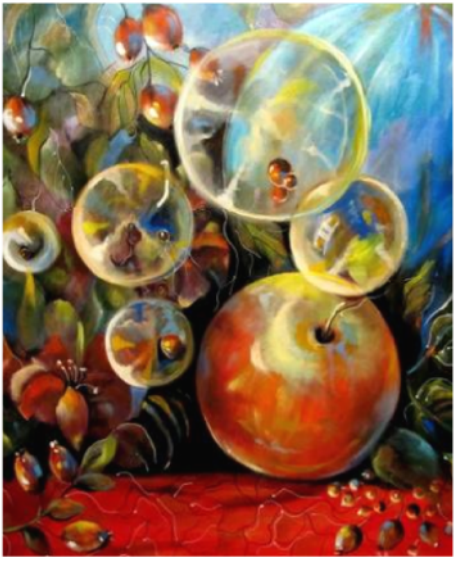
The Meaning of Life



June 11-12, 2019

University of Haifa, the Eshkol Tower

Observatory and *Senate Hall*

Organizers: Iddo Landau and Sam Lebens

Speakers:

David Benatar
University of Cape Town

Kiki Berk
Southern New Hampshire University

Marianne Garin
Université de Fribourg

Jeffrey Hanson
Harvard University

Gil Hersch
Virginia Tech

Asa Kasher
Tel Aviv University and Shalem College

Jonathan Knutzen
University of California, San Diego

David Matheson
Carleton University

Miriam McCormick
University of Richmond

Thaddeus Metz
University of Johannesburg

Joseph Moore
Princeton University

Mirela Oliva
University of St. Thomas, Houston

Elena Popa
Asian University For Women

Charlie Potter
Birbeck College, University of London

Michael Madden Prinzing
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Charles Repp
Longwood University

Shlomo Dov Rosen
Truman Institute, Hebrew University and Yakar

Pranay Sanklecha
University of Graz

Daniel Schneider
University of Haifa

Saul Smilansky
University of Haifa

Joshua Tepley
Saint Anselm College

Joshua Lewis Thomas
The Open University

Angel Ting
Hong Kong Baptist University

Jessica van Jaarsveld
University of Johannesburg

Lorraine Yeung
Hong Kong Baptist University

Fumitake Yoshizawa
Akita University

June 11

10:00	10:15	**Welcome Address** *Observatory*
10:15	11:15	**Keynote – David Benatar:** Half Full or Three Quarters Empty? One Pessimist's Response to Iddo Landau on the Meaning of Life *Observatory*
11:15	11:30	**Break**
11:30	13:00	**Parallel Sessions**
Jeffrey Hanson:		The Place of Commitment in a Meaningful Life
Joseph Moore:		Morality for Meaning in Life *Observatory*
Joshua L. Thomas:		Is the Desire for a Meaningful Life Selfless?
Saul Smilansky:		Paradoxes and the Meaning of Life *Senate Hall*
13:00	14:00	**Lunch**
14:00	15:30	**Parallel Sessions**
Daniel Schneider:		Meaning without Value
Mirela Oliva:		The Relational Nature of the Meaning of Life *Observatory*
Kiki Berk & Joshua Tepley:		Sartre and Heidegger on Death and Meaning in Life
Elena Popa:		De Beauvoir's Ethics, Meaning, Competition *Senate Hall*
15:30	15:45	**Break**

15:45 17:15 **Thaddeus Metz, Jessica van Jaarsveld: Judaism and the Meaning of Life**
Observatory

Conference Dinner – German Colony Hotel

June 12

9:30	11:00	**Parallel Sessions**
Michael Prinzing:		The Meaning of 'Meaning'
Charles Repp:		The Meaning of 'Life'
		Observatory
Gil Hersch:		The Shape of a Life Does Not Matter
David Matheson:		Meaning and the Pursuit of Pleasure
		Senate Hall
11:00	11:15	**Break**
11:15	12:45	**Parallel Sessions**
Lorraine Yeung:		Meaning and Morality: the Case of Procreative Parenting
Angel Ting:		Meaning in Life and its Implication for the Principle of Procreative Beneficence
		Observatory
Miriam McCormick:		Credible Messages of Hope
Asa Kasher:		Meaning in Life, Philosophy and Practice: A Tool Box Approach
		Senate Hall
12:45	13:45	**Lunch**
13:45	15:15	**Parallel Sessions**
Fumitake Yoshizawa:		Internal and External Relations between Death and the Meaninglessness of Life
Charlie Potter:		The Meaning of 'Meaning' and 'The Meaning of Life'
		Observatory
Jonathan Knutzen:		Meaning of Life and the Future of the Species
Marianne Garin:		Were the Presocratics Concerned by the Meaning of Life?
		Senate Hall
15:15	15:30	**Break**

