Nataliya Atanasova
Sofia University

No Body to Mourn: The Poor Image and its Afterlives

Ed Atkins' CGI figures are always immaculate, affectless, hollow, which directly translates the condition where human data, in the form of algorithms and statistics, easily fails to coalesce into presence, or even efficiency, leaving only a high-definition remainder. "I didn't know that life was so sad," sings Dave, one of Atkins' recurring 3-D rendered avatars, before collapsing into the vortex that swallows him forever and representing a real-life event.
Taking such a remainder as its point of departure, I will look into the hollow image as a distinct ontological condition, to be differentiated from Hito Steyerl's notion of the 'poor image'. Whereas the poor image degrades through circulation and yet preserves a political vitality together with the trace of a referent that once was, the hollow image is strictly evacuated from within; as with the Warburgian/Agambian Nachleben, it is a fading whose referent never existed. For this reason the hollow image is read here through Agamben's Nymphs, and in particular through his treatment of Henry Darger, whose fifteen-thousand-page In the "Realms of the Unreal" was generated from a lost newspaper photograph of a murdered child: an entire afterlife issuing from an already absent body, proliferating because the referent was missing twice over. Ed Atkins arrives at the same structure by inverse means, without any absent referent, no original loss, only the form of survival as such. For Agamben, a purely historical life is one that is 'ninfale', and images become "truly alive" only when a subject unites with them; the hollow image inhabits this ninfale condition while foreclosing its second movement, since no subject arrives to complete the union. Read alongside Barthes' punctum, it inverts the photographic wound: in place of the wounded opening of the punctum, here only an inherited melancholy, a grief without object, an afterlife preceding the life it would otherwise survive.
Drawing on Mackay's Speculative Aesthetics, the hollow image is read not as recording death, but as produced under its condition, not as the mourning of a lost origin, but the structure by which origin itself comes to be retroactively posited, yet loses importance.

Keywords: hollow image, poor image, Nachleben, ninfale, Darger, speculative aesthetics, afterlife of the object

Hakan Atay
Mersin University, Turkey

Lives, All Lives: A Literary-Metaphysical Inquiry

In this paper, I propose a new metaphysical idea according to which lives are all that there was, is, and will be. A life, in the singular, is not to be understood as something alive; rather, it is defined by an innermost memory that resists reduction to anything other than itself. Reduction is an essential operator with three distinct vectors: one may reduce a life to its beginning, its end, or its middle. Once such a force is exerted, lives reveal themselves through a perceptual resistance. I take four steps to elucidate the core of this inquiry. Drawing on Graham Harman's two vectors of reduction and his biographical defense of autonomous objects, I then turn to Timothy Morton's ingenious idea, developed in Realist Magic, of analyzing the life of an object in narratological fashion. The third step consists of an analysis of Arjen Kleinherenbrink's brilliant solution to the problem of time in Object-Oriented Ontology, particularly his rigorous redistribution of Chronic and Aionic times. Last but not least, Tristan Garcia's reformulation of the concept of resistance in the volumes of his Letting Be project guides my attempt to define the cellular memory of a life. At the end, literature is positioned to be a curious medium that records the effects of this resistance in different forms. From Greek tragedy to modern novels and short stories, what we observe is the development of tools of sensitivity for detecting the signs of such resistance.

Daniel Guy Baldwin
University of Liverpool

I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream: The Prudential Case for Euthanasia, Assisted Dying, and Suicide

For an individual, non-existence can be rationally preferred to existence in an undesired state especially when one has little control over the conditions of that state. The possibility of limitations placed on an individual by uncontrollable external circumstances can be a genuine prudential reason to wish for death when those circumstances prevent an individual from acting upon their motives or from living their life how they wish.

The short science fiction story I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream by Harlan Ellison is helpful to demonstrate an extreme case of the above. During the story, five human survivors of a nuclear are subjected to constant, unescapable torture from a malevolent AI (AM). AM actively and continuously undermines their identities whilst also preventing them from committing suicide. Eventually, one of the characters, Ted, realises AM cannot stop them from killing each other and takes it upon himself to end the lives of his co-survivors.

Death is a prudential choice for every character in the story for their narrative identities are in a constant state of disruption that cannot be resolved via identity reformation due to AM's continuous torture (torture it inflicts due to its own disrupted narrative). The story of each character has ceased to have coherence from their perspective. As such Ted's acts of killing are akin to an act of euthanasia.

Applied to reality, we can admit that individuals have genuine, prudential reasons for wanting death to release them from narrative disruption. When one suffers from chronic or terminal illnesses, one can be left unable to do a great many of actions and activities by which their identity was realised prior to their illnesses, and, in instances where identity reformation is an impossibility, it is therefore not unreasonable for these patients to wish for a death prudentially.

Olivia Barbaro
University of Guelph

Reconsidering Death: Griefbots and the Extension of Life

In a world defined by immediate access to technology, many aspects of the human experience have become mediated by some form of technological tool or platform. This access has altered how we relate to ourselves and others, providing alternative means of communication with one another, and now even with the dead. Traditional understandings of death as we know it are drastically changing as we move into a digital world where death may no longer equate to the end of a deceased person's life.

The prospect of death has always been accompanied by a particular finality. Regardless of whether one believes in an afterlife, there is a general consensus that once an individual is deceased, they can no longer act as an agent in the physical world. In both the death as biological sense, which signifies the end of the organism's biological processes, and the death of possibility sense, which signifies an annihilation of all possibilities and projects (Andrii, 2021), the individual is no longer able to initiate action, form intentions, or pursue projects. The creation of griefbots, digital tools providing an interactive simulation of the deceased, have allowed for an extension of the latter, where the deceased can still communicate, respond, and participate in ongoing projects within the digital world.

This work explores the possibility of the deceased remaining an acting agent in the world, capable of making its own decisions and having beliefs and desires. Drawing on Andrii's work of life and death, I will argue that this newfound technology allows for the deceased person to remain in the category of life-as-a-possibility: where they can engage in a cluster of projects and potentials that depend on subjectivity. In doing so, this paper challenges the finality of death by questioning whether, in the age of griefbots, death still constitutes the definitive end of agency and possibility.

