

# **Building Back Better: Opportunities and Risks**

**Sixth Annual Graduate Conference in  
Ethics and Public Affairs**

**Conference Program  
November 17-19, 2022**



**Carleton**  
University

# Conference Program

**Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
Dunton Tower Room 2017

<i>What</i>	<i>When</i>
Registration/Check-in	1:00 pm
Welcome and opening remarks (Vida Panitch, EPAF Director)	1:30 pm – 1:45 pm
<b>Session 1: Public Reason and Discourse</b>	1:45 pm – 3:30 pm
<i>When Science Communicators Speak: Reconciling Public Reason and the Administrative State</i> Vanessa Schipani, University of Pennsylvania (USA)	
<i>Journalistic Standards and the Epistemic Agency of Minority Voices</i> Maëlle Turbide, Université de Sherbrooke (Canada)	
Break (30 min) refreshments provided	
<b>Session 2: Hard cases of Inclusiveness and Representation</b>	4:00 pm -- 5:00 pm
<i>Justifying Democratic Representation for Future Generations</i> Matthew Wiseman, University of Southern California (USA)	
<i>When methodological debates meet political disputes: the case of the National Institute for Excellence in Education</i> Olivier Grenier, Université du Québec à Montréal (Canada)	
<b>Social event</b> for conference participants hosted by EPAF Program	5:30 pm -- 7:30 pm



**Friday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**Dunton Tower Room 2017**

*What*

*When*

Registration/Check-in

9:30 am

**Session 3: Economic Policy and Social Justice**

10:00 am – 11:15 am

*Examining Market Domination in Canada Through an Analysis of Settler/Indigenous Relations*

Corey McKibbin, McMaster University (Canada)

*Anti-precarity Bonds: Building Better Sovereign Debt Contracts by Attending to the Poor's Lived Experiences*

Aatif Abbas, Syracuse University (USA)

Break (30 min) refreshments provided

**Session 4: Political Ideology and Public Health Crises**

11:45 am – 1:00 pm

*Causes of the COVID-19 Death Rate Disparity between Western Nations and China*

Gavin Foster, Carleton University (Canada)

*Neoliberal Ideology: Ethics of a Public Health Crisis*

James Carr, University of North Carolina Charlotte (USA)

Lunch (provided for conference participants only)

1:00 pm – 2:15 pm

**Session 5: COVID-19: Lessons Learned and Future Directions in Ethics**

2:15 pm – 3:30 pm

*It's Just Allocation: An application of Parfit's Priority View*

Isaias Ruiz, McMaster University (Canada)

*Ethics of Blame; Let's Stop Pointing the Finger*

Ryan Oriwol, Carleton University (Canada)

Break 30 min (refreshments provided)

**Keynote speaker**

4:00 pm – 5:30 pm

*Epistemic Injustice, Democratic Deliberation, and Public Policy*

Amandine Catala, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Canada Research Chair on Epistemic Injustice and Agency, Department of Philosophy, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)

**World Philosophy Day Social Event** in collaboration with Carleton's

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Department of Philosophy

(refreshments provided & cash bar)



**Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**Virtual (via Zoom)**

*What*

**When (EST)**

**Virtual Session 1: Effects of Oppression**

10:00 am – 11:15 am

*Oppression as Suicide Inducing, or Spinoza Against Oppression*

Ian MacLean-Evans, York University (Canada)

*Taking a Moral High Ground: The Effects of Group-Based Moral Superiority on Solidarity Activism*

Xenia Stieger, King's College London (UK)

Break 15 min

**Virtual Session 2: Race, Nationality, and the Protection of Basic Rights**

11:30 am -- 12:45 pm

*The Borderless Wall: Basic Rights and Privacy in the Context of Immigration Enforcement*

Joel Sati, University of California, Berkeley (USA)

*How Race Makes Place: why market-based solutions will not solve environmental housing displacement*

Joshua Petersen, University of Michigan (USA)

Lunch break

12:45 pm – 2:00 pm

**Virtual Session 3: Preparedness and Response**

2:00pm – 3:45 pm

*Emergency Management & Justice*

Adam C. Smith, University of Utah (USA)

*Mondragon as an Alternative Business Firm Model for Providing Water Services in Indigenous Reserves*

Fernando Lennertz, McMaster University (Canada)

*Challenging Ourselves: Challenge Trials and Institutional Tribulations*

Travis Quigley, University of Arizona (USA)

Break 15 min

**Virtual Session 4: Political Responsibility**

4:00 pm -- 5:15 pm

*The War Against Peace: A Hand on Deck*

Femi Omotoyinbo, Queen's University Belfast (UK)

*Individual Responsibility for Climate Justice: Political not Moral*

Shruti Pandey, University of Delhi (India)

Closing remarks (Vida Panitch, EPAF Director)

5:15 pm -- 5:30 pm



# Keynote Speaker

## Amandine Catala

Amandine Catala, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Canada Research Chair on Epistemic Injustice and Agency, Department of Philosophy, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)



Amandine Catala is an Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), where she holds the Canada Research Chair on Epistemic Injustice and Agency. Her research interests lie in feminist, social, and political philosophy as well as philosophy of race and philosophy of disability, and include epistemic injustice and agency, territorial rights, colonialism, indigenous issues, migration, linguistic justice, cultural minorities, and neurodiversity. Her work has appeared in *Philosophical Studies*, *The Monist*, *Synthese*, the *Journal of Political Philosophy*, the *Journal of Social Philosophy*, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, and *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly*.

### **Epistemic Injustice, Democratic Deliberation, and Public Policy**

Most western democracies have been, or continue to be, involved in colonialism. Yet colonial memory is often either severely distorted or lacking entirely – a situation that can be characterized as “colonial erasure.” I argue that colonial erasure produces and maintains inequalities in both epistemic and political power. Specifically, I argue that colonial erasure undermines the democratic process

of deliberating on several issues of public policy that also matter for social justice in both its material and cultural dimensions — for example, reparations, history textbooks and curricula, statues and monuments, or holidays and festivals. I proceed in three steps. I first argue that, by obscuring the continuity between historical and contemporary injustice, colonial erasure creates epistemic injustice for minoritized groups like Afrodescendants and Indigenous peoples. I then argue that colonial erasure undermines political equality in contemporary societies by creating what I call a “meta-epistemic filter.” Finally, I argue that this situation of meta-epistemic filtering undermines political equality because it significantly hinders these minorities’ ability to engage in the democratic process of political participation on an equal basis.