June 12 Continued

15:30	16:15	**Parallel Sessions**	
Pranay Sanklecha:		Skeptical and Nihilist Crises About Meaning in Life	*Observatory*
Shlomo Dov Rosen:		Authoring one's Life as Creativity beyond the Source of One's Soul	*Senate Hall*
16:15	16:30	**Break**	
16:30	17:30	**Keynote – Thaddeus Metz:** Recent Work on the Meaning of "Life's Meaning": Should We Change the Philosophical Discourse?	*Observatory*
17:30	17:45	**Concluding Remarks**	*Observatory*

Abstracts

Speakers listed alphabetically

David Benatar | **Keynote** | Half Full or Three Quarters Empty? One Pessimist's Response to Iddo Landau on the Meaning of Life

This Keynote address will develop a critical response to Iddo Landau's recent book, *Finding Meaning in an Imperfect World*.

Kiki Berk and Joshua Tepley| Sartre and Heidegger on Death and Meaning in Life

Sartre devotes an entire sub-section of his discussion of facticity in *Being and Nothingness* to the topic of death. According to the standard interpretation, Sartre argues that the fact that we die deprives our lives of meaning. We think that the standard interpretation is mistaken: Sartre holds, not that death deprives life of meaning, but that death makes the creation of meaning in life more difficult. One of the reasons that Sartre has been commonly misunderstood in this regard is the fact that he sharply contrasts his own view with that of Heidegger, whom Sartre interprets as claiming that death is that which gives our lives meaning. In other words, as Sartre interprets Heidegger: if we didn't die, then our lives would be meaningless. Sartre clearly rejects this view, but he doesn't go so far as to say that death renders our lives meaningless; it simply makes the creation of meaning in our lives more difficult.

Marianne Garin| Were the Presocratics Concerned by the Meaning of Life?

Did the so-called "Presocratic philosophy" show any interest in meaning of life, roughly understood as a subjective (that is

individual) or objective (that is anthropological) concern regarding the reason and ultimate purpose of human existence? Cicero claimed that Socrates was the very first thinker to introduce ethical concerns into philosophy, while the Presocratics would have mainly focused on physical phenomena. In my talk, I'll raise the possibility that the "meaning of life" was a philosophical concern before Socrates and Plato, that is in Archaic philosophy.

Jeffrey Hanson| The Place of Commitment in a Meaningful Life

In her recent book, *Doing Valuable Time: The Present, the Future, and Meaningful Living*, Cheshire Calhoun advances a novel and compelling approach to the recently renewed philosophical conversation around the question of meaning in life. She argues that commitment as traditionally understood is not required for meaningful living. She does not argue that commitments are a bad thing or that we ought never to make them, but she maintains that all we must make for the sake of agential integrity are what she calls "*normative* commitments" that establish practical principles and their ranking. Nothing, however, she concludes, follows from this structural necessity in such a way as to secure any content-rich "*substantive* commitments" to any particular projects or relationships or ways of life. The reason for this Calhoun thinks is that all that unified agency depends on is that one determine what practical principles one will uphold, not on those principles having any particular content. So abstract can this normative requirement be according to Calhoun that even a resolve "to act on whatever desire is strongest at the moment" counts for her as an adequate practical principle. I argue however that a principle like "to act on whatever desire is strongest at the moment" is in fact not practical in the sense required by Calhoun's own theory.

Gil Hersch| The Shape of a Life Does Not Matter

Many people believe that the shape of a life with an upward trajectory is better for the individual than the shape of a life with downward trajectory life, even if both lives have the same total momentary well-being. In this paper I argue that this belief is mistaken. It relies on too simplistic a conception of momentary well-being. If we accept a more sophisticated conception of momentary well-being it follows that in and of itself the shape of a life does not matter for one's lifetime well-being. All the ways in which a shape of a life might matter for lifetime wellbeing are already accounted for by a sophisticated version of momentary well-being. The remaining intuition many people hold—that even taking everything into account a shape of a life matters for lifetime well-being above and beyond momentary well-being—can be explained away by appealing to some well-known cognitive biases.

Asa Kasher| Meaning in Life, Philosophy and Practice: A Tool Box Approach

The history of philosophical discussions of meaning in life has included pursuits of a single, universal meaning in life, meant to be of much practical significance, on the one hand, and deliberations on topics, such as the differences between meaningless, senseless and worthless, not meant to be of much practical significance, on the other hand. The present paper is meant to be of both philosophical and practical significance. We present a conceptual toolbox that includes most of the elements required for a personal pursuit of meaning in one's life, all of which being naturally amenable to practical application as well as to philosophical analysis, clarification and ramification. Here are fundamental elements: First, preliminary conceptions of one's personal poles of "good" and "bad". These are starting points for the

creation of the personal spectrum of values. Secondly, general practical principles that govern one's activities. Following these principles is an approximate embodiment of the personal conceptions of "good" and "bad". Thirdly, one or more metaphors to be used for describing one's life as shaped by these practical principles and their underlying conceptions of "good" and "bad". Prominent examples of such self-portraits are the metaphors of one's "story" and one's "voyage". They enable one to characterize one's personal meaning in life. Fourthly, one's self-portrait induces conditions of success. One important condition is extensibility, one's personal meaning in life being naturally extensible to new personal circumstances and human spheres of activity. Fifthly, a battery of conditions of success that obviate alleged denials of the very possibility of personal meaning in life. Rebuttals are formulated on grounds of the fundamental metaphors. Most important is the rebuttal of objections related to death.