Matthew Barnard
Manchester Metropolitan University

Is artificial intelligence an artificial life?

Great strides have been taken in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to tear down the Cartesian wall between human and nature. We recognise, perhaps more than ever, what we have in common with not only animal but all kingdoms of life. With such progress, it is no wonder that manifold philosophical projects to erode that final distinction between life and matter have emerged and no single phenomenon tempts us down this path more than Artificial Intelligence (AI). Aristotle told us that no matter how long we throw a stone in the air, it will not learn to stay up. Perhaps this is still the case, but with the humble silicon graphics card and AI, we seem to have a rock that thinks.

This paper forms part of a broader project to develop an existential phenomenological interpretation of AI along broadly Heideggerian lines. A challenge to such an attempt is that against the ontological distinction Heidegger draws between humans and things. Developments in twenty-first century philosophy, such as Object-Oriented Ontology and the New Materialisms more generally have brought this distinction, or difference, into question. This paper will interrogate to what extent this debate in continental metaphysics on the limits of life can improve our understanding of contemporary and future Artificial Intelligence.

Kiki Berk
Southern New Hampshire University

Why Extinction Threatens Present Meaning

Given the worsening climate crisis, rising global political tensions, and rapid developments in AI, human extinction appears increasingly likely. Extinction is not merely a threat to future generations; rather, its prospect threatens the meaningfulness of our present lives. Samuel Scheffler defends this claim in Death and the Afterlife (2013), but many find his Contribution Argument unpersuasive, since not all projects aim to benefit future people.

In this paper, I defend a stronger argument for the same conclusion, which I call the Ongoing Enterprise Argument. Our projects are more meaningful when embedded in larger enterprises, such as scientific progress. Their meaningfulness depends partly on the durability of their impact: when others continue them, their significance can extend beyond our individual lives. Without future generations to sustain these enterprises, our projects cannot achieve the same degree of meaning. Extinction therefore threatens present meaning.

This view explains why extinction is more threatening when imminent than distant and clarifies the appeal of "leaving a trace." What matters is not that we are remembered, but that our projects continue. Simone de Beauvoir considers and rejects a similar argument. I argue that the Ongoing Enterprise Argument withstands her objection and avoids standard criticisms of Scheffler's view.

Artur R. Boelderl
University of Klagenfurt

"There Must Be More to Life Than … Life?" Ricœur, Derrida, and Bataille on Life and Death

What is constituted at the juncture where beginnings and endings permeate experience, can rightfully be called lived finitude. In my paper, I want to explore this by looking at the respective positions Paul Ricœur, Georges Bataille, and Jacques Derrida held toward life and death: Ricœur reorients reflection toward natal emergence, treating native life, character, and the unconscious as involuntary givens that demand a lifelong consent, thereby shifting existential urgency from the anticipation of dying to the task of affirming the condition of being born. Derrida radicalizes this shift by identifying existence with "living-on," proposing survivance as an original structure in which vitality is always already an afterlife—"more life than life"—that complicates the life/death opposition without collapsing it. This structural intertwining implies that experiencing aliveness is inseparable from the imminence of its interruption, a dynamic also captured in the triad of continuing, persisting under threat, and intensifying one's moments, each mode integrating mortality within its very sense. Bataille translates this integration into sovereign affect: a readiness "before death" that negates evasions of finitude and seeks an ecstatic expenditure—laughter, tears, erotic rapture—where subject boundaries dissolve. Are we, as living finite beings, already beyond ourselves?

Sahand Ashrafian Bonab
University of Bristol

Illness, Finitude and the Resilience of the Body

In tandem with normative avenues of care, play has come to the forefront of discussions concerning illness and finitude. This article explores how practices of play and aesthetic experience can function as modalities of care that reconfigure embodiment under conditions of illness and constraint. Drawing on phenomenological accounts and Deleuze's concept of the virtual to describe the porous field through which lived experience exceeds medically or socially imposed limits. Rather than treating the body as a fixed site of decline, this framework foregrounds how engagement with art and play opens alternative registers of sensation and relation.

The paper focuses, in part, on the case of Mats Steen, whose life with severe physical disability was profoundly shaped through online roleplay. This case will show how resilience emerges not as adaptation to lack, but as a creative reorientation of embodiment through practices of play.

By situating play as a form of care, the paper will conclude that aesthetic and virtual engagements sustain the lived body as open, relational, and continually reconstituted. In doing so, it will hopefully contribute to phenomenological and interdisciplinary accounts of care by showing how resilience can ultimately arise through imaginative, affective, and playful modes of inhabiting the world.

Angie Bonett
Radboud University

On the Borders of Death

Our disposition towards death affects the way we conceptualise the boundaries of our identity, both on an individual and political level. Taking this as my starting point, I will begin by evaluating the consequences of the transhumanist position on death. The transhumanist believes that death is the inverse of life and a hindrance to humanity's prosperity, advocating for the eradication of disease and considerable prolonging of life. I will then problematise this by referring to Nancy's The Intruder and Derrida's Of Hospitality. First, I will draw on Nancy's case of an organ transplant, which illustrates how a dead person's organ can sustain a new person's life. Contrary to the transhumanist, this example shows that the self is more complex than a self-identical entity (the living, thriving person) struggling against death. Second, I will use Derrida to bridge into the political, where the lack of self-identity within the individual structures the political dynamic between the citizen and the outsider. Using these two key insights from the texts, I will argue that the transhumanist framework cannot account for the intertwinement of death with life. Because of this, transhumanism implies a political homogeneity with tragic consequences for the figure of the foreigner.

