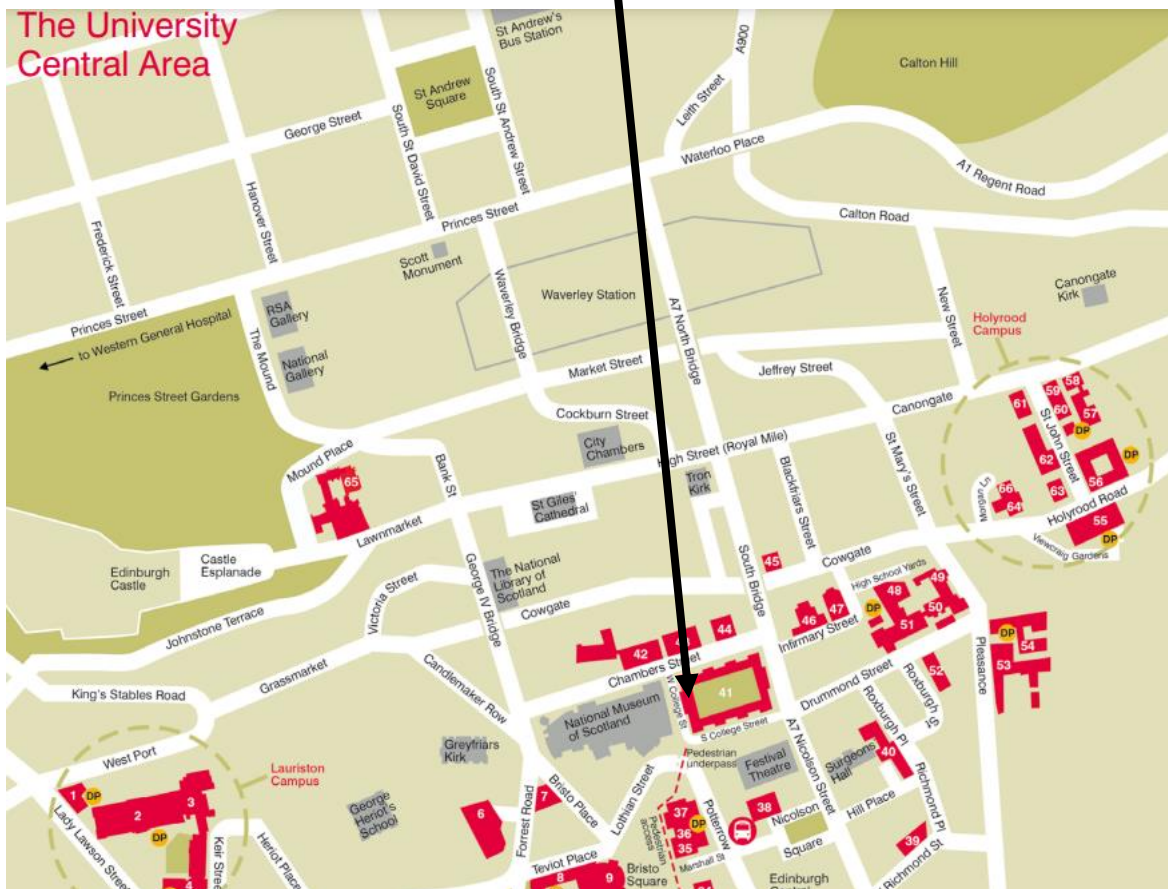
Persons with mobility difficulties arriving by vehicle can access The Old College via South Bridge, Chambers Street and West College Street, although the two latter are

best used if you are a wheelchair user.

Bus stops on South Bridge are approximately 150 yards from the main entrance and are located on the east and west sides of South Bridge and also Chambers Street.