Jonathan Knutzen| Meaning of Life and the Future of the Species

In a thought-provoking series of lectures, Samuel Scheffler draws out the surprising implications of a doomsday thought experiment in which the human species goes extinct shortly after our deaths. Scheffler claims, correctly I think, that many of us are profoundly disturbed by this prospect. He goes on to insightfully explore the source of this disturbance and what it tells us about the structure and content of our values. A central upshot of his discussion is that, perhaps much more than most of us had realized, the value of our lives and projects are hitched to the future of humanity.

Interestingly, however, although Scheffler thinks that the imminent disappearance of humanity would sap much of what we do of meaning, he does not think the eventual extinction of the human species threatens the value and

meaning of our lives. This is puzzling. If eventual extinction does not threaten the value and meaning of our lives, why would immanent extinction do so? So far as I can see, Scheffler does not answer this question.

In response to this question: I argue that humanity has ethically significant unfulfilled potential, that it has embarked on an ethically fraught project ("civilization") which calls for resolution, and that it has a moral vocation which has not yet been adequately discharged. The immanent extinction of the species could therefore plausibly be tragic in something like the way that the premature death of an individual is. The paper has two parts, roughly equal in length. The first explores various ways of making sense of the idea that the story of humanity is somehow incomplete or unresolved. The second traces out the ethical implications of these lines of thought and suggests some ways we might think about the meaning and value of individual lives in relation to a larger whole to which they contribute.

David Matheson| Meaning and the Pursuit of Pleasure

In the recent literature on life's meaning, it is commonly accepted that meaning can be based on the pursuit of morality, the pursuit of knowledge, and the pursuit of art (here understood, broadly and respectively, as activity performed for the sake of moral ends, activity performed for the sake of epistemic ends, and activity performed for the sake of aesthetic ends). Far from commonly accepted, by contrast, is the view that meaning can (also) be based on the pursuit of pleasure (activity performed for the sake of hedonic ends). Indeed, Iddo Landau stands virtually alone among the most prominent contributors to the literature when he accepts this view in the sixteenth chapter of his *Finding Meaning in an Imperfect World*.

Because I think that failure to accept the view that meaning can be based on the pursuit of pleasure risks obscuring an

important practical route to meaning in life, I here speak in favour of that view. I begin by laying out a *prima facie* case for it. One key premise of this *prima facie* case is that pleasure is a final value (in other words, hedonic ends are finally valuable). Another key premise is that the pursuit of final value is generally the sort of thing on which meaning can be based.

I go on to note four things that are *not* implied by the view that meaning can be based on the pursuit of pleasure: (1) we have reason to take a hedonistic theory of meaning seriously; (2) meaning can be based on the deeply immoral, or the deeply ignorant, or the deeply artless pursuit of pleasure; (3) the pursuit of pleasure is an easier route to meaning in life than the pursuit of morality, the pursuit of knowledge, and the pursuit of art; and (4) meaning can be based on activities that involve only "lower" or "merely animalistic" aspects of human nature.

Miriam McCormick| Credible Messages of Hope

Much of the recent literature in the philosophy of *hope* addresses the nature and value of the attitude. There is consensus amongst philosophers that hope involves at least the belief in the possibility (but not certainty) that a desired outcome will obtain, with current debate centering on the question of what else might be involved in hope beyond belief and desire. Philosophers have also investigated the question of what makes hope rational or fitting. Philosophers, social scientists, and religious scholars who investigate hope recognize its importance for human wellbeing, agency, and health. It has even been suggested that there is a particular form of hope, basal hopefulness, that is essential for taking an interest in one's future and forming particular hopes. Research seems to suggest that there is something uniquely valuable about hope to human life, that having hope is generally better than lacking it, and

that we might all do better to cultivate and sustain hope in our lives. But even if we accept that hope is – other things equal – good to have, there is a further question of exactly how hope should be encouraged.

The purpose of this paper is to develop an ethics of offering hope, an ethics that applies to both interpersonal and political life. We suggest that the key is to offer a credible message of hope. A credible message of hope is one that recognizes the position of the hopeless (or hope challenged) person and thinks about what is a likely or reasonable thing to positively anticipate for that person, and then helps them imagine this possibility.

Thaddeus Metz| **Keynote** | Recent Work on the Meaning of "Life's Meaning": Should We Change the Philosophical Discourse?