Adam Buben
Leiden University

The Personhood of the Digital Dead: Postmortem Human Trafficking and Prostitution Regulation

Interactive Personality Constructs of the Dead (IPCDs)—or so-called "deathbots"—are AI technologies drawing on the digital remains (e.g. emails, texts, interviews, social media) of deceased individuals to replicate aspects of their personalities for the purpose of continued engagement with the living. At present, IPCDs are mostly large language model bots subsequently trained on data related to particular individuals. Alongside the rise of such bots, there is an ever-growing body of scholarly literature discussing ethical worries about the dangers they might pose. Concerns about threats to the dignity of the dead and the psychological well-being of the living (among other potential problems) have in turn led to calls for regulation to help mitigate the dangers before it is too late. It has proven difficult, however, to bridge the gap between abstract ethical hand-wringing and practical policy implementation. Several scholars have taken up this challenge, suggesting novel regulatory frameworks based on careful analysis of the various conditions that might make development and use of IPCDs ethical or at least permissible. Although it is still early, these nuanced recommendations have yet to catch on amongst policymakers in industry or government. A slightly different strategy other scholars employ involves applying already existing regulatory frameworks to the situation of IPCDs. The benefit of this strategy is twofold: first, it might be easier to expand application of already existing practices to novel, but similar, cases than it would be to implement completely new policies; second, provocative redeployment of older practices might attract more attention from both the public and decision-makers. It is in the spirit of such provocation that I borrow from the Dutch prostitution regulatory framework, which is better suited to IPCDs understood as continuations of the personhood of the deceased than other frameworks put forward in the literature thus far.

Luke Joseph Buhagiar & Pulis, Matthew
University of Malta (Buhagiar), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (Pulis)

Game Over? Meaning(s) of Life at the End of Life

This paper theorises meaning of life among the dying by relying on ritual theory and two-on-one qualitative interviews with practitioners whose work revolves around the dying. The interview format involves two interviewers (the authors) per participant (the practitioner), enabling deeper dialogical engagement with different perspectives. Our guiding question asks how those at the end of life approach the meaning of life (i.e., interviewees = practitioners with roles revolving around death or the dying; topic = meaning of life among the dying). Taking a post-qualitative stance, the interviews are reflected upon without coding, as we delve into questions such as whether and how meaning tends to cohere or disperse at the end of life. The interviews are engaged with alongside texts on ritual theory and liminality, in a way that horizontally interrelates the theoretical and the empirical. Key insights revolve around the tensions between 'concentrated' and 'diffuse' experiences of the meaning of life at the end, the evocations of 'meaning' and 'meanings', and questions raised by the intractable recurrences that feature across the sources guiding our inquiry.

Adrian Camilleri Chiaro
University of Malta

The Copycat Defence. Rethinking AI art

Philosophical discussions of artistic creation have frequently privileged exceptional cases: the genius, the masterpiece, and the work that appears to rupture established conventions. This emphasis continues to structure debates about generative artificial intelligence, whose outputs are often dismissed as derivative recombinations of previously existing material. This paper argues that such objections rely on a distorted comparison class. Rather than comparing AI-generated works exclusively with the most innovative achievements of art history, we should consider the much broader field of ordinary artistic production: competent, conventional, derivative, anonymous, commercial, and minor works that remain recognisably art despite making no revolutionary contribution.

The talk first challenges the mythology of creation ex nihilo. Even works regarded as radically original emerge through inherited materials, techniques, genres, and conventions. Artistic creation is therefore better understood as a spectrum of reconfiguration, ranging from the conventional rearrangement of established forms to transformations that alter the possibilities of an artistic field. Kantian genius represents one influential formulation of exceptional originality, but it should not be treated as the necessary condition of artistic production as such.

Generative AI likewise produces new configurations from extensive and unevenly constituted corpora of human-made material. This does not mean that human artists and computational systems create through identical processes, nor that reconfiguration is sufficient for art. Questions of intention, authorship, selection, presentation, and reception remain. Nevertheless, the claim that AI "merely recombines" cannot independently disqualify its outputs without also excluding much of what artistic practices already recognise as art. AI thus operates as a stress test for philosophical aesthetics, revealing the extent to which its accounts of creation have mistaken exceptional art for art in general.

Junko Matsuzaki Carreira
Tokyo Keizai University

Material Culture and Cross-Cultural Encounter in Nanban Japan: Rethinking Life and Death through Ceramics and Tea Practices

This paper examines how material culture shapes human experience through an analysis of ceramics and tea practices in Nanban Japan. Rather than treating objects as neutral tools, it argues that they actively participate in the formation of meaning through embodied practices and social interactions. In this sense, everyday objects such as vessels are not merely functional, but play a constitutive role in structuring how practices are performed and understood.
Drawing on the historical context of Nanban trade between Japan and Portugal, the paper explores how cross-cultural encounters transformed material practices. The circulation of goods, together with new aesthetic sensibilities and religious influences, created conditions in which familiar objects were reinterpreted. Tea practices and ceramics, which mediate acts such as drinking, offering, and display, provide a productive site for examining these changes.
The paper develops three main claims: first, ceramics shape embodied practices and everyday experience; second, through ritual and social use, they connect to broader questions of meaning, including reflections on continuity, memory, and life and death; third, cross-cultural encounters reconfigured their meanings by transforming the contexts in which they were used and understood.

Emily Cogburn
University of Malta

Ecofeminist ontology: Val Plumwood, Graham Harman, and an Object Oriented Ontology Understanding of Humans and Nature

Val Plumwood argues that Western culture's dualist attitude toward nature problematically involves backgrounding, hyperseparation, relativism, stereotyping, and intrumentalization. Ecofeminism recognizes that this dualist mentality must be understood as parallel to, and just as political as, how humans oppress one another through the dualisms of man/woman and dominant/nondominant cultures.

Plumwood's version of Ecofeminism does not advocate merely attempting to erase this dualism. Arguing that humans and nature are in fact one, she argues, flattens the very real differences in the needs of nature and humans and risks humans simply assuming that the goals of both are the same. Instead, her Ecofeminism recognizes the relationship and overlaps between humans and nature while also understanding that nature has its own goals and ends.

Harman's object-oriented ontology places all objects from humans to rocks on equal ontological footing. He rejects the definition of objects by their relationship to humans while also providing a framework for objects' interactions. Thus, he recognizes the importance of relationships between objects while maintaining that objects are not exhausted by those relations. This ontology supports Plumwood's program, I argue, by highlighting and illuminating how humans and nature are connected and yet neither is dominated or defined by the other.