**The Old College building is located at Number 41 on the map below.**

**Usha Kaseva Lecture Theatre can be accessed from West College Street**





## SCHEDULE

Day 1, 2 <sup>nd</sup> May			
Time	Speaker	Affiliation	Title
9:00-9:15	Michael Cholbi and Ellie Palmer	University of Edinburgh & IAPDD	Welcome
9:15-10:00	Ellie Palmer	University of Edinburgh	Being After Death
10:15-11:00	Stephen Burwood	University of Hull	Digital Immortality and Being a Body
11:00-11:30	<b>COMFORT BREAK</b>		
11:30-12:15	Michalina Bevoor	University of Liverpool	“It’s better to die young”: The Zuruahā’s suicidal philosophy of life
12:30-13:15	Adam Buben	Leiden University	Death Is an Injustice: Dispelling a Common Myth about Existentialism and Mortality
13:15-14:30	<b>LUNCH</b>		
14:30-15:15	Ying Yao	University of Oslo	Practising Grief for Moral Attention
15:30-16:15	Dawn Wilson	University of Hull	Co-portraiture in Life and in Death
16:30-17:30	<b>Keynote:</b> Dominic Wilkinson	University of Oxford	Grief and the Inconsolation of Philosophy
18:00	<b>MEAL</b>		

Day 2, 3 <sup>rd</sup> May			
Time	Speaker	Affiliation	Title
9:15-10:00	Michael Cholbi	University of Edinburgh	Grieving Our Selves, Fearing Our Deaths
10:15-11:00	René Baston	Ruhr-University Bochum	Critiquing the Critique: Are There Higher-Level Biases in Suicide Research?
11:00-11:30	<b>COMFORT BREAK</b>		
11:30-12:15	Deb Marber	De Montfort University	Life extension, immortality and the meaningful life
12:30-13:15	Katherine Cheung	New York University	Learning From Chronic Pain and Immortality
13:15-14:30	<b>LUNCH</b>		
14:30-15:15	Cristina Voinea	University of Oxford	Griefbots: from ethical problems to political solutions
15:30-16:15	Connor Leak	University of Birmingham	Whose Death is it, Anyway? Comparativist and Subjectivist Evaluations of Death
16:30-17:30	<b>Keynote:</b> Michael Hauskeller	University of Liverpool	Why Not Eat the Dead?
18:00	<b>PUB</b>		

## Abstracts

### **1. Being After Death**

**DAY 1 9:15-10:00**      Ellie Palmer (University of Edinburgh)

Prior to the growing global secularisation, the belief in the afterlife, immortality, something akin to the ‘soul’, and some form of persistence of our existence post-bodily-death were common worldviews embraced across a wide array of cultural and religious traditions. However, as the world gradually loses faith in any God, these ideas traditionally associated with religiosity are simultaneously lost, resulting in a shift in how human beings perceive death. Whilst it is now less common for us in a more secular society not to presume the existence of the soul, Cartesian dualist sentiments remain. We have hung onto the Platonic notion propelled by the Cartesians that the soul is not dependent on the physical body; all we have done is replace ‘soul’ for ‘self’. We have developed a supremacy of mind over body which has created a disconnect between our selves and the world, leading to a general lack of concern for the external, physical realm in which our bodies, other people and the environment are situated, thus creating the perfect breeding ground for a starkly individualistic societal system of ethics to prevail. In an age plagued by global conflict and the impending climate crisis, the necessity to address this disjunct could not be more prevalent. One brick-wall frequently faced by ethicists is translating any concern into practice with a society that is so inclined to prioritise individual, self-centred interests. I argue, however, that there is another way to frame one's thinking such that care for the external world, and our moral actions reflecting this, is intrinsic: through the reframing of self as essentially spatial and relational, and ultimately temporally extended beyond the death of our consciousness. The adoption of this view enables us to stop restricting our desires, commitments and goals to avoid those which are potentially threatened by our own deaths or unable to be achieved within our lifetime. Ultimately, referring to Japanese philosophy and the concept of ‘aidagara’ or ‘betweenness’, I claim that the understanding of self in this spatial, interconnected and temporally extended way in turn helps to expand the sphere of things that we care about and therefore leads to more future and community-minded ethics.

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### **2. Digital Immortality and Being a Body**