In this article I critically discuss English-speaking philosophical literature addressing the question of what it essentially means to speak of "life's meaning". Instead of considering what might in fact confer meaning on life, I make two claims about the more abstract, meta-ethical question of how to understand what by definition is involved in making that sort of enquiry. One of my claims is that over the past five years there has been a noticeable trend among philosophers to try to change our understanding of what talk of "life's meaning" connotes. For example, whereas most philosophers for a long while had held that such talk is about a kind of value possible in the life of human beings, recently some have argued that certain non-human parts of nature can exhibit meaningfulness, which, furthermore, is not necessarily something valuable. The second claim I advance is that there is strong reason to reject this trend, and instead for philosophers to retain the long-standing approach.

Professor Metz will also be presenting his APJ Prize Winning essay "Judaism's Distinct Perspective on Life's Meaning"

Joseph Moore| Morality for Meaning in Life

Some contemporary philosophers have more or less correctly identified what it is to have meaning in life. These are the "hybrid" theorists, who argue that living meaningfully does not consist merely in having certain subjective states like satisfaction or merely in attaining certain objective goods like achievement, but rather in the active alignment of such subjective states with objectively suitable objects. Precise formulations of hybrid views vary. Here is my preferred version: to live meaningfully is to successfully engage in (objectively) valuable activities which one (subjectively) values. I argue that this proper understanding of meaning in life has important implications for moral theory, on the plausible assumption that morality should promote meaningful living. Other philosophers have neglected these implications for a variety of reasons.

Mirela Oliva| The Relational Nature of the Meaning of Life

My paper argues for the following thesis: the quest for the meaning of life entails a relational account of meaning. I will defend Nozick's notion of the meaning of life and show that this meaning is not one value among many but rather represents the connectedness of all aspects of the human life. According to this view, living a meaningful life requires us to grasp and realize relations between values, personal goals and actions, social interactions, events, and our entire existence from birth to death.

Since meaning involves transcending limits, the question of the meaning of life pushes us to transcend all sorts of limits: the limit of space and time, the limit of resources, and so on, until the ultimate limit, death. I will outline the various limits and boundaries that we encounter when questioning our life.

In the second part of the paper, I will analyze the different types of relations that determine various modes of meaning. I will therefore focus on the notion of meaning as: (1) external causal relationship; (2) external referent; (3) intention or purpose; (4) lesson; (5) personal significance; (6) objective meaningfulness; (7) intrinsic meaningfulness; (8) the total resultant meaning (i.e., the sum of 1-7).

Summing up the meanings of one's life can remain, strictly speaking, a naturalistic business. There is nothing that can impede a secular mind to go through various modes of meaning and then sum them up. However, Nozick seems to suggests that such a sum is, at the end, confronted with the relational nature of meaning; for such a sum to have a final, ultimate meaning, it would need to reach a level that does not need further meaning. That does not mean a level where the question of the meaning of life becomes obsolete, but rather a level of "something" which is its own meaning. This is the divine: what Nozick calls the Unlimited, after the Hebrew *Ein Sof*.

Finally, I will address objections against the usefulness of a relational account of the meaning of life. In this part, I will also investigate whether Nozick's relational account is exclusively limited to theism or if it can accommodate naturalistic perspectives as well.

Elena Popa| De Beauvoir's Ethics, Meaning, Competition

Existentialist approaches to the meaning of life have focused on concepts such as freedom, transcendence, and agency. Simone de Beauvoir's view, as presented in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, emphasized not only the value of freedom, but the possibility of successful projects. This understanding of freedom and meaning necessarily includes a connection to others: 'we see that no existence can be validly fulfilled if it is limited to itself. It appeals to the existence of others.' Beauvoir's earlier work, *Pyrrhus and Cineas*, stresses the

connection between authenticity and respecting others' agency, and this ethical project is interpreted by Webber (2018) as a Kantian categorical imperative: one should not deprive others of agency. In this paper I discuss Beauvoir's considerations on agency and authenticity alongside contributions from analytic philosophy to analyze a contemporary concern: the possibility of a meaningful life by pursuing competitive projects.

Charlie Potter| The Meaning of 'Meaning' and 'The Meaning of Life'

The question of life's meaning is traditionally applied to life as a whole, but more recent philosophical literature is concerned with individual lives, either from a third-person perspective or, as is more common in psychological literature from the perspective of the person that lives it. Throughout all of these senses of life, meaning is treated as synonymous with questions of 'significance' or 'purpose'. In this paper I argue that there are occasions in which significance and meaning come apart, and that purpose is just one particular way of something's being meaningful. Whether something is meaningful, I argue, is essentially a question of whether it is interpretable.