Drew M. Dalton
Indiana University

The Light of the Living Dead: A Biophysical Critique of Heidegger's Phenomenology

At the foundation of Heidegger's phenomenological appraisal of lived experience is the assumption that life and death stand opposed to one another as ontological contraries. For Heidegger, and likely for us too, wherever life is, death is not; and, where death is, there is no life. Following this line of reasoning Heidegger, drawing from Aristotle's assessment of life as a mode of possibility, defines death as a kind of "impossibility" (SZ 262/BT 307). This assessment of life and death as ontological contraries, where the possibility the one impossibilizes its other, informs Heidegger's account of the nature and potential value of Dasein's anticipatory and indirect "experience" of death while alive (i.e., being-towards-death) as well as his remarks on the direct experience of death in others (SZ 238/BT 281-282). Unfortunately, this account of life and death as ontological contraries does not accord with the most recent testimonia of the material sciences where the line between living matter and dead matter has almost entirely collapsed. Through the work of Lynn Margulis, Addy Pross, Nick Lane, amongst others we now understand both how living structures emerge from and are continuous with non-living structures and, even more radically still, how life is ultimately a function of and servant to entropic collapse, i.e., death (per Peter Atkins, Eric D. Schroder, Dorion Sagan, Jeremy England, etc.). What this implies is that, if life and death can be separated at all, then their relation to one another must be refigured not as contrary opposites, but as subalterns. Indeed, if anything, contemporary biophysics has revealed death to be much closer to the essence of life than its opposite or end, to return to Aristotelian categories: the condition for life's material nature, the efficient cause of its organic activity, the formal organizing principle of its operation, and its final aim and purpose. The aim of this paper is to draw from biophysics to mobilize a speculative materialist critique of Heidegger's phenomenological assessment of the nature and relation of life and death and to show how life may not be contradictory of death, but a modality of death.

David Deamer
Independent

Nietzsche's 'comedy of existence' and Monty Python's The Meaning of Life

'At present,' writes Nietzsche, 'we still live in the age of tragedy… the comedy of existence has not yet "become conscious" of itself' (GS§1). This paper explores how the age of the comedy of existence is now upon us, a momentous contemporary cultural Weltanschauung, this condition having uses for life. To explore this claim, I look to the domain of comedy itself, taking as an incision point Monty Python (1969-onwards), which has inspired modern comedy writers from Groening (Simpsons) to Parker and Stone (South Park), from Tina Fey to Stewart Lee, to mention a few. Accordingly, I will put the Python's last film, The Meaning of Life (1983), into conversation with the final book of Nietzsche's free spirit series.

The Gay Science (1882/1887) is where Nietzsche first proclaimed god is dead, troubling not only religious ideologies but all totalising systems of thought. And while the philosopher was aware the idea would take time to be accepted (§108;§125), once so would afford life both 'happiness' and 'daring' (§343). Nietzsche prefigures this with the thought of the comedy of existence at the opening of the book, its project raising the consciousness of the reader to existential laughter, as John Lippitt (1996) calls it, beyond humour as incongruity, superiority, release. Enter Monty Python. Working predominately in the sketch format, the Pythons created comedy attacking 'closed systems of thought… political, theological, religious, whatever', according to John Cleese (1979), one of the troupe. The Meaning of Life is the Python's magnum opus of this form and function, the style and tone continually shifting, as Michael Palin, another Python, remarks, having 'the loosest structure, which will be the meaning of life' (2013). And does not this loose shifting structure remind us of Nietzsche's Gay Science, a mosaic of passages, of differing tones and styles?

Mark Fedyk
University of California, Davis

Dying, Caring, and Intentionality

What does it mean to care for someone who is dying? This paper argues that dying is a philosophically revelatory limit case for understanding both the nature of caring and religious language at the end of life. Drawing on Wittgenstein and Anscombe's philosophy of action, we propose that caring is "adjuvant intentionality": the normative, public, and relational actions through which a caregiver enables the cared-for to make "things as they should be." This account rejects reductive views of caring as desire-satisfaction or prediction-fulfillment, which dehumanize the cared-for as objects rather than agents.

Dying presses adjuvant intentionality to its edge. As first-person agency recedes, the caregiver acts to hold the dying person within a shared form of life. Drawing on Lazenby (2006), we argue that religious speech acts—prayer, blessing, ritual—are not failed attempts at prediction or description; they are a distinctive mode of caring action that enacts the dying person's continued membership in the human community. We propose an integrated account of dying well, where caring and religious language converge to resist medicalized and purely secular reductions.

Chrstian J. Feldbacher-Escamilla
University of Cologne

Bringing Forgotten Dead Back to Life. Death, continuity, and historical mediation

Historical representations often face the dilemma that, on the one hand, an accurate tracing of lines of influence perpetuates historical limitations; but, on the other hand, a representation that dissolves such limitations carries the risk of being ahistorical or (illegitimate) revisionist. This talk will outline a middle ground for presenting the history of early logical empiricism, in which contributions by female philosophers can be systematically incorporated by focusing on themes rather than chains of influence. We will exemplify this account with the help of particular female logical empiricists' work, trying to historically mediate them via their partly forgotten work. We will argue that this way, the desideratum of historical accuracy can be taken into account through the choice of topics; and that the desideratum of dissolving restrictions can be taken into account through the integration of parallel and analogous developments, whereby contributions by female philosophers can be systematically woven in. Our investigation also makes use of tools from the digital humanities to systematically identify such developments for our chosen case studies and draws conclusions about personhood and the role of historical mediation

Francesco Frendo
University of Malta - Junior College

Death, The Symbolic, and Death's Symbolic

This paper analyzes the discography of Florida metal pioneers, Death, through a Lacanian framework. Utilizing newly authorized biographies and archival research, this analysis theorizes the band's transition from visceral gore and catharsis to an intellectualized confrontation with death and the limits of the human condition. This shift spans the band's middle and later periods. Notably, the album Symbolic (1995) functions as an intensified articulation of the dissolution of law, memory, and the limits of signification. To this end, this account primarily engages with the intersection between the band's album 'Symbolic', and J. Lacan's Symbolic register grounded in their mutual recognition of the Symbolic as a psychological and ontological limit. By dissecting the album's lyrical content, technical structures, and obscure delivery, I explore the Lacanian notions of the Gaze (1000 Eyes), the fragility of signification (Crystal Mountain and Symbolic), Jouissance and the Death Drive (Perennial Quest), as well as quilting point (point de capiton) where meaning slips amidst 'Empty Words'. Through this analysis, I contend that the band's aesthetic, by virtue of the Symbolic, functions as a vital testament to the Lacanian Real: the point where the Symbolic order falters at the limit of language and comprehension. Thus, the band's conceptual shift demonstrates how death itself is no longer articulated as the visible remainder of a rotting corpse, but a reflection on the non-signifiable and incomprehensible, yet it dictates the very structure of a liminal totality which can only be navigated through symbols and symbolization.