**DAY 1 10:15-11:00**      Stephen Burwood (University of Hull)

A central feature of many transhumanist or posthuman narratives is that we may dispense with the biological body in its entirety. Whole brain emulation—consisting of the ability to obtain high-resolution brain data—presents us with the prospect of uploading one's consciousness onto a silicon substrate and promises, or so it is argued, the possibility of replacing of our biological embodiment with an *in silico* incarnation for our conscious minds, offering us a digital, post-biological life of unbounded possibilities, and freeing us from the constraints of our biological embodiment. Shorn of such constraints, our uploaded, digital selves could persist for much-extended if not quite limitless lifetimes; either in a series of replacement, proxy bodies in this world or as purely digital beings, eschewing any physical form and free to explore a cyberspace terrarium—a virtual environment not necessarily internally bound by the familiar laws of physics. Despite its promise of unrestrained freedom, the purported experiences our digital selves would have of their world—actual or virtual—often assume that the sensory manifold presents itself to the subject very much as does our current experience. What this takes for granted is the complete absence of any connection between the structural organisation and meaning of the sensory manifold and the nature of the subject's embodiment. In this paper I argue that because digital immortalists have uncritically inherited a mechanistic conception of the body as a complete account of embodiment, they do not have an account of what it is to be a body. And because they do not have this, they also do not have an account of why the subject's experiences of its world are as they are. What such an account reveals is that the structural organisation and meaning of the sensory manifold is a response to the body's limitations; the very thing from which digital immortality promises to free us.

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### **3. “It’s better to die young”: The Zuruahã’s suicidal philosophy of life**

**DAY 1 11:30-12:15** Michalina Bevoor (University of Liverpool)

The Zuruahã are an indigenous people living in the State of Amazonas in the north-western corner of Brazil. Having experienced ethno-trauma from natural resource extractors in the late 19th century, they withdrew into the forests and remained in almost total isolation until the 1980s. During this period, they developed a death-centered philosophy of life, that is unheard of in any other culture. The natives' suicide motivation is based on beliefs according to which there are three types of afterlife, three different paths, depending on the cause of death. The Zuruahã believe that through death, especially death by suicide, they achieve their true form of existence. They believe that it is better to die young and healthy than to die old, which results in contempt for old age, and the loss of health and physical strength. It is therefore not surprising that the vast majority of suicide victims are young people who take their own lives for reasons that Western civilization would probably consider trivial. The suicide of a tribe member usually triggers a wave of subsequent suicides that follow a certain pattern of behaviour, so that the upcoming death is always signalled in advance. Like many other tribes in the Amazon, the Zuruahã also practice infanticide, which arouses opposition from the Brazilian Christian community. The purpose of this paper is primarily to analyse the history of the tribe and understand its beliefs, which I call the "Death-Centered View", that makes the Zuruahã the community with the highest suicide rate in the world. The analysis of beliefs and lifestyle will give an insight into what the Zuruahã consider a good, valuable life. Next, I will examine whether the type of suicide commonly committed by them can be considered morally permissible and rational. Because they commit infanticide in two different ways – i.e., by abandoning an infant and by actively taking a child's life – I will discuss the possibility of comparing infanticidal acts with euthanasia by refusing care and by shortening life. Infanticide will be further analysed in the context of the morality of euthanasia and the phenomenon of "social death" to which an unwanted child may be condemned if it is kept alive.

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### **4. Death Is an Injustice: Dispelling a Common Myth about Existentialism and Mortality**

**DAY 1 12:30-13:15** Adam Buben (Leiden University)

There is a popular view of existentialism that says it embraces mortality as a necessary component of meaningful human life. Insofar as existentialism can be generalized about in this way, this view is mistaken. Many of the figures frequently associated with existentialism are actually quite ambivalent about mortality, and some object to it vehemently. Two thinkers in the latter category are Miguel de Unamuno and Albert Camus. In laying out their respective thoughts about death, meaning, and immortality, I make the case that so-called ‘existentialists’ need not have a very friendly or even resigned relationship with their own chronological finitude. Unamuno explicitly states that a life ended by annihilative death is meaningless, and longing for personal immortality is the only way to maintain hope of a life worth living. In some ways, Camus takes a less extreme position, but he still manages to argue that death is an injustice and an obstacle to the cultivation of further value. In both cases, extension of one’s own conscious life always seems like something worth fighting for, even when it results in great suffering. The claim that suffering is preferable to extinction might be difficult to defend, but it does reinforce the notion that two representative existentialists are quite hostile toward mortality.