# Conference Abstracts

## Session 1: Public Reason and Discourse

### When Science Communicators Speak: Reconciling Public Reason and the Administrative State

**Vanessa Schipani, University of Pennsylvania**

From climate change to the coronavirus pandemic, it's undeniable that we need science-based policies to overcome today's challenges. But recently, scholars have questioned whether science squares with a major tenet of liberal democracy – public reason. Public reason stipulates that the reasons justifying coercive policies are shared by all citizens. The problem is most scientific reasons aren't shared by all citizens. This has led some to claim that public reason conflicts with the administrative state [1]. If true, we're in trouble.

The present paper aims to reconcile public reason and the administrative state by highlighting the necessity of science communication experts in a liberal democracy. Scholars who work on public reason underestimate or, worse, ignore the role that teachers, journalists and press officers play in translating science for the public [2]. This neglect leads them to wrongly conclude that most scientific research isn't public, I'll argue.

Two challenges to science as public reason permeate the literature: (1) Most citizens can't possibly understand the scientific justifications behind policies, and, thus, can't agree (or disagree) with them; (2) Among citizens who do understand the science, there isn't consensus over many theories [3]. Given these challenges, much science isn't public. Since administrative agencies require science to justify policies, public reason and the administrative state conflict.

To (1), I'll argue: Scholars conflate the level of scientific knowledge needed to form policy justifications with the level needed to merely understand them: One doesn't need to be a scientist to understand such justifications. One needs a science communicator to translate the justifications for them. To (2), I'll argue: While there isn't agreement over the scientific reasons behind policies, surveys show there is agreement over science's evaluative standards [4]. That is, most agree that science is a solid way to obtain knowledge about our world. Thus, I'll argue that the administrative state is compatible with what's called the accessibility approach to public reason, which relies on shared evaluative standards, not shared reasons [5].

Lastly, I'll address two objections: (A) Citizens can't assess whether science's evaluative standards have been properly applied in policy justifications; (B) My argument idealizes citizens to an unreasonable degree. To (A), I respond: Citizens can – with the help of science communication experts. To (B), I respond: My argument requires less idealization than any level currently proposed in the literature. That is, it merely imagines a world in which we emphasize the education and communication of scientific process in grade school, news articles and press releases.

[1] Kogelmann, B. & Stich, S. (2021). "When Public Reason Falls Silent: Liberal Democratic Justification versus the Administrative State." *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy*, Volume 7. Oxford University Press.



[2] I interpret 'communicator' broadly to include teachers.

[3] E.g. over how exactly climate change will impact civilization and, early in the pandemic, over whether masks work to curb infection.

[4] Badano, G. & Bonotti, M. (2020). "Rescuing Public Reason Liberalism's Accessibility Requirement." *Law and Philosophy*. 39: 35-65.

[5] Vallier, K. (2014). *Liberal Politics and Public Faith*. Routledge.

## **Journalistic Standards and the Epistemic Agency of Minority Voices**

**Maëlle Turbide, Université de Sherbrooke**

There is a rich literature in philosophy about the challenge of giving a voice to the marginalized in the formation of shared beliefs within a society. This conversation around the theme of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007) points to the importance of considering social identities and power relations among knowing agents, highlighting the deep ethical dimension of knowledge production (Grasswick, 2019). The role of journalism, as a powerful social institution that disseminates and produces knowledge (Godler, Reich, Miller, 2020), has been little studied by this community of researchers. This is the focus of my work because I realize the important potential of journalistic practices in giving social value to contributions from those with less epistemic influence and in fostering public discourses that promote diversity, equity, inclusion and reconciliation. I investigate the ethics of journalistic knowledge production by asking the following question: To what extent do journalistic standards foster the epistemic agency of minority voices? I concentrate on two norms that are widely discussed in the literature on journalism: a) news should be of public interest (Patterson, Seib, 2005) and b) journalists need to be objective in the treatment of news (Galison, 2015). I am studying how these norms are interpreted and put into practice in the context of issues affecting minorities. Based on semi-structured interviews with two reporters working in Montreal and on my own experience as a journalist for over 12 years, my contribution so far is to uncover two tensions that demand further scrutiny by social epistemologists. First, the tension between 'public interest' and 'interest of the public.' Second, the tension between objective reporting and the social situatedness of knowers.



## Session 2: Hard cases of Inclusiveness and Representation

### Justifying Democratic Representation for Future Generations

**Matthew Wiseman, University of Southern California**

Current political institutions have proven incapable of adequately combating climate change in part due to the systemic absence of formal representation of future generations in their decision-making. A crucial way we should build back better from the climate crisis is to create political institutions that incorporate such representation, for example by including proxy representatives in congress to deliberate and vote on behalf of future generations (González-Ricoy & Gosseries 2016).

In this presentation, I'll outline and defend what is, in my view, the most compelling justification for democratic representation of future generations. I'll appeal to the much-discussed All-Affected Principle (AAP), (roughly) the claim that all those whose interests are affected by a democratic decision should have their interests represented in the making of that decision (Goodin 2007). After having briefly defended AAP against alternative approaches to constituting the demos, I'll introduce and reject two related objections claiming that AAP fails to justify democratic representation for future generations due to the non-identity problem.