Julian Galea
SAMOC/UM

The Ontological Insecurity of Remission - Narrative Conflicts Between Winning and Watchfulness

Screening, identification and treatment of various cancers is continually improving. Diagnostic techniques increasingly reliably locate cancers while advanced treatment plans involving surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and/or immunotherapy, lead to outcomes where pathology is controlled or eliminated in cases that until recently would have had a very poor prognosis. Social taboos around cancer are also being dismantled, due both to improved clinical outcomes and social awareness campaigns. Cancer is not always the terrifying, shadowy bogeyman it once was.

Instead, the prevailing cultural narrative of cancer is often framed through the teleology of battle: Within the metaphorical work of Lakoff and Johnson, it is a fight - that one either wins or loses. However for many patients entering remission, the conclusion of active treatment does not herald a return to the normal life-trajectory, but rather the onset of a profound ontological insecurity. This paper explores the lived experience of a state of survivorship characterized by the tension between the outward expectation of triumph, celebration and moving forward, and the private reality of anxious watchfulness.

Drawing on reflections from clinical practice, this presentation analyzes how the survivorship narrative can create a biographical disruption. When the acute busyness of the treatment schedule recedes in favour of quarterly or biannual check-ups, a simmering existential dread may arise - a watchfulness that renders the body a site of suspicion. I examine the narrative conflict that arises when a patient's internal phenomenological state of anxiety and finitude clashes with the external societal expectation to be grateful and move on.

By applying frameworks of narrative identity and liminality, this paper argues that remission is not simply a post-illness state, but a unique existential category. I explore how patients re-negotiate dimensions of existence - re-evaluating time, agency, and position while living in the shadow of potential recurrence. Ultimately, I suggest that moving beyond the win/lose binary is essential to authentically support those navigating the complexities of life in remission.

Natasha Galea
University of Malta

Dying Before Death: Simone de Beauvoir and the Social Death of Ageing

In 'The Coming of Age', Simone de Beauvoir argues that ageing reveals a split between lived subjectivity and social objectification, as the ageing body is fixed by the gaze of the other. This paper examines how her account of old age renders the ageing body a site of 'social death' well before biological cessation. Drawing on Beauvoir's phenomenology, I show that old age is structured by a tension between inward lived becoming and outward social fixity: the subject continues to experience themselves as open to possibility, yet it is increasingly designated by others as a finished object. In this way, ageing discloses a form of lived vulnerability in which the future is no longer apprehended as possibility, but as facticity.

Beauvoir's analysis suggest that old age is not simply a biological process, but a temporal and relational one in which subjectivity is estranged from itself. The elderly person does not cease to be a subject, but finds their subjectivity increasingly mediated by the judgements of others. I argue that this constitutes a unique form of alienation, in which the Other is not merely external to the self but insinuated within it. Alienation becomes internal to experience, marking a fracture between self-relation and social recognition. Ageing is thus a distinctive temporal structure in which the person becomes estranged from their own body. More broadly, Beauvoir's account of ageing illuminates the temporal violence of a world that confers value according to productivity, novelty, and visibility. The paper concludes by suggesting that, for Beauvoir, dying begins not at the moment of biological death, but as a slow social and temporal process of estrangement.

Jesse Germans
Radboud University

Mourning Animals

Our relation to animals is normally structured by the Cartesian idea that they do not die in the same way persons do. I will argue that a reconsideration of death through a phenomenological lens, allows for a more extensive ethical approach to the contemporary (mass)extinction of animals. First, I will recapitulate the contemporary phenomenological approach to death as a limit-phenomenon. With particular emphasis on the importance of death, as that which grounds the awareness of belonging to a generative chain of (human) beings. An awareness which regulates and grounds the teleological unfolding of humanity and meaning-constitution. Indeed, if I die and my experiential life ends, the world and life continue, thereby allowing for meaning-constitution in the first place. Consequently, I will illustrate how, for Husserl, animals also die as persons, and not merely as organism, partly because of their role in co-constituting the meaning of the lifeworld. I will argue that this burdens humans with the ethical duty to reconsider what happens when an animal dies. I will stress the ethical dimension of this phenomenological account, claiming that a human-animal communion in death grounds the ethical demand of a human-animal communion in life, thereby putting back the humane into humanity.

Katarzyna Gurczyńska-Sady
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Speaking to the Dead: Dialogue Beyond Presence

The starting point of this paper is a widespread yet philosophically puzzling practice: addressing the dead. In mourning, memory, and cultural ritual, people continue to speak "to" those who are no longer present. How can such acts be meaningful if their addressee no longer exists?

Drawing on the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, I argue that the intelligibility of this practice does not depend on the presence of an addressee, but on its role within shared forms of life. Addressing the dead is not a mistake, but a recognizable feature of human linguistic and social activity. This claim is further developed through a dialogical conception of meaning inspired by David Bohm, according to which meaning emerges within a relational field that is not reducible to individual subjects.

I argue that speaking to the dead does not merely compensate for absence, but reveals a more fundamental structure of meaning and subjectivity. If understanding arises within a shared dialogical space, then death does not mark its absolute limit. What disappears is reciprocal presence, not the relational structure of sense itself. Speaking to the dead thus shows that dialogue is not grounded in the co-presence of individuals, but unfolds within a shared space that exceeds them. Death transforms this space—it does not bring it to an end.