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### **5. Practising Grief for Moral Attention**

**DAY 1 14:30-15:15** Ying Yao (University of Oslo)

It is a tragically paradoxical fact about grief that while it often imparts valuable moral lessons about others and our relationships with them, we are frequently unable to address the moral imperatives and fulfil the practical possibilities highlighted by grief due to the very loss we suffer. But if what is revealed in grief is morally edifying, there appears to be a rationale for engaging with it while still capable of practically addressing the normative opportunities it exposes. This paper examines how proactive grief, which is invoked by directing one's attention to the possibility of loss without any actual or anticipated bereavement, can be an attentional practice that bridges the gap between epistemic transformation and practical possibility observed in the typical cases of grief. Drawing from Michael Cholbi's account of grief as an attentional phenomenon (Cholbi, 2022), I give an account of how proactive grief, like grief, is an instance of attentional activity, but unlike grief, is an instance of intentional attentional action and has the possibility of loss as its object. Like grief, proactive grief teaches us about that and how we invest in the people we grieve our practical identity (Cholbi, 2022, p. 16); furthermore, proactive grief reveals to us how in so far as someone is a possible object of grief, they figure into our practical identity qua humanity, to whom we have moral obligation, which is prescribed by the intrinsic membership and commitment our practical identity has to humanity (Korsgaard, 1992, p. 84). In addition, I propose that proactive grief is an instance of Murdochian moral attention by sharing the following characteristics with the latter: (i) Proactive grief is a form of attention; (ii) Proactive grief facilitates acceptance of death and chance that underlies the cultivation of virtue (Murdoch, 1971, p.71); (iii) Proactive grief is "unselfing" by revealing reality from conflicting perspectives with respect to time, possibilities, and persons, in a way that counteracts one's habitual and egoistic way of attending; (iii) Proactive grief motivates moral action by making salient reasons that are invariable across the perspectives, which brings about a sense of the universality of certain reasons, on the one hand, and incite a sense of urgency for action by highlighting the practical possibilities that would otherwise be invalidated by loss, on the other. As such, proactive grief cultivates moral vision and motivates moral action.

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## 6. Co-portraiture in Life and Death

### DAY 1 15:30-16:15 Dawn Wilson (University of Hull)

The central idea of the paper is to argue that photography makes possible a significant and distinctive novel category of portraiture: I call it co-portraiture. Co-portraiture is a self-portrait of an artist that lies within, or is created through, the production of a portrait of that same artist by another artist. Using examples, I clarify what I mean by this, and distinguish the category from various other types of collaborative portraiture. I offer a new category of 'co-portraiture' that can be applied to death-bed photography. I suggest that a co-portrait is both a portrait and a self-portrait, specifically: the creation of a self-portrait through the creation of a portrait. I argue that its most significant potential is found in photography and that in this medium, co-portraiture makes it possible to produce self-portraits not only in life but also in death.

I extend this idea through an application to a work (published as a gallery exhibition and as a photobook) by Beate Lakotta and Walter Schels, titled 'Noch Mal Leben Vor Dem Tod', translated as 'Life Before Death'. It is a collection of paired portraits, first of a subject taken while they are alive (shortly before death) and second the same subject taken after death. The subjects were also interviewed and their words accompany the images. I use the idea of co-portraiture to argue – or at least suggest – that these portraits are a highly distinctive category of death bed portraiture. Unlike standard deathbed images these are co-portraits rather than just portraits. If I am successful in arguing this, it follows from my position, that these are self-portraits by a person who is dead. I suspect that photography is the only medium where this is possible.

I will also examine a range of examples where artists (Warhol and many more) have used photography to depict themselves (or others) on their deathbed, while they are in fact still alive. If necessary this can be deepened with reflections on why photography is a medium traditionally associated with death masks (e.g. Bazin) and the practices such as Victorian post-mortem photography. The fully expanded version of this

paper looks at a surprising case study: Wittgenstein. He had a significant personal interest in photography and we have several good examples where he was meticulous in directing how his portraits should be created. I discuss specific examples where Wittgenstein was photographed by Ben Richards and argue that these specifically can be understood as co-portraiture. This takes us at last to the question of Wittgenstein's controversial deathbed 'portrait' which was taken by Ben Richards, and whether this can be argued to be as conclusively a self-portrait, as it is for participants in the Lakotta-Schels project, where I ultimately defend the stronger claim that Wittgenstein's deathbed portrait is a self-portrait.

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## 7. Grief and the Inconsolation of Philosophy

**DAY 1 16:30-17:30** Dominic Wilkinson (University of Oxford)

Can metaphysics yield the consolations of philosophy? One possibility, defended by Derek Parfit, is that reflection on the nature of identity and time could diminish both fear of death and grief.