First, Tänssjö (2007) argues that to be affected by an institution's decision is to be either benefitted or harmed by it, which requires being made either better or worse off, respectively. But since any such decision will itself cause different people to come into existence than any alternative, these future people will not have been made better or worse off by that decision, for they would otherwise not have existed. In response, I'll argue we should rethink what it means to be affected in the sense relevant to AAP. We should keep the intuitively plausible idea that to be affected means to be either benefitted or harmed, and embrace the notion that people can be benefitted (harmed) in a non-comparative sense by being brought into existence with good (bad) lives. This is a notion that is enjoying increasing philosophical support (e.g. from Harman 2004; Bykvist 2007; Shiffrin 2012; McMahan 2013; Gardner 2016) and that, importantly, can be defended on grounds independent of political representation.

I'll then respond to Heyward's (2008) concern that even if future people are affected in the right way, proxy representatives would, counter-intuitively, have no reason to prefer outcomes in which future people are better off than different future people would have been had an alternative decision been made, since, as long as the latter have lives worth living, they have no grounds for complaint for having been brought into existence. To combat this worry, I'll build on Hare (2007) by arguing that the special obligations proxy representatives bear towards the future people they represent that are constitutive of their role are plausibly understood as *de dicto* rather than *de re*. That is, the representatives are obliged to advocate for future people whoever they turn out to be, rather than for particular possible future people. I'll show how this resolves Heyward's worry, and finish by arguing that the specific features of these *de dicto* obligations do not fall prey to recent objections mounted against more common types of *de dicto* obligations by Podgorski (2021).





## **When methodological debates meet political disputes: the case of the National Institute for Excellence in Education**

**Olivier Grenier, Université du Québec à Montréal**

Improving education practices is a primary political goal in developed countries. For example, the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment is meant to regularly assess developed countries' school systems. Some countries, such as the United States, France and Finland, have even created national institutes to review and summarize educational research. In Quebec, a consultation took place in 2017 regarding the creation of a National Institute of Excellence in Education (NIEE). The NIEE's roles would be to review and summarize educational research on relevant topics, and to transfer the results to the professional educators. The project was left aside notably because of a change in political leadership in the province in 2018 and of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. However, recent commentaries in the Quebec's medias seem to have brought it back in the political agenda. Indeed, some education researchers believe that the post-pandemic "return to normalcy" is a good time to establish the NIEE's foundations.

Despite its goal of providing easier access to scientific knowledge regarding the best educational methods to professional educators, the NIEE has led to many debates about its relevance. Generally speaking, there are at least two important debates: one is methodological, while the other is political. Firstly, the consultation document provided to present the NIEE project recommends an evidence-based approach which favors the use of statistical data obtained during randomized controlled trials and minimizes the use of qualitative methods in educational research. Secondly, the roles attributed to the NIEE in the consultation document overlap the ones of other organizations dedicated to educational success, notably the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (CSE) and the Centre de transfert pour la réussite éducative au Québec (CTREQ). Thus, the CSE and the CTREQ would lose some political power in education if the NIEE were created. To maintain its privileged influence on decision-making in education in Quebec, the CSE recommended in 2017 to create a Standing Committee on Educational Research and a Center for Excellence in Education. These two organizations would fill the research review and transfer responsibilities envisioned for the NIEE, and they would essentially be under the authority of the CSE.

While these two debates can be distinguished, my main thesis is that they are closely related. Indeed, as documentary analysis of some of Quebec's education journals have shown, qualitative methods tend to be more popular among Quebec's education researchers than the quantitative methods favored in the NIEE consultation document. Thus, the creation of the NIEE is an opportunity to acquire a more important political role in Quebec's education system for the supporters of quantitative methods, while giving the research review and transfer roles to organizations managed by the CSE is a manner for supporters of qualitative methods to maintain their privileged political role at the Quebec Ministry of Education. Either way, methodological differences need to be reconciled so that the political structures dedicated to educational success can provide better counsel to professional educators.



## Session 3: Political Ideology and Public Health Crises

### Causes of the COVID-19 Death Rate Disparity between Western Nations and China

**Gavin Foster, Carleton University**

This paper aims to explore how the underlying political and economic philosophies of various nations played a role in their handling of the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years. In particular, the difference between the neoliberal, democratic model found in many Western countries (such as Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom) will be contrasted with the socialist, authoritarian model found in states like China.[1] Space constraints prevent exploring this in-depth; thus, this paper will confine itself to two features of neoliberal thought: the individualized ethos, and the emphasis on privatization over centralization/nationalization of business. It will be argued that these features of neoliberalism contributed to the proliferation of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that, conversely, features of Chinese governance and economic thought allowed for effective public-health measures that resulted in one of the lowest death rates per-capita in the world. Such conclusions are qualified as being confined solely to their contribution to combatting pandemic health emergencies.

This paper contributes to the ongoing research that explores the connection between socio-economic values/norms within differing countries (or communities) with their ability to successfully combat health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. As the fight against COVID-19 continues, and with the possibility of future epidemics or pandemics, attention to the social and economic frameworks that best combat such crises is paramount.

[1] 'Socialism' is here used in the colloquial sense used by contemporary political commentators, not as defined by the actual socialists of today who define it as the workers possession of the means of production, which is certainly not the case in China. Further, the author certainly makes no claims in this paper as to the actual superiority of either system in the grand scheme of things. The only concern is how these political and economic systems have played a role in the development and capability of pandemic responsiveness and success. Many of the drawbacks or benefits of each system unrelated to the direct success of mitigating the effects of the pandemic are not thoroughly examined here (such as the clear lack of many freedoms that exist in nations like China, or the type of wealth-inequality that exists in nations like the United States).