The difference between meaning and significance I argue, is that for something to be significant, it merely needs to have an impact on something else; for something to be meaningful however, we need to be able interpret it in such a way that we gain an understanding of the wider context that we connect it to. The connection between meaning at a very general level and interpretability has been noticed by some other philosophers within the meaning literature, and others have noticed how meaning links things into a wider context. The closest view I have found to the one I offer here is the one put forward by Markus. Where I diverge from Markus is his emphasis on coherence.

Michael Madden Prinzing| The Meaning of 'Meaning'

"Meaning" has many meanings. Amongst the things said to be meaningful are: words, sentences, stories, natural signs, events, and even lives. Many philosophers think that life's meaning is "totally unrelated" to other kinds of meaning. Of course, they're right that the way in which a word and a life are meaningful is very different. But, then, the same is true of the way in which a word and the rings in a tree trunk are meaningful. These different uses of "meaning" are not like the different uses of "bank" (the financial institution and the side of a river). There is an underlying unity: meanings are products of interpretation. What something means is what you would learn if you interpreted it properly. For instance, the fact that there are 10 rings in a tree trunk means that the tree was 10 years old when it was cut down. If one knows how to interpret the rings, one can ascertain their meaning. When a person speaks, their meaning is the message they intend to communicate—i.e., how they wish to be interpreted. Life can be meaningful, I argue, because it too is an object of interpretation.

Empirical research shows that people asked about the most meaningful parts of their lives frequently mention hardships—failures, tragedies, even suffering—and research on post-traumatic coping shows that people don't generally think of traumas as meaningless or without value. This is hard for the standard theories to account for. If something is meaningful if and only if it makes a valuable contribution, elicits fitting fulfillment, involves successful engagement with projects of value, or is the proximate cause of good effects, then how could hardships possibly be meaningful? The interpretation theory suggests an answer: it's possible to matter in a bad way, and hardships often do. Something can matter in a bad way. That said hardships sometimes have positive value.

Another puzzle is that, while meaningfulness is commonly taken to be a distinctive "category or dimension of value", meaningful things always have some independently specifiable value: moral, aesthetic, epistemic, etc. This makes talk of meaning feel redundant. If meaningfulness is a distinctive kind of value, why does it always overlap with other values? The answer, according to the interpretation theory, is that meaning is not a kind of value; it's instances of value (moral, epistemic, etc.) apprehended via interpretation. In interpreting a life, we see that it matters by seeing that it has value (or disvalue in the case of negative meaning).

Charles Repp| The Meaning of 'Life'

Within the recent philosophical literature on life meaning, one finds a wide range of views concerning how best to understand the relevant notion of meaning. By contrast, one finds surprisingly little disagreement concerning how best to understand the relevant notion of life. Following Susan Wolf, whose groundbreaking work in many ways fixed the parameters for the current debate, most theorists now begin from an 'individualistic' -- as distinct from a 'cosmic' or 'holistic' -- interpretation of life. Current discussions of life meaning typically start, that is, by asking what makes an individual life meaningful, putting aside the question of what would give meaning to human existence or the existence of all living things collectively. Furthermore, current discussions often assume, if not explicitly at the outset then implicitly in their conclusions, that what matters to the meaningfulness of an individual life are only the actions or projects that the subject of that life chooses to undertake, as apart from the external objects, people, or events that she encounters. In this paper I offer several reasons for adopting a broader conception of life qua bearer of life meaning than the strictly 'agential' conception widely accepted among current

theorists, and I propose a way of thinking about life meaning that seems well suited to this broader conception of life.

Shlomo Dov Rosen| Authoring one's Life as Creativity beyond the Source of One's Soul

I will argue that it is in the taking hold of one's own destiny, through actively molding one's own moral nature, that the ultimate meaning of life inheres.

Sixteenth century Rabbi Isaac Luria is quoted by his student R. Chaim Vital as relating to the possibility of people rising above the source of their soul. The crucial word, שורש, can be variously translated as source, root, or origin. The Kabbalistic philosophy of sources of souls is ostensibly a predeterministic theology, by which a person's nature, potential, and ultimate spiritual value are anchored in an original root of the soul.

A central Kabbalistic vehicle for rising above the source of one's soul is *ibur* (impregnation), by which the soul of a righteous person is combined into the personality of someone else, assisting the latter to reach that which would not otherwise have been possible. But such rising above one's source can also be achieved alone, in other ways. If a person can do it alone, in what sense is it beyond the scope of her original potential?

Pranay Sanklecha| Skeptical and Nihilist Crises About Meaning in Life

Oakley points out that people suffering from crises of meaning often say things like: 'nothing matters … or … everything is pointless … [or] that they don't care about anything, or that nothing is worth caring about, or that nothing has any importance.' From this, he extracts a hypothesis about what many crises of meaning are typically caused by or 'perhaps even constitute':

> Many (probably most) meaninglessness crises in which the person concerned believes life in general, or everyone's life, to be meaningless, are cases where she finds that nothing is worth doing, pursuing, or aspiring to: nothing has any value.