In this paper, I assess the prospect of such consolation, focussing especially on attempts to console a grieving third party. A shift to a reductionist view of personal identity might mean that death is less threatening. However, there is some evidence to suggest that such a shift does not necessarily translate into less death anxiety. Moreover, applied to grief at loss of another, such a perspective may be misdirected. A temporally neutral perspective offers a theoretically powerful way of reducing the sense of loss at being separated in time from a loved one. However, it is unclear whether it is psychologically possible to achieve. Even if it were possible, it may not diminish the pain of separation.

I identify a serious challenge to philosophical consolation for grief. The greater the consolation that is offered, the greater the risk of losing important attachments and the less it may be psychologically accessible.

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## 8. Grieving Our Selves, Fearing Our Deaths

**DAY 2 9:15-10:00** Michael Cholbi (University of Edinburgh)

Many people fear death, but philosophers have struggled to justify this fear. Epicureans deny its rationality outright on the grounds that death is not bad for us and so offers us nothing to fear. Contemporary comparativists about death's value hold that our dying at a particular time such that our having lived longer would have been better for us is bad for us, but many comparativists deny that such 'deprivations' are the kinds of bads or harms to merit fear (as opposed to disappointment or regret, say). An obvious move in response to this dialectic is to claim that we misdiagnose the fear of death — that rather than fearing death because of its possible negative effects on our well-being, what we in fact undergo is a form of anxiety arising from the fact that death involves annihilation or non-existence. Here I propose that the anxiety that surrounds death can plausibly be seen as a truncated form of grief regarding one's own death. In my book, *Grief* (2022), I argue that a necessary condition of grief is the death or loss of someone with whom the bereaved subject practically identifies. Since we almost invariably practically identify with ourselves, anticipatory self-directed grief whenever we seriously contemplate our own deaths can thereby occur. Moreover, the bewilderment or 'existential vertigo' common in other-directed grief likely manifests as anxiety in the case of self-directed grief, i.e., as a heightened attention to the agential significance of one's own death. More specifically, the 'pre-grieving' we undergo in connection with our own deaths stems from an appreciation that, unlike in instances of other-directed grief, death precludes our ability to transform our identities in ways that are practically efficacious.

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## 9. Critiquing the Critique: Are There Higher-Level Biases in Suicide Research?

**DAY 2 10:15-11:00** René Baston (Ruhr-University Bochum)

Many clinical psychologists assume that suicidal agents have a specific attentional bias towards death. The Suicide Stroop task is a psychological test used to assess attentional bias towards suicide-related stimuli. In the classic Stroop task, participants are presented with words printed in different colors and are asked to name the ink's color, not the word itself. This becomes challenging when the word itself is the name of a different color (e.g., the word "green" printed in red ink), creating a conflict between the word's meaning and its ink color. In the Suicide Stroop task, participants are shown a series of words related to suicide (like "death", "suicide", "hopeless") along with neutral words, all words printed in different colors. The participant's task is to identify the color of the ink, not the word's meaning. If a suicidal participant takes longer to name the color of suicide-related words compared to neutral words, it's inferred that they have a stronger attentional bias towards suicide-related content.

In which sense does an attentional sensitivity for suicide-related words indicate a bias, though? As Thomas Scanlon explains, having a desire for something leads to higher attentional attraction for information that relates to the desirable object. As clinical psychologists widely assume that the desire for death plays a crucial role in understanding suicidal action, it is hard to see why a higher attentional sensitivity for death- or suicide-related words is biased. As Daniel Kelly suggests, biases are systematic departure from a genuine norm or a standard of correctness. The norms of attentions, however, do not seem to be violated if individuals who intensively consider a practical problem, such as self-killing, do also pay more attention to related information. I will consider different normative dimensions which psychologist could implicitly use, including the value of life as a normative standard. Then, I will discuss whether clinical psychologists fall prey to a higher-level bias, because they may be biased in attributing biases to individuals who consider self-killing.