### Neoliberal Ideology: Ethics of a Public Health Crisis

**James Carr, University of North Carolina Charlotte**

*Our American credo is that people are willing to tolerate a society with miserably low levels of social capital, so long as there can be massive income inequality... with the hope that they will soon be sitting at the top of this steep pyramid... When humans invented poverty, they came up with a way of subjugating the low- ranking like nothing ever before seen in the primate world. ~Robert Sapolsky, 1994*

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the growing body of work raising concerns regarding the prevalence of neoliberalism in modern society. I will define neoliberalism as possessing three main characteristics: individualism, free market via privatization, and deregulation/decentralization (McGregor, 2001, 82). I will demonstrate that neoliberalism creates a perverse inversion between the

social- citizen and the consumer-citizen. This creates a distortion of the rights and duties of citizens, governments and the corporate sector. The scope of this paper will be limited to the biopsychosocial aspects of neoliberalism's effect on citizen health, as a full discussion of the negative effects of neoliberal ideology would far exceed my parameters. Throughout my writing, I will argue that neoliberal ideology is a public health crisis by exploring three ethically problematic tenets that are justified by neoliberalism. These include poverty/threat of poverty, unequal/unavailable access to goods and services, and degradation/exploitation of the Commons.

## **Session 4: Economic Policy and Social Justice**

### **Examining Market Domination in Canada Through an Analysis of Settler/Indigenous Relations**

**Corey McKibbin, Carleton University**

In this paper, I argue that there must be economic policy reformation that promotes, rather than disincentivizes, a solidarity between Settler/Indigenous communities in market contexts. By market contexts, I mean the kind of economic policies that the Federal Government endorses in Canadian society. If Canada is to properly recognize Indigenous communities in market contexts, then there must be a shift in how the country approaches environmentally, and socially, hazardous decision making. Lillian Cicerchia asserts that domination is both "agential and structural" (Cicerchia, 2019, 2). This entails that the Neo-Republican view, which promotes strong States and "regulated markets," can in fact be a dominating force. The structures of current capitalist markets allow for incentives that "unintentionally produce structures that have unintended, yet dominating effects" (Cicerchia, 2019, 2). The resulting effect of these dominating market structures is the social conditioning of persons "by their social positions" (Cicerchia, 2019, 2). This paper explores the implications of market domination through lenses of capitalism and economic democracy. The comparison of these two economic systems will result in a determination of which is better at recognizing Indigenous (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) sovereignty in Settler/Canadian contexts by examining historical and contemporary policies and case studies.

Cicerchia, L. (2019). Structural Domination in the Labor Market. *European Journal of Political Theory*. Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1474885119851094?journalCode=epta>

### **Anti-precarity Bonds: Building Better Sovereign Debt Contracts by Attending to the Poor's Lived Experiences**

**Aatif Abbas, Syracuse University**

International creditors extend loans to developing countries under the legal norm of *pacta sunt servanda*, i.e., agreements must be kept. Unfortunately, this norm exacts a severe toll on the world's most vulnerable populations. Poor people tend to live in heavily indebted countries that must practice austerity to keep paying interest. Many of these countries spend more tax revenue on debt-servicing than on poverty alleviation. Moreover, during periods of acute economic adversity, governments simply cannot make payments and breach their agreements. The pain from austerity



pales in comparison with the brutal repercussions of default. Foreign creditors withdraw money from the country and attempt to seize its assets. As a result, inflation skyrockets, unemployment rises, and protests turn violent. Such pain and suffering pose a question: Is *pacta sunt servanda* morally justified?

Scholars have employed three approaches to challenge this legal norm. Some argue that a country's citizens should not be responsible for loans taken out by their previous undemocratic leaders. Others question the strict repayment norm on consequentialist grounds: it hampers human development by diverting money to wealthy overseas creditors. Finally, contractualists argue that the poor can reasonably reject *pacta sunt servanda* on grounds like fairness, responsibility, and well-being. While these arguments stem from respect or promotion of the poor's interests, they do not base these interests on their real perspectives. Instead, they hypothetically attribute them to the poor.

In this article, I employ a realist contractualism to assess the morality of *pacta sunt servanda*. Through a close study of their testimony to ethnographers, journalists, and activists, I demonstrate that the poor experience a multi-faceted precarity from fixed-interest debt repayments. Therefore, my paper proposes novel debt contracts that reduce interest payments during economic downturns and delay principal payments during severe recessions. Specifically, these bonds make payments contingent on economic metrics like unemployment and inflation. Such anti-precarity bonds—as I call them—provide the poor with relief when it's most needed and, therefore, avoid compounding their precarity. Drawing on financial theory and practice, the article further argues that these bonds would be feasible to design and adopt. Overall, my proposal addresses the pain and suffering caused by international lending through debt contracts' design without questioning *pacta sunt servanda*. Its commitment to the classic moral prohibition against breaking promises constitutes a distinctive strength. Ultimately, anti-precarity bonds would be of vital significance in a world that—while emerging from the health crisis—seems headed towards a debt crisis.

## **Session 5: COVID-19: Lessons Learned and Future Directions in Ethics**

### **It's Just Allocation: An application of Parfit's Priority View**

**Isaias Ruiz, McMaster University**

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought to light ethically puzzling questions around the allocation of medical resources. Though, for most practitioners, questions around the allocation of scarce medical resources are happily guided by a Most Lives Saved (MLS) approach. MLS is undergirded by the principle of utility, where the outcome that produces the most good, or that benefits the most people is regarded as optimal. But, as Derek Parfit points out, the principle of utility assumes that benefits are received by all equally. In addition, the MLS approach fails to address the needs of marginalized communities and works to create long-term scarcity. Empirical work on health outcomes based on race during Covid-19 has found that black patients were more at risk of contracting the SARS-CoV-2 virus but were paradoxically less likely to be allocated medical resources through triage methods that applied MLS. And since MLS and the principle of utility seem to only be concerned with maximizing current benefit, this would produce greater levels of long-term scarcity—especially in times marked by Crisis Standards of Care such as the ongoing pandemic. Thus, in this discussion, I propose an



alternate decision-making framework for medical resource allocation. I propose the use of Parfit's Priority View and the principle of absolute urgency as alternatives to MLS and the principle of utility.