For Oakley, the "loss of value" is to be distinguished from the loss of a valuable thing. In his "loss of value" cases, 'rather than losing what we value, we lose our values themselves.'

If you think there are no values, that (for example) all value claims are ultimately really a matter of social convention or individual whim or an expression of power dynamics, then it is natural to say things like: nothing matters, everything is pointless, etc. And it is natural to talk about this in terms of a crisis of meaning.

In this paper, I first argue that such crises are not necessarily only crises about the meaning of life, but can also be crises about meaning in life. I then argue that the prevailing debate on meaning in life is not just unwilling to engage with this crisis but, much more importantly, that it is unable to.

Focusing in particular on the work of Thaddeus Metz and Susan Wolf, which I use as illustrative examples of the prevailing paradigm, I will argue that two related features of the debate – a central method it employs and a closely connected fundamental assumption that it makes - render it theoretically blind to crises of meaning that arise from skeptical or nihilist worries about value.

Daniel Schneider| Meaning without Value

It is often thought that in order to have a life with meaning, one must have a life with objective value. I argue here that this view is mistaken. I argue that desire alone is sufficient for accounting for the meaningfulness of life, and that recognizing what one desires most is sufficient for recognizing what is most meaningful in one's life.

I present this argument through an examination of a series of historical texts: Plato's Euthyphro dialogue, some aphorisms of Epictetus's Enchiridion, and portions of Spinoza's Treatise on the Emmendation of the Intellect, and his Ethics.

Saul Smilansky| Paradoxes and the Meaning of Life

Like reflection about paradoxes, reflection about the meaning of life (henceforth MOL) goes back a long way in philosophy. Yet oddly, at least in the Western tradition, the two have not been combined to the extent that one could have imagined. Paradoxes are central in logic and the philosophy of mathematics, in epistemology, and in the philosophy of science, but not in moral philosophy and in the exploration of the MOL. I will suggest some reasons for this curious lacuna. I will explore some widely-known apparent paradoxes (such as moral luck and Parfit's population paradoxes), together with some less known paradoxes, that bear upon the meaning of life, and draw out their significance for this topic.

I will focus upon paradoxes within the analytic side of the Western tradition, and even there, I will be selective and not aim to note every example. It seems to me significant that we can reach firm conclusions about absurdity and the meaning of life from a tradition that aims at conceptual and argumentative rigor. "Analytic existentialism" can be built upon firm foundations, in paradoxes about value, morality, and the meaning of life. The results will often resemble conclusions that are more familiar from continental or oriental philosophical traditions.

Finally, we will explore what it means to live with paradoxes that bear upon the MOL. The questions here have hardly been explored in the past. We will see that not all paradoxes are bad for the MOL, and that in fact we have some reason to be glad about paradoxicality, in instances of "the good absurd". The ways of dealing with paradoxes in daily life are

complex, and some of them give rise to further paradoxicality.

Joshua Lewis Thomas| Is the Desire for a Meaningful Life Selfless?

In *The Variety of Values*, Susan Wolf defines a meaningful life as one that is 'actively and at least somewhat successfully engaged in a project (or projects) of positive value'. On her conception, pursuing meaningfulness is neither morally required, nor certain to make us happy. This poses two puzzles: if meaningfulness is not good for us in either way, why do we have such a strong desire for it, and why do we typically see this desire itself as something laudable.

Wolf attempts to answer these puzzles by arguing that our desire for meaningfulness comes from a recognition of our own insignificance. A person who spends their life pursuing nothing but personal satisfaction, she says, implicitly appears to believe that whether they are satisfied or not is the most important thing in the universe. Obviously, however, an awareness of our real position in the universe – the fact that we are not important at all – should serve to dispel this solipsistic attitude and replace it with a desire to promote goodness outside the boundaries of our own subjective lives. And that, she notes, would motivate us to engage with precisely the sorts of 'positively valuable' activities that she labels as meaningful.

This paper will argue that Wolf's account here fails in its stated aims. Specifically, while it may explain why we desire to promote value outside our own lives, and hence why we engage in projects that may result in our obtaining meaningful lives, it does not explain the distinct desire for meaningfulness itself nor why that desire is laudable. The desire for meaningfulness itself, I argue, is not a selfless desire but is rather a self-interested one which only

instrumentally involves engagement in positively valuable activities.