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## 10. Life extension, immortality and the meaningful life

**DAY 2 11:30-12:15** Deb Marber (De Montfort University)

"For existentialist philosophers like Simone De Beauvoir, the need to carve our selves into someone who makes a mark onto the world in our own unique way stems directly from the fact of our mortality. It is because we will eventually be dead that we must strive to create our selves as a unique character who will be remembered by others for our unique being; it is because of our mortality, and our awareness thereof, that we must find out what is for us to "be" and act in accordance with who we are, following an unambiguous ethics in spite of our freedom (de Beauvoir, 1947). Thus, our ability to find and create meaning stems directly from being aware that we will die. Being immortal, then, would deprive us of the sense that we must leave our mark before it is too late and hinder our ability to find our own meaning. Call this argument, the MEANINGFUL argument against immortality.

Conversely, Bernard Williams' famous Makropulos case (1973), based on an opera by Janacek, sees the protagonist Elena Makropulos live for over 300 years by drinking an immortality potion, and eventually reflects on the tedium brought about by an immortal life as Elena, through her long life, progressively fulfills every categorical desire, every desire that makes her who she is as a person and loses the will to live. Through this case, Williams argues that an immortal life could not be desirable because the immortal one desiring it would either stop having such categorical desires or stop being the same person. Call this argument the TEDIUM argument against immortality.

In recent years, as funding into life extension research has consistently increased, the possibility of immortality has started to appear less remote than in Williams and de Beauvoir's times. Yet, their arguments still seem very potent. In this paper, I first draw connections between the MEANINGFUL and TEDIUM

arguments. I then argue against Williams and de Beauvoir by defending that immortality would not make human experience any less fragmented and chaotic than it already is. I show why, given this fragmentation, the need to impose a coherent narrative and to define oneself as a unified agent, will only become more acute as our lives extend. And I show why, rather than enabling us to fulfill all of our categorical desires, longer lives make it less likely that we will be able to exhaust them."

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## **11. Learning From Chronic Pain and Immortality**

**DAY 2 12:30-13:15** Katherine Cheung (New York University)

One objection to the attractiveness of immortality is that human lives are narratives and therefore cannot be infinitely long - without an ending, the narrative of a human life would not be recognizably human. John Martin Fischer writes that an "essential feature of a narrative is that it has an ending" (Fischer, 2012), while others have argued that having an ending is what enables us to attribute meaning to our narratives. Chronic pain provides an interesting parallel to immortality, in that it similarly defies traditional attempts at teleological narrativity due to its endless nature and its distortion of the sufferer's experience of time. Just as we expect life to have an end, we commonly expect pain to be remediable or to have an end at some point: immortality and chronic pain act as exceptions to these expectations. Van Hout et al., (2023) write that as chronic pain has no end, it "defies any search for a higher meaning or purpose". Moreover, chronic pain in a sense mimics immortality, in that the structure of the individual's lived temporality is changed - past, present and future no longer stand in logical relation to each other. The chronic pain is simultaneously the present and "always", and is never-ending yet ever-changing (Van Hout et al., 2023). Comparing both chronic pain and immortality as exceptions to linear narratives may be fruitful for both. In particular, drawing from the experience of chronic patients may help to respond to the objection regarding the attractiveness of immortality and prompt us to consider if there are reasons to doubt its desirability. Moreover, examining narratives in the context of chronic pain and immortality can help to spotlight the testimonial injustice chronic pain patients often face and contribute to understanding how and why the identities of patients may shift. Looking forward, potential recommendations for chronic pain treatment approaches may be drawn from this comparison, such as the encouragement of non-linear models of health (in contrast to the typical narrative of diagnosis to cure).

## **12. Griefbots: From Ethical Problems to Political Solutions**

**DAY 2 14:30-15:15** Cristina Voinea (University of Oxford)

The emergence of Large Language Models ushered in a novel possibility: the creation of digital personas mimicking deceased individuals, known as 'griefbots'. These AI-driven chatbots have garnered significant attention, with companies like "You, Only Virtual" and "HereAfter AI" spearheading the growing griefbot industry. This paper delves into the ethical concerns raised by griefbots, particularly their implications for the bereaved, while also offering policy recommendations for navigating this intricate terrain.

The first part of the paper combines insights from philosophy and neuroscience to shed light on the nature of grief. Research in cognitive neuroscience underscores grief as a form of learning that necessitates temporal progression. Recent work in philosophy mirrors these insights, portraying grief as a transformative experience, entailing an endeavor to reconstruct life's meaning in the absence of those with whom individuals' identity was deeply intertwined. Both approaches present grief as learning (albeit different types of learning), which underscores its' paradoxical nature: although extremely painful, it is also necessary in order to once again acquire well-being after the loss of those with which we were eudaimonically invested.