In this work, I demonstrate that Parfit's Priority View, with the addition of the principle of absolute urgency, is not only morally but also practically compelling. It is morally compelling because it says that when distributing resources, special concern ought to be given to those that are worse off over the course of their whole lives, and thus whose needs have more absolute urgency. It is practically compelling, because unlike MLS and the principle of utility, absolute urgency is not concerned merely with the current situation at hand. And insofar as it demands that we take a more nuanced account of a person's life as a whole, it does not exacerbate future or long-term scarcity. Thus, I argue that Parfit's Priority View, with the addition of the principle of absolute urgency, can be invoked not only to morally justify allocation based on race, but it also can respond to practical concerns of future scarcity that the principle of utility overlooks. My approach better suits the needs of the population being underserved by the MLS approach. That is, by taking into account the overall health risks of a person's whole life, rather than just the urgency of the current crisis at hand, Parfit's Priority View and the principle of absolute urgency would not rule out members of vulnerable communities. Moreover, in its response to future scarcity, it would, overall, better serve the population.

## **Ethics of Blame; Let's Stop Pointing the Finger**

**Ryan Oriwol, Carleton University**

An essential aspect of "building back better" that should not be overlooked is building back together. One of the more regrettable reactions to news of COVID-19, the lockdown, or the mask mandate was the desire to find someone or something responsible for this outcome. This desire displayed itself in several forms, whether it was blaming the government for not reacting soon enough, blaming fellow citizens for not exercising proper caution or even our family members who believed some misguided or false information about the crisis. We all share the goal of making it to the end of this crisis as quickly and safely as possible; counterintuitively this did not always bring people together. Unfortunately, this may partly have to do with the choice to blame others for the situation we found ourselves in.

In my presentation, I will discuss the morality of blame. I will do so by offering an analysis of blame. Then, a set of conditions in which blame is justifiable, and finally, an argument for why we should avoid using blame moving forward while trying to build back better.

The analysis will be used to clearly define what we mean when we blame someone or something for an event. It will also be used to point out the cause of assigning blame, not only the blamer but also the recipient of the blame. Inspired by Paul Billingham and Tom Parr's paper on "The Morality of Public Shaming" (2020), I will construct a set of conditions for when blame is appropriately assigned and the value in assigning "Justifiable Blame". This, as well as findings by Moral Psychologist Jonathan Haidt, will be used to make an argument for why we should be cautious in blaming others for complex social issues such as income inequality and climate change. The conclusion to this argument will be to encourage self-reflection and personal accountability so we may begin building back together.



## Virtual Session 1: Effects of Oppression

### Oppression as Suicide Inducing, or Spinoza Against Oppression

Ian MacLean-Evans, York University

It has been argued comprehensively that there is a plausible reading of Baruch Spinoza on which Spinoza holds the following two tenets: First, suicides are externally caused, and second, suicides can sometimes be rational if external conditions force it to seem to be the least available evil compared to someone's other options. This reading primarily follows the work of Nadler (2015, 2020) and [author] (Forthcoming in 2023) (author name removed for anonymization of reference).

Yet, it would be vastly better if situations of rational suicide did not occur. In this paper, I explore the implications of Spinoza's philosophy of suicide. I argue that Spinozism demands that we make it so that suicide is never made rational. While suicide may become rational in certain situations, Spinozism holds that it is always worse that suicide becomes rational. For suicide to become rational for ourselves, bad life conditions must be overwhelmingly present, and this is undesirable. Subsequently, since Spinoza holds that we must strive to ensure others have the best kind of life conditions available to them (E4p18s), and we see that suicide becoming rational indicates bad life conditions for ourselves, we must strive to abolish conditions that force suicide to be rational for others as well as ourselves.

I then identify oppression as a condition which forces rational suicides, and I argue that it does so by forcing the evidence available to many oppressed people to suggest that good living is impossible. I do this by appealing to Young's definition of oppression, and by noting that oppression thus defined indicates bad living on Spinozist grounds. Young's account of oppression holds that "all oppressed people suffer some inhibition of their ability to develop and exercise their capacities" (1990, 40). Similarly, "virtue" or "power", are synonymous in the Spinozist view (E4def8), so when one's powers (or capacities, in Young) are constrained, one is barred from Spinozist good living. I thus argue from a Spinozist position that oppression must be abolished to eliminate situations where suicide is forced to be rational.

In a pandemically-minded world in need of radical change, the Spinozist finds encouragement to fight oppression. From the fact that suicide can be forced to be rational by external conditions, and also that oppression can be one of these external conditions, we must work to combat oppression as we look to new possibilities emerging out of the global pandemic.

[author]. Forthcoming in 2023. "External Conditions, Internal Rationality: Spinoza on the Rationality of Suicide." *Journal of Spinoza Studies* vol. 1, no. 2.

Nadler, Steven. 2015. "Spinoza on Lying and Suicide." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24, no. 2: 257–78.

Nadler, Steven. 2020. "Suicide" in *Think Least of Death: Spinoza on How to Live and How to Die*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 157-171.

Spinoza, Benedictus de. 2016. *The Collected Works of Spinoza*. Translated by E. M. Curley. Vol. 1 and 2. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Young, Iris Marion. 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.



## **Taking a Moral High Ground: The Effects of Group-Based Moral Superiority on Solidarity Activism**

**Xenia Stieger, King's College London**

After the killing of George Floyd on May 26th, 2020, millions of White allies joined the Black Lives Matter movement in solidarity. Minority activists benefit from the support of those advantaged in a system of inequality to alter the status quo. However, previous research suggests that members of advantaged groups often engage in solidarity activism to bolster the moral image of their ingroup. Black activists questioned White allies' true motives and wondered whether taking a moral high ground would indeed translate into sustainable, long-term activism. Understanding both the motives and antecedents of solidarity activists is crucial in the creation of a more equal society.

Our study is the first to examine the role of group-based moral superiority as a motivating factor for White solidarity activists to take collective action and to stay persistent in their support for the BLM movement. We theorised that when a group of activists is taking a moral high ground, this process can be its own antecedent of collective action behaviour.