Angel Ting| Meaning in Life and its Implication for the Principle of Procreative Beneficence

The principle of procreative beneficence (PB) states that "couples (or single reproducers) should select the child, of the possible children they could have, who is expected to have the best life, or at least as good a life as the others, based on the relevant, available information". It is a principle established to guide procreative decisions of parents, and the central idea is that parents should produce a child with "the best possible life", or that are "expected to enjoy most well-being in her life". Nonetheless, the conception of "the best possible life" is not clear. In reply to Savulescu's arguments for PB, Michael Parker points out that the concept of "best possible child" is paradoxical, for he argues that "the best possible life is not necessarily, indeed could not be, one lived by a person with no flaws of character or of biology". Here, Parker seems to suggest that the concept of "the best possible" life consists of more than physical wellness, but other components that enable human flourishing. Indeed, when parents decided to give birth, they have in their mind "the best possible child" with all the favourable biological properties the child can have. However, when it comes to a person who values one's own life, it is one's relation to the world that seems to be more important. This difference in determining the value of life could be reflected in cases where people with disabilities nonetheless find their lives worthwhile and meaningful, while there are healthy people who committed suicide because they cannot find meaning in their life. This paper aims to look into the concept of "the best possible life" given by Julian Savulescu and the discussion of "worthwhile lives" in medical ethics, and examines whether having a child with "the best possible life"

could also entail a meaningful life. If “the best possible life” and “the meaningful life” are two different aspects in determining the value of life, this paper would then probe into the possibility of including a conception of meaningfulness in procreative decisions, and might come to the conclusion that there may be good reasons not to follow PB.

Jessica van Jaarsveld| Nagel, Soloveitchik and the Duality of Man

In this paper, I consider two accounts of a dichotomy central to human existence – on one side a person is absorbed in her daily life, seeing great import in its minutiae; on the other side a person steps back and contemplates their place in the cosmos.

Nagel’s account of this dichotomy finds many parallels in Soloveitchik’s account of the dual personas within us, represented by what Soloveitchik calls Adam the first (Adam I) and Adam the second (Adam II). But the two conceptions depart in significant ways too.

Nagel claims that in the second, contemplative state, we can find no proof beyond doubt that our lives have meaning, and yet we return in earnest to the first state to continue taking ourselves seriously and being absorbed in our pursuits. He concludes from this that our lives are absurd.

By contrast, I explain that for Soloveitchik, this dichotomy is part of fulfilling our purpose in the world. Given these differences, I seek to establish which of the two thinkers offers a more satisfactory account of the dichotomy of man.

I find that Nagel’s takes for granted - and offers no explanation for - why man should have this dualistic capacity in the first place. Soloveitchik, based on the belief that the capacity is imbued in us for a purpose by God, is able to offer us this further explanatory step.

I use Dougherty's (2016) Bayesian analysis to show that there is a greater likelihood that this capacity results from God rather than natural processes, and thereby suggest that Soloveitchik's account offers a plausible way to conceive of man's dichotomy.

Lorraine Yeung| Meaning and Morality: the Case of Procreative Parenting

This paper asks whether the view that procreative-parenting makes parents' life meaningful justifies its practice. It is not uncommon for people to claim that having children gives meaning to their life. They think that having children provides them a vital driving force to work hard, stay healthy and live well. It allows them to clearly orient other activities and projects to the project of raising their children. Some may even claim that it gives them the reason to live on. To them, raising children amounts to what Bernard Williams calls a "ground project", something that an agent wants, giving him a reason to live his life and "is a condition for his having any interest in being around in the world at all." Raising children seemingly share features of a meaningful project in some philosophical approaches to meaning in life.

However, prospective-parents can have similarly meaningful experiences by adopting children in dire need of a family. Together with numerous pressing moral challenges to procreation—the problem of overpopulation, the environmental impact and the opportunity costs involved—the case against procreative-parenting is compelling. What justifies prospective-parents' preference for procreative-parenting over adoptive-parenting?

Luara Ferracioli offers an answer. She advances an account of the value of procreative-parenting. On her account, the value of parent-child relationship consists in a deep and robust, loving bond between the child and her parent. Procreative-parenting provides a distinctive justification for the deep and

robust parental love that is missing in adoption: “having intentionally brought a vulnerable child into the world for the purposes of parenting will give an agent a weighty pro tanto reason for loving the child deeply and robustly,” “regardless of who their child is, or will become.” (p.87, p.93).

Ferracioli deems that this non-trivial, distinctive value of procreative-parenting is potentially contributive “to the pursuit of a meaningful life by both parties to the relationship” (p.82).

Despite its seeming force, the aim of this paper is to establish that such an appeal to meaningfulness cannot justify procreative-parenting.