Márk Horváth & Ádám Lovász
Independent researcher

Nonhumanism, Extinction, and the Fossilized Future-Present: Meillassoux, Colebrook and Absentological Temporality

Our paper explores nonhumanism, extinction, and contemporary interpretations of fossilization, drawing on the perspectives of Quentin Meillassoux and Claire Colebrook. We examine how the fact of extinction as a geohistorical process disrupts the anthropocentric narrative of human exceptionalism. Through a philosophical articulation of fossilization as a testament to past extinctions, we consider how nonhumanism can provide a framework for reimagining the future as a "fossilized" remainder of past existence. By engaging with Meillassoux's speculative materialism and Colebrook's philosophy of extinction, we develop a nonhumanist approach to the Anthropocene that prioritizes the inhuman remainders of existence as forms of materialized resistance to human hubris. Although Meillassoux's stance is ultimately crypto-anthropocentric, positing a radical dualism between thought and being, by combining Meillassoux's speculative materialism with Colebrook's nonhumanism we may elaborate a position that takes extinction as a future-present mode of temporality, a posited absence already present we term "absentology."

Ana Ilievska
American University of Beirut

Kill Bill: Documentality, Deletion, and the Body as Last Document

What does it mean to die in a society where social existence depends on inscription? Extending Maurizio Ferraris's theory of documentality, i.e., the claim that social objects exist as inscribed acts, this paper argues that contemporary power lies not primarily in the control of production or even of recording, but in the control of deletion. I call this apparatus the documental regime: the historically specific administration of documentality through platforms, algorithms, institutions, and our own everyday practices of curating and erasing. Its signature pathology is registration without obligation, a condition in which atrocity has never been more documented and never less binding.

The paper develops this argument through the atrocity image, ontologically a "weak document" in Ferraris's terms: it registers a killing without constituting an obligation. Under conditions of proliferation, flattening, curation, and content moderation, the image's evidential force terminates not in institutional uptake but in the viewer, producing what I call the virtuous spectator, who accrues moral capital from the archive of suffering while laboring, through every view and share, in the regime's own reproduction. Genocide, read documentally, is thereby revealed as a double killing: the extermination of bodies as natural objects and the de-inscription of the social objects that clothed them (names, records, archives, cities).

Against this void, the paper turns to Simone Weil's asymmetry of rights and obligations: a right unrecognized is worthless, an obligation unrecognized loses nothing. Reading Weil's own death alongside recent hunger strikes—Panos Routsis beneath the Greek Parliament, the imprisoned Palestine Action activists in Britain—I argue that when every record can be voided, obligation migrates into the flesh, the last unfalsifiable writing surface. The question for a philosophy of life and death today is how to rebuild the nexus between registration and obligation before the body becomes the only document left.

Sophie Ingle
Radboud University

Two Halves of a Walnut: Benjamin, Hegel, Death and the Living Aftermath of Tragedy in Hamnet

What remains of tragedy once the moment of death has passed and life continues? This paper examines Maggie O'Farrell's Hamnet (2020) and Chloé Zhao's cinematic adaptation (2026) as explorations of tragedy understood not as a singular event, but as an ongoing process shaped by loss. Beginning from the historical death of Hamnet Shakespeare in 1596, the paper explores how both the novel and the movie imagine the aftermath of this loss through disrupted language, suspended time, and altered modes of being. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's account of tragedy and the Trauerspiel, the paper argues that Hamnet aligns with the mourning play, foregrounding sorrow, the role of language, and the temporary affective engagement of the reader or viewer. These Benjaminian insights are then placed in dialogue with G. W. F. Hegel's account of being, nothing, and becoming, which provides a way of understanding how loss negates immediacy and initiates transformation rather than resolution. Through attention to narrative scenes, linguistic strain, and the experience of spectatorship, this paper argues that Hamnet presents tragedy as a process of meaning-making that persists after death while resisting closure.

Urška Jenčič
Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana

Fictions of Liveness: Taxidermy, Objectification, and the Politics of Representing Animals

While natural history museums present taxidermied specimens as educational tools – vehicles for understanding biodiversity, ecology, and conservation – they construct a particular conception of "the animal" and natural life. I focus on taxidermy as a cultural, scientific, ideological, and political practice, and the museum as an authoritative site of cultural (re)production, where claims to objectivity, realism, and truth mask the construction of meaning, narratives, and hierarchies about nature, animals, human-animal relations, and the identity of "us" and "others", subtly normalising human-animal power relations and the exploitation of nature.
Within this framework, taxidermy embodies a central irony: dead animals are supposed to teach about life. Taxidermy, as the literal arrangement of skin, produces a fiction of liveness – an aesthetic and epistemic illusion in which death is carefully effaced to simulate a fragment of life. The signs of violence necessary for the animal's death are carefully erased, and the processes of dismemberment and manipulation are concealed to create an idealised scene that confirms curated narratives reflecting human interpretations rather than animal realities. The animals are permeated with objectification and reduction, represented as passive, visible, and knowable – in a sense, always already dead and static: a state, not a process. This framing naturalises a relationship of domination: the power to kill (with impunity), preserve, and display becomes the power to define, and vice versa.
The practice is deeply tied to histories of colonialism and scientific control – it is a form of symbolic conquest. Taxidermy embodies two, perhaps contradictory, tendencies of our relationship to nature and animals: romanticist fetishisation and rationalistic knowledge. The animal must serve as a generic representation of a species, science, ordered, known and contained life, but also as a fantasy of wilderness and life without modern troubles or inhibitions. Exhibitions often normalise these power relations rather than critically interrogate them, subtly reinforcing human superiority and institutionalising a human–nonhuman divide.

Nana Kawamura
Hokkaido University

Resisting Suicidism: Through the Communication of Lived Experience

This paper argues that suicidism—a form of oppression directed at suicidal individuals—produces a distinctive kind of hermeneutical injustice that impedes their ability to understand and articulate their own experiences. Building on Alexandre Baril's concept of suicidism and Miranda Fricker's account of hermeneutical injustice, I show how dominant discourses, including mainstream suicide prevention, the medicalization of suicidality, and the sanctity-of-life doctrine, govern and contest how suicide is experienced and understood, systematically obscuring the lived experiences of suicidal individuals. These frameworks not only shape public interpretations but also constrain self-understanding, leading individuals to view their thoughts as pathological or irrational.