The subsequent section of the paper analyzes the ethical issues raised by griefbots for the bereaved, by distinguishing them from other methods of memorializing, imagining, or communicating with the deceased. The interactive aspect of griefbots, which gives the impression that the departed are still present, gives rise to concerns about their potential to hinder individuals in effectively coming to terms with and

comprehending the reality of their loved ones' passing. In other words, griefbots might hamper grieving processes, keeping people in a state of cognitive dissonance that can negatively affect their well-being.

To address these potential risks, some suggested classifying griefbots as medical devices, advocating for their usage exclusively under medical supervision. Nevertheless, it is plausible that many individuals would willingly embrace the risks, motivated by the prospect of perpetuating their emotional connection with the departed. This raises a fundamental question: should individuals' access to griefbots be circumscribed on the grounds of their potential to inflict harm? In the paper's final segment, the focus transitions from ethical considerations to political philosophy, specifically invoking Mill's Harm Principle. Departing from a conventional reading of this principle in terms of self-regarding versus other-regarding activities, I adopt a more fruitful interpretation grounded in the distinction between consensual versus non-consensual harm. This perspective yields clarity regarding when and under what conditions it is ethically justified to permit individuals to engage with potentially detrimental technologies, thereby circumventing paternalistic inclinations.

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### **13. Whose Death is it, Anyway? Comparativist and Subjectivist Evaluations of Death**

**DAY 2 15:30-16:15** Connor Leak (University of Birmingham)

I supplement the philosophy of death by demonstrating the importance of subjective evaluations of death and relating them to a comparativist evaluation, a systematic, objective method to calculate the value of death. First, I detail the importance of subjective evaluations of death by discussing hypothetical cases where we negate the subjective evaluation and reach fallible conclusions. After demonstrating the importance of subjective evaluations of death, I illustrate a tension in cases where the agent has no (subjective) desire to die but whose death, according to comparativism, would be good for them. In order to solve this tension, I discuss three different attempts to combine both accounts: (i) making use of the General Deprivation Account (Behrendt, 2019; Nagel, 2012), (ii) subjectively grounding the comparativist account (Crisp, 2021; Kriegel, 2019; Schroeder, 2020), and (iii) supplementing the comparativist account with the subjective evaluation. I conclude that the final attempt is most fitting: the agent's subjective evaluation of death should supplement the comparativist evaluation. This thus provides an all-encompassing evaluation of death for human agents.

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### **14. Why Not Eat the Dead?**

**DAY 2 16:30-17:30** Michael Hauskeller (University of Liverpool)

When a person has died, we are generally expected to treat their remains with respect. There are legal regulations in place that dictate what we can and cannot do with the bodies of the dead, how they are to be disposed of and under what circumstances and for which purposes they can be used. Not every use is permitted, but not every use is prohibited either. Dead human bodies can be valuable resources, and when they are, the law often allows their use. For quite some time now, dead human bodies have been dissected and experimented on to advance medical research or for teaching purposes, and today they are highly prized as potential organ providers. And yet, however widespread such use may be, it is still regarded as the exception to the more basic rule that the bodies of the dead should not be treated as mere resources that can be used any way we like. The question is, why not?

Why do we think it is necessary to put any restrictions at all on how the bodies of the dead are used by the living? Why don't we allow dead bodies to be used in whatever way people want to use them? Why do we

demand respect for the bodies of the dead? Isn't that irrational? After all, the dead have no use for their bodies anymore, the persons they once were have ceased to exist, and the bodies they leave behind seem to be little more than empty shells that have no intrinsic value. But if that is so, shouldn't we be allowed to use them any way we please provided it is safe, just like we are allowed to sell a dead person's clothes, or burn them, or use them as cleaning wipes? Say a man decides to plastinate his dead wife in a position that allows her to be used as a footstool and subsequently uses it precisely as that, or an artist obtains several fresh corpses from the morgue to create a performance piece during which the bodies are torn apart and then fed to a pack of hungry dogs, or a woman cooks her dead child in the oven and serves it for dinner to be consumed by her and the rest of the family. We would no doubt be shocked by those actions, but would we also have good reason to regard them as wrong? I think we do, and I will try to explain why in my talk.