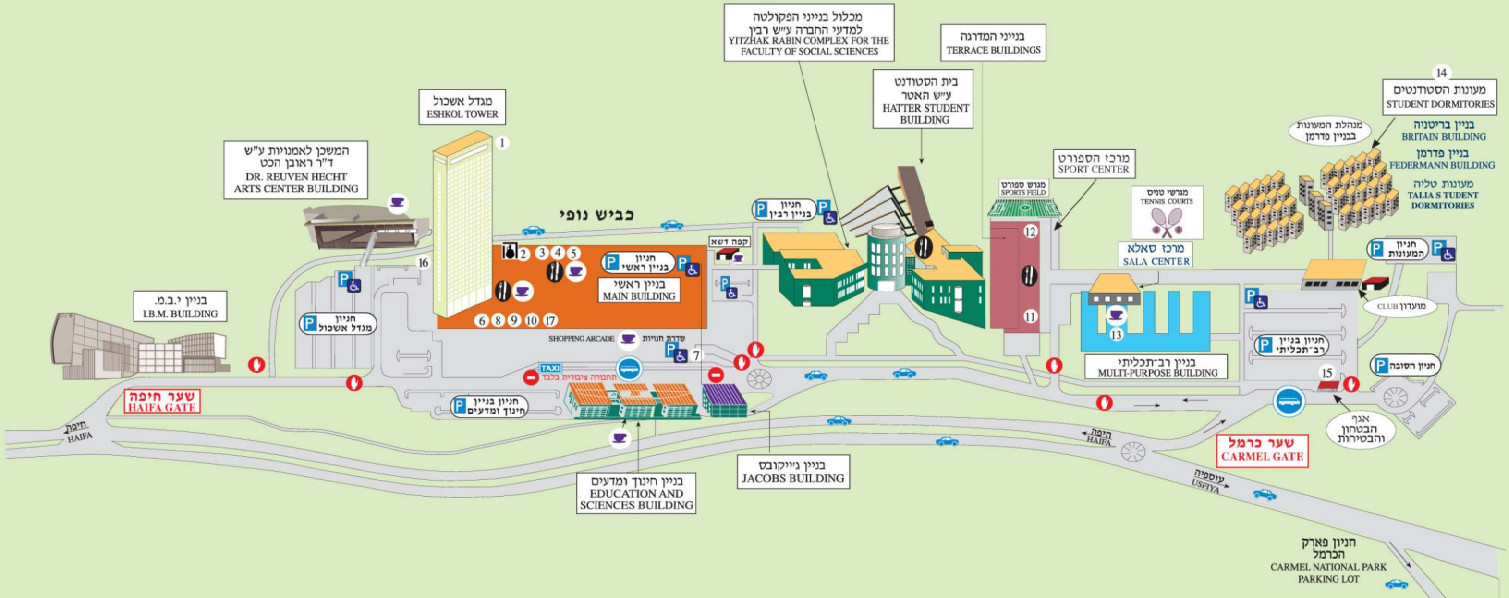
Fumitake Yoshizawa| Internal and External Relations between Death and the Meaninglessness of Life

It is sometimes said that life is meaningless because it must end in death. This type of claim may receive mixed reactions—some nod in complete agreement, some disagree, and others do not even get the idea. Some philosophers interpret this idea as maintaining the “immortality requirement,” where immortality is necessary for one’s life to have meaning. Other philosophers claim that life can be meaningful only because it eventually ends.

In this paper, in order to clarify the idea that death makes life meaningless, I propose that there is an internal/external distinction to be drawn regarding the relations between death and the meaninglessness of life.

UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA

אוניברסיטת חיפה



Observation Gallery	מצפור (1)
Hecht Museum	מוזיאון הכט * (2)
Ma'agan Mikhael Ancient Ship	הספינה העתיקה ממעגן מיכאל (3)
Library	ספריה (4)
Art Gallery	גלריה לאמנות (5)
Bank	בנק (6)
Post Office	סוכנות דואר (7)
Kupat Holim - Sick Fund Clinic	קופת חולים / מרפאת שיניים (8)
First-Aid Station	עזרה ראשונה (9)
Bookstore	חנות ספרים (10)

Student Union	אגודת הסטודנטים (11)
Sports Center	מרכז הספורט (12)
Edmond Safdie Auditorium	אודיטוריום ספדיה (13)
Dormitories	מעונות (14)
Security and Safety Department	אגף הבטחון והבטיחות (15)
Warehouse	מחסני האוניברסיטה (16)
Student Administration Division	אגף מינהל תלמידים (17)
Parking Lot	חניון
Handicapped Parking	חניון נכים
Bus Stop	תחנת אוטובוס
Taxi Station	תחנת מוניות
Barrier	מחסום לרכב

Refreshment Centers -	מתקני מזון
Minimarket - near the Dormitories	מינימרקט — ליד המעונות
Restaurant	מסעדה
Food Court	אתר המסעדות — בניין ראשי
Rabin Building	בניין רבין
Coffee Shop/Cafeteria	מזנון
Cafeteria - Terrace Building	בניין המדרגות
Cafeteria - Main Building, 500 Floor	מזנון — בניין ראשי, קומה 500
Riger Café - Main Building	קפה דשא ע"ש ריגר — ברחבת הבניין הראשי
Cafeteria - Education and Sciences Building	בניין חינוך ומדעים
Coffee Shop - Art Center Building	משכן לאמנויות
Coffee Shop - Shopping Arcade	שדרת החנויות

* הכניסה למוזיאון הכט בשבתות דרך שער כרמל בלבד