This exclusion has significant epistemic and affective consequences, undermining self-understanding and reinforcing isolation. Although often justified in the name of prevention, such silencing may intensify suffering by foreclosing possibilities for recognition. In response, I propose that sharing lived experiences and practicing narrative care can function as forms of epistemic resistance.

Nga Chun Josh Law
University of Bristol

Habit in Later Life Repetition without Stagnation in Beauvoir's Old Age

In Old Age, Simone de Beauvoir characterizes ageing as an irreversible and often unfavourable transformation—a process marked by metamorphosis, crisis, and shifts in self-identification. These descriptions are often criticized as overly bleak or even ageist. However, this paper argues that Old Age offers a more nuanced and sympathetic account than such readings suggest.
Rather than simply portraying decline, Beauvoir reworks her earlier framework of ambiguity by expanding the meaning of transcendence under the conditions of later life. While ageing may limit large-scale, future-oriented projects, it does not eliminate transcendence altogether. Instead, transcendence persists in smaller, embodied forms—through everyday practices that sustain meaning, openness, and engagement despite increasing constraints.
The argument proceeds in three steps. First, Old Age is situated within Beauvoir's earlier account of ambiguity, which emphasizes the tension between transcendence and immanence, freedom and facticity. The text complicates this framework by revealing the fragility and unequal distribution of material resources in later life.
Second, the paper draws on the phenomenological concept of habit to illuminate ageing as an embodied and temporal process. Ageing involves an oscillation between the pre-reflective incorporation of bodily change into habitual life and moments of disruption, in which one becomes aware of one's ageing body through reflection and the gaze of others. This tension intensifies the experience of the body as both lived and opaque, contributing to a sense of "limited future and a frozen past."
Finally, Beauvoir's distinction between "invertebrate habit" and the "poetry of habit" highlights the ambivalence of repetition. Habit can lead to stagnation, but it can also sustain continuity, meaning, and a form of ontological security. In this sense, habit exemplifies a "repetition without stagnation," offering a fragile yet genuine mode of openness in later life.

Stacey Mitchell
Unitarian Universalist Association

Our Interconnected Ecological Existence, and Reflections on the Approaches of Eco-chaplaincy and Eco-ontology

Our Earth and humanity have been in declining health since the beginning of the Anthropocene era. As a river dies of pollution, the communities surrounding that community are often sicker and hence poorer. And when the Brazilian Rainforest is cut to extreme levels, this now affects changing weather patterns across the globe.
I will look at philosophical assumptions, influenced primarily by Descartes, that have helped give rise to hyper-individualism and the decline of a healthy Earth. Then I will briefly look at current deconstruction philosophy (i.e. Derrida). This will be followed by briefly addressing more post-modern philosophers such as David Wood, focusing on the interconnectedness of life.
materialism and dualistic thought prevalent in Western thought has dominated individualistic actions (not interdependence views) in society. These actions have brought about habits of thinking that have contributed to the decline in planetary health. And following the philosophical arguments of David Wood (Vanderbilt University), I will look at current models of eco-chaplaincy (spiritual aspects of ecological crisis) and eco-ontological thought, as ways in honoring an integrated life, and of mourning the life-death cycle.
The loss of life, whether human, animal, wild forest, or oceanic, often is met with feelings of grief, sadness, bewilderment, and yet at the same time with love, due to our interconnectedness. What motivates us as humans to ultimately change ourselves, and hence our Earth? Is there a new possibility that we can orient ourselves to?

Pierre Muscat
University of Malta

Memory, Form, Life

This paper explores how life can remain meaningful in the face of sheer contingency, finitude, and irreversible loss. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's account of différance and iterability and Maurizio Ferraris' social ontology of documentality and unamendability, I argue that human life is best understood through a teleonomic conception of causality. Life persists not through the elimination of uncertainty, but through the production, communication, and transformation of form across time. On Derrida's view, every decision is both always a response to uncertainty and the opening of a space for the new. On Ferraris' view, interpretation is grounded in the resistances of the real and the irreversibility of inscription, through which social reality is stabilised and sustained across generations. Taken together, these two approaches show that uncertainty is not an obstacle to life, but a structural condition. I conclude that the ethical value of a decision lies not in securing closure or certainty, but in sustaining the very space in which future decisions remain possible.

Stefano Oliva
Università Niccolò Cusano (Roma)

Decreation and the Death Drive: Insights from Artistic Practice

The concept of decreation plays an important role in Simone Weil's thought. According to the French philosopher, it is a process of de-subjectivisation and a renunciation of the self, making room for others (love), the world (contemplation of beauty) and God. In relation to the concept of God, decreation establishes an analogy between the creature and the Creator. According to Weil's theological model, God does not create by adding anything outside of himself, but rather by contracting and withdrawing to make room for the emergence of the world. Conversely, the renunciation of the self bears some resemblance to the Freudian concept of the death drive. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud identifies a drive beneath the compulsion to repeat that is an alternative to the reality principle and opposed to the pleasure principle. This drive ultimately embodies the drive of every living being to return to an inorganic state. This death drive (which can be traced in Weil's biography) seems to coincide with the movement of decreation.
This movement, which is always tendential and which Weil already links to the aesthetic experience as a renunciation of consuming beautiful things—objects of desire—has some interesting applications in the field of artistic practices, and particularly in the performing arts (e.g. dance, musical improvisation, theatre). Through exploring artistic practices, the fundamental distinction between decreation and the death drive can be grasped. Decreation should not be understood as self-suppression, but rather as the capacity to make room for the success of the artistic process, which will ultimately be perceived as something other than the subject. In this sense, I will attempt to interpret decreation not in analogy with the death drive, but with the life drives that Freud discusses in the same work.