In two studies, we investigated the role of group-based moral superiority in motivating collective action behaviour of solidarity activists in the Black Lives Matter movement. In Study 1 (n = 218), we examined the relationship between group-based moral superiority and both collective action intentions and activism persistence above and beyond traditional measures of collective action (i.e., SIMCA, Van Zomeren et al., 2008, 2012). In Study 2 (n = 209) we manipulated group-based moral superiority experimentally. We tested whether higher levels of group-based moral superiority lead to increased collective action behaviour. To increase and decrease group-based moral superiority, participants were given a fake New York Times article that either stated that solidarity activists are more or less moral than non-activists. Across both studies, mediation analyses found support that group-based moral superiority plays an indirect role in increasing collective action intentions through stronger politicised group identification. The same indirect relationship was found for activism persistence in Study 1 but was not replicated in Study 2. Our findings have theoretical implications for a better understanding of the SIMCA model of collective action and introduce a new dimension of morality to the activism literature. To this date, no previous study has examined group-based moral superiority in the context of activism, and we identified this as a gap in literature. Additionally, these findings demonstrate that even when solidarity activists act from a moral high ground, this behaviour can be utilised in strengthening their politicised identity, and through that, their activism in the collective fight against inequality.

## **Virtual Session 2: Race, Nationality, and the Protection of Basic Rights**

### **The Borderless Wall: Basic Rights and Privacy in the Context of Immigration Enforcement**

**Joel Sati, University of California, Berkeley**

A May 2018 report by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) revealed that the fear of deportation deters illegalized immigrants from reporting crimes. The ACLU released this report at a time when the Trump Administration expanded Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)'s presence in courthouses across the country, resulting in a higher number of courthouse arrests by ICE. The fear is

that immigrant participation in the justice system will expose them to immigration enforcement.

It is this problem, that of illegalized people deciding between seeking protection of their basic rights or avoiding deportation, that Joseph Carens focuses on when arguing for a “firewall” between immigration enforcement and protecting immigrants’ basic human rights. Carens argues that democratic states should “establish as a firm legal principle that no information gathered by those responsible for protecting general human rights can be used for immigration enforcement purposes.” More importantly, firewalls derive from the underlying value that formal grants of rights are meaningless if rights holders are unable to exercise them.

Though I agree with Carens about the legitimacy of the underlying value, his account falls short of it. Carens’s conception of firewalls does not account for government intrusion in non-basic rights domains. Firewalls can protect illegalized people when seeking emergency healthcare, but do not account for other ways immigration enforcement collects information with the help of entities such as data brokers, state agencies, and public service providers to name a few.

In response, I argue that the right to privacy should be the basis for firewalls. More specifically, I argue for a conception of privacy based on contextual integrity. Privacy, defined through contextual integrity, is preserved when information flows generated by an action or practice conform to legitimate contextual norms and is violated when those norms are breached. Contextual integrity allows for deeper analysis of the institutional relationships that immigration enforcement forges with other governmental and private entities.

This project is one part of a larger project developing a systematized philosophical account of illegalization, defined as state practices of criminalization that use immigration enforcement as a tool of social degradation. Illegalization is also a concept consonant with this underlying value, because it focuses on the environmental factors that form the chasm between formal rights and their substantive enjoyment. Moreover, an account of firewalls, informed by considerations of contextual integrity, allows us to see how contemporary information-sharing practices have an effect on the autonomy and privacy of the people who must interact with them. Lastly, my paper looks to make explicit how immigration enforcement relies on criminalization to violate the privacy of those who are deemed “illegal.”

## **How Race Makes Place: why market-based solutions will not solve environmental housing displacement**

**Joshua Petersen, University of Michigan**

We argue that market-based solutions to human displacement — most notably, negotiated property buyout programs — are inadequate for solving displacement caused by environmental factors, particularly in the United States. We defend this claim through an illustrative case study of Mossville, Louisiana. We close by considering normative constraints on the market which could promote justice after displacement. In particular, we explore the role that cultural heritage laws could play in protected marginalized communities. By philosophically investigating real-world issues at the intersection of housing, climate, and race, this paper aims to provide a new perspective on the normative constraints which may mitigate suffering after crisis and displacement.





For over two years, the authors of this paper worked with environmentally-displaced individuals in Louisiana to document the effects of a voluntary buyout scheme on the historically Black community of Mossville. Though the buyout of Mossville program was voluntary, interviews with those affected reveal that participants experienced this event as a forced displacement. Those interviewed revealed significant trauma as a result of this buyout, and many shared that they were worse off post-buyout. Our quantitative analysis found that white residents in the buyout received nearly twice as much for their homes as Black residents. Despite these findings, the corporation leading the buyout defends their practices and claims that this buyout represents industry standard. In particular, defenses of voluntary buyouts tend to refer to the mediating force of the housing market to ensure justice and fairness.

What explains, then, the failure of the housing market to ensure justice in Mossville? We identify two complementary reasons.

First, the market is racialized. Factors such as redlining and the exclusion of people of color from capital markets have caused well-documented racial wealth gaps to emerge in home ownership (see Rothstein 2017). As voluntary buyout programs (such as Mossville's) fail to correct for historical discrimination, they also fail to provide participants with just means of relocation.

Second, the market is racializing. In today's housing market, assessors appraise homes by estimating values in comparison with similar units, known as "comps." Recent journalism (e.g. Kamin 2020) and sociological scholarship (Howell and Korver-Glenn 2018) suggest that when assessors know that a homeowner isn't white, they more frequently choose comps which are inappropriate for their appraisal. In doing so, we argue, appraisers construct racial hierarchies within the market. As buyouts occur in such a way that make "race-blind" appraisals impossible (we argue), voluntary buyouts cannot overcome this site of inequity. A limited analysis of appraisal reports from the Mossville buyout support this reasoning.

To address these failings, we argue that policymakers should turn to cultural heritage protection law to constrain market forces during voluntary buyout processes. Given that sites like Mossville hold special historical significance in the United States, we argue that markets are simply not the appropriate site for their negotiation. Widening cultural protection law in the US may provide one way to stop racialized and racializing housing markets from emerging in particularly vulnerable communities in the midst of relocation.

Kamin, Debra (2020). Black Homeowners Face Discrimination in Appraisals, The New York Times.