Irene Olivero
University of Erlangen-Nuremberg

Artificial Wombs and Digital Afterlives: Ethically Controversial Artifacts and the Future of the Human

Artificial wombs and post-mortem digital avatars are emerging technologies that challenge fundamental assumptions about human life, increasingly blurring boundaries around birth, death, identity, and agency. These artifacts do not merely raise metaphysical and moral questions; they generate persistent and structured forms of ethical disagreement, revealing deep uncertainty about how existing normative frameworks apply to technologically mediated forms of life. In this talk, I argue that such cases are best understood as instances of a broader category—"Ethically Controversial Artifacts": a distinct class of technologies whose defining feature lies in the sustained normative disruption they provoke. Existing taxonomies classify artifacts in terms of cognitive (Heersmink, 2021), affective (Piredda, 2019), experiential (Terrone, 2024), or regulatory roles (Lorini et al., 2022); yet, they fail to capture artifacts that are not simply value-laden but value-disruptive—artifacts whose primary social role is to trigger ongoing ethical contestation. Building on theories of socially constituted artifacts (e.g., Thomasson, 2014; Juvshik, 2023), I maintain that this disruption is not a contingent side effect but a predictable and stable social function that emerges through public uptake, interpretation, and controversy. Focusing on technologies that intervene at the boundaries of human existence—such as ectogenesis and digital afterlife systems— I show that this category clarifies why such artifacts actively participate in reconfiguring concepts such as personhood, responsibility, and the limits of human life. In doing so, they function as sites where normative frameworks are not merely applied but renegotiated. By foregrounding normative disruption as a constitutive dimension of certain technologies, this talk contributes to debates on artificial intelligence and the future of the human and argues for a shift from viewing ethics as external evaluation to understanding it as co-constituted through technological artifacts.

Kalin Pak
University of Antwerp

The Ontology of Care in Eco-Death Practices

In light of the ecological crisis and the funeral industry's significant contribution to environmental degradation, alternative deathcare practices such as green burial, resomation, and human composting have gained increasing public attention. These emerging practices invite a fundamental reconsideration of how we understand and value the dead body. They also generate normative tensions: do such methods risk violating the dignity of the dead by reducing the corpse to its ecological utility, or might they offer new ways of honouring the dead within an expanded ethical and ontological framework? In reframing the corpse as a site of posthumous biovalue, ecological deathcare raises questions about whether these practices merely instrumentalise the body or re-situate it within broader networks of care and ecological responsibility.

This paper argues that these tensions are transformed when viewed through the lens of care ethics, which conceives dignity as arising not from autonomous agency but from relational and intra-active networks of interdependence. Applied to deathcare, this framework recognises that funeral practices are embedded in complex networks of care that extend across families, communities, institutions, and more-than-human ecologies. Recent work within the ecological deathcare movement reflects this shift by proposing an alternative aesthetic and ethical engagement with death and the corpse, one that situates human mortality within ecological processes of transformation and renewal. I analyse the ethical and ontological foundations of this movement, showing how its critique aligns with ecofeminist care ethics and a new materialist ontology. While these two fields rarely intersect in existing scholarship, eco-deathcare provides a concrete site where they converge, demonstrating how care ethics can be grounded ontologically and how new materialism can gain normative traction. Together, they offer a framework for reimagining governance and practice: a relational ethics of care that is materially enacted through ecological death practices and grounded in the recognition of interdependence between the human and the more-than-human world.

Stefano Pavarini
University of Bologna

HHeidegger,Benjamin and the Meaning of Death

Heidegger's analytic of death in Sein und Zeit has profoundly influenced major camps of Twentieth century philosophy: his view of finitude as the ultimate horizon of possibility has paved the way for an entire "thanatological" discourse, one that would in tendency later become directed against Heidegger. Already in the 1930s Benjamin defined his philosophical position also in relation to death in terms opposite to those of Heidegger and also placed himself in direct conflict on a political level.
My paper focuses on the dialectic between Heidegger and Benjamin on the conception of death and on the consequent and opposing philosophical choices of the two thinkers.
For Heidegger human existence is "essentially futural" insofar as it is its freedom "for death" that structures temporality through the anticipation of its end: Heidegger calls this temporal unity the unity of the "ectases". On the contrary, Benjamin performs the extension of Heidegger's argument about death to the level of history which Heidegger himself was unable to conceive. The anticipation of historical death, the death of the species, is the material meaning of Messianic "exteriority" and recently, with the development of nuclear technologies, it has acquired the social reality of a possible historical event.

Amanda Rosa Pérez Morales
Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla

Virophilia: Disease as Excess of Life in BioArt

This presentation proposes to rethink disease not as a lack or failure of life, but as one of its forms of excess; that is, as an intensification of biological processes that overflow the organization of the human body. Drawing on the philosophy of Georges Canguilhem, it argues that the pathological does not constitute an absence of norms, but rather the production of new vital normativities which, although incompatible with the organism's stability, remain fully alive. In this framework, disease, and the viral in particular, appears as a force of proliferation that places the body in an unstable threshold between life and death.

As an artistic-theoretical case, I'll analyzes The Virophilia Project by Pei-Ying Lin, in which our relationship with the infectious is reconfigured. Through the concept of "virophilia," the work displaces the immunological paradigm based on defense and rejection, proposing instead an affective approach that oscillates between fascination and unease.

From this perspective, BioArt does not merely represent disease, but cultivates and stages it, rendering visible a posthuman dimension of life characterized by coexistence, vulnerability, and the impossibility of absolute immunity, even as the aspiration to achieve it paradoxically persists.

Julie Reshe
University College Cork

Being-With-Towards-Death: Pregnancy and the Death Drive

Motherhood and childbirth are conventionally positioned as the opposite of death, both in philosophical thought and in everyday understanding. Within philosophy, they tend to stand at a distance from being-towards-death, while in psychoanalysis they are aligned with the life drive rather than the death drive. This paper challenges that division and proposes that pregnancy and childbirth can be understood as singular embodiments of being-towards-death and of the death drive. Rather than affirmations of life, they embody the enfoldment of death. If being-towards-death is constitutive of Dasein, then pregnancy may be approached as a particularly intensified instance of it. At the same time, it is irreducibly relational, so it is not only being-towards-death, but also being-with-towards-death. Drawing on Sabina Spielrein's notion of destruction as intrinsic to creation, this paper reconsiders pregnancy, this paper reconsiders pregnancy as the