Rothstein Richard (2017). The Color of Law.

Howell, Junia and Elizabeth Korver-Glenn (2018). "Neighborhoods, Race, and the Twenty-first-century Housing Appraisal Industry." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 4(4): 473-490.



## Virtual Session 3: Preparedness and Response

### Emergency Management & Justice

Adam C. Smith, University of Utah

Climate change, the covid-19 pandemic, and infrastructure failures have made the devastating impact of emergencies all too clear. While emergencies have a significant negative impact on the state's ability to create and maintain a just society, emergency management has gone largely unmentioned in political philosophy, with Zack (2011), Voice (2015), and Brake (2019) being the notable exceptions. However, all three of these authors work from a liberal egalitarian theory of justice and/or focus on specific issues within emergency management (EM), like rebuilding and displacement. My goal here is broader. I argue that virtually all theories of justice give the state an obligation to invest in EM, via the obligation to provide certain goods and services. What these goods and services are is relative to each theory, but some examples include a judicial system, a national army, a basic education, clean drinking water, health care, etc. The state's obligation to provide goods and services is, I maintain, not just an obligation to provide them in the present and during ideal times, but an obligation to take reasonable steps to ensure that it can provide them to everyone at all times. Furthermore, the state is aware of the frequency, severity, and effects of emergencies and has the ability to lessen their impact by investing in EM, which includes both mitigation and preparedness efforts. So, failing to make reasonable investments in EM is a violation of the state's obligation to provide goods and services. My account specifies the notion of "reasonable investment", i.e. what it takes for the state to successfully fulfill its obligation to EM. With this basic obligation in place, future work can be done on specific issues involving emergency management and justice.

After presenting my argument, I consider two objections and one practical issue. The practical issue is the several cognitive biases and heuristics that all people have (to varying degrees) that make us less likely to take emergencies seriously and adequately invest in EM. I highlight the work of Robert Meyer and Howard Kunreuther (2017) to show that there are ways to counteract these cognitive biases. The first objection I consider is what I call the "cost objection", that EM costs too much or is not cost effective. I use the case of hurricane Katrina to show that EM can be extremely cost effective. In cases where EM is not cost-effective, there are other relevant obligations, at least for egalitarian theories of justice, like protecting life and well-being that supplement the obligation to provide goods and services and combined are strong enough to give the state an obligation to invest in EM even when it costs more than potential damages. The second objection is against requiring people to invest in EM for rare and distant emergencies. I reiterate that the obligations under consideration hold for the entire nation, justifying mandatory investment in EM through taxes. I leave open how EM should be handled: one federal agency, regional agencies, or some combination of the two.

Brake, E. (2019). Rebuilding After Disaster. *Social Theory and Practice*, 45(2): 179-204.

Meyer, R. and H. Kunreuther. (2017). *The Ostrich Paradox: Why We Underprepare for Disasters*. Philadelphia, PA: Wharton School Press.

Voice, P. (2015). What Do Liberal Democratic States Owe the Victims of Disasters? A Rawlsian Account. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 33(4): 396-410.

Zack, N. (2011). *Ethics for Disaster*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

## **Mondragon as an alternative business firm model for providing water services in Indigenous reserves**

**Fernando Lennertz, McMaster University**

Indigenous reserves in Canada have faced for many decades a severe lack of access to clean and safe water. There are several causes for this water crisis to persist for so long, in spite of multiple attempts to redress it, among which we should highlight: the lack of adequate funding and support by the federal government; limited supply of trained operators and insufficiency of technical resources; the past and present effects of colonialism (such as the dispossession from lands and resources, the distrust induced by the violation of treaties by settler authorities, unemployment and limited opportunities for economic development); the imposition of Western standards and practices on communities, with blatant disregard for Indigenous epistemologies, values and traditional knowledge; and the disinterest of governmental institutions in partnering with Indigenous communities to understand the social context for development of appropriate water governance (e.g., understanding the cultural relationship with water) and to respect Indigenous decision-making processes and capacity regarding water.

In my presentation, I will argue that a different business firm model for providing water services can present a solution to this water crisis that can better suit the values and needs of Indigenous communities and address the aforementioned causes of water crises. In particular, I will argue that fostering a network of worker cooperatives with quadruple bottom lines (which include financial, social, environmental and cultural goals) can produce more effective and more easily reachable results than additional regulation and litigation. By developing firms aligned from the start with the regulatory principles, we can accomplish what the law was trying to more efficiently, intervening *ex ante* rather than *ex post*.

To explain the proposal, I will draw parallels with the Mondragon experiment in the Basque Country, examining how they have grown from a cooperative of 5 workers to a federation of worker cooperatives employing over 80,000 people, in spite of facing very adverse conditions in its humble origins with little capital, infrastructure and a government deeply hostile to its population and Basque culture. I will then analyze the derivative Cleveland model developed in the United States and conclude with an example of translation of this model done by members of the Lakota Nation to their cultural and historical context.

I end my presentation with a call to action for universities to lend their support to this project, including Indigenous Studies departments, Business Schools, Humanities departments, Engineering departments, among others, to promote such firms through incubators, expert advisory, procurement, and debate.

## **Challenging Ourselves: Challenge Trials and Institutional Tribulations**

**Travis Quigley, University of Arizona**

Early in the development of vaccines for Covid-19, an organization called One Day Sooner collected information from thousands of volunteer participants for challenge trials. In a challenge trial, everyone



is uniformly exposed to a virus (some are controls). The idea is that safety and efficacy conclusions are accelerated under controlled conditions. This is an established but controversial research protocol in vaccine development. The nub of the dispute is over how much (risk of) harm medical professionals can intentionally cause to research subjects. The Hippocratic injunction to do no harm, a foundational — although practically obscure — tenet of medical role obligation, plays an outsize role here. I first argue that current understandings of research harm and risk, already unsatisfactory, are indefensible in the pandemic conditions we have recently faced. The basic argument here is the risk literature is hopelessly conservative. A contemporary approach, which is relatively permissive in the context of the literature, assesses risk by reference to socially permissible “comparator activities” that incur similar risks. So what is the appropriate comparison? The suggestion on offer is volunteer activities such as a volunteer fire department. But when millions are dying, why is the appropriate comparison not, say, going to war? That is: if volunteers are clear-eyed and the cause is vital, there may not be a limitation on acceptable risk at all. Perhaps we shouldn’t think of challenge trial volunteers as patients, but as heroes.

This illustrates a broader problem for public health institutions, especially in the U.S.. We’ve been challenged ourselves, and our protections have fared poorly. The recent issue in vaccine development isn’t about developing new vaccines, but updating existing Covid-19 vaccines for new variants and sub-variants. We’re hopelessly behind the curve; there was no variant booster for Delta, and we are only now seriously contemplating a booster for Omicron, when a new and significantly different sub-variant (BA.5) is already dominant. This seems less about research protocol than regulatory practice and urgency. It’s not certain, by the ordinary standards of vaccine development, how effective variant-specific boosters will be. But that’s precisely the problem: by the time their effect is certain by those standards, it will always be too late. The basic issue here is with institutional norms and the distinction between normal and emergency circumstances. It may (may) be correct in normal times for regulatory agencies to be conservative, avoid allowing individuals to assume risks, and hoard their credibility above all else. But the ultimate prerogative is to save lives; in dire times, conservatism is a policy choice. This is a matter of institutional culture and institutional design, but also a matter of moral thinking. The commitment to doing no harm is a kind of principle of character; while exceptions are inevitably made, its basic structure is categorical. But what we need is different principles for different times; I will close with some remarks on this kind of moral structure, sometimes called ‘multi-level consequentialism.’

## **Virtual Session 4: Political Responsibility**

### **The War Against Peace: A Hand on Deck**

#### **Femi Omotoyinbo, Queen's University Belfast**

Here, I consider war against peace (broadly unjust wars) as an impediment to social justice for which every contributor ought to stop and/or reverse their contributions. While the usual conception of social justice is the doing aspect (i.e., equal distribution of wealth, human rights and equity), social justice should be both doing and undoing. There is also the undoing aspect, which involves taking responsibility to stop and/or reverse certain actions that deter the achievement of social justice. It is noteworthy that various thoughts on contributions to war often cut across direct and indirect

contributors to war, including soldiers (combatants), vanquished aggressors, political leaders, and even military robots. However, contributions from the above contributors may be impossible or minimal without weapons from the arms industry. The arms industry is the one hand on deck that needs more moral spotlighting. Therefore, I will be presenting three factors that shield the arms industry from a critical moral examination.

The first factor is the philosophical arguments within war ethics that are somewhat opposed to the responsibility of the arms industry for its contributions to war. These arguments seek a blanket protection for all civilians based on the Principle of Non-combatant Immunity (PNCI). Proponents of the arguments envisage that total war on non-combatants will ensue if the arms industry takes liability for its contributions to (unjust) war since there are non-combatants that make similar contributions. The second factor is the self-descriptive strategy by the arms industry in which the arms industry often presents itself in ways that divert attention from its contribution to the war against peace. I will select some popular arms-manufacturing companies in the world to highlight this self-descriptive strategy. The third factor is the political connections and secrecy that characterise the activities of the arms industry. This concerns the involvement of politicians who use their political, and sometimes socio-economic influences to protect and/or facilitate some activities of the arms industry. Many governments consider arms production as "capital intensive" and thereby encourage civilian or private arms producers to take military contracts. Some governments even help to maximise profits for the private arms manufacturers and provide financial bailouts for the civilian arms industry to keep them in business.

Given these factors, it is difficult to make the arms industry responsible for a needful undoing of their contributions to the war against peace. However, if these factors are addressed, it will be easier to conceive the responsibilities of the arms industry as one that cuts across *ad bellum* (before the war), *in bello* (during the war), and *post bellum* (after the war) contexts. I will finally consider, though briefly, such possible responsibilities for the arms industry that could ensure the achievement of social justice, especially in relation to peace.

## **Individual Responsibility for Climate Justice: Political not Moral**

**Shruti Pandey, University of Delhi**

The excessive consumption of natural resources by the developed nations and their disproportionate appropriation of the climate's ability to absorb greenhouse gases has changed the climate to an extent that the interest of the underdeveloped poor of the global community and the future generation's prospect of having a safe future stands highly compromised. This kind of injustice reigning in today's globalized world of unprecedented interconnectedness and increasing dependencies has expanded the scope of justice and demands a revisiting of our conception of individual responsibilities for such structural harms. Since the existing political and institutional structures at the national and international front have fallen short of addressing the issue of climate justice, we are faced with a difficult but unavoidable question of whether the responsibility to address climate change and associated structural injustices percolate down to individual agents?

Given the complexities involved in addressing an extremely large global challenge and the



seeming triviality, almost banality of individual agents to address it; this paper while highlighting this problematic link would attempt to argue that the responsibilities of individuals are not just moral but political in nature. The individual agents are endowed with this responsibility not in virtue of their discrete causal contributions or capacities to bring change but because they are complicit in and benefit from carbon intensive structures, practices and institutions constitutive of global political and economic order. Agents discharge this responsibility by taking part in collective political projects to transform these structures that generate both climate hazards and vulnerabilities for the disadvantaged. By incorporating the normative considerations of distributive justice in the capacious conception of political responsibilities, this paper proposes to advance the theory and practice of climate justice in two ways. Firstly, instead of abstracting an individual from their social positioning, this model views an individual as embedded in the larger global order. In doing so it supports a relational and collective over an individualistic conception of responsibility to make better sense of how and why individuals' responsibility can be conceived in structural and intergenerational issues like climate change. Secondly, by framing climate justice in terms of political responsibility, it tries to better orient and motivate climate action that is imperative for transforming economic and political structures which currently are inextricably associated with emissions. While the central thesis of this paper remains theoretical, it also has practical and political implications for building back a better future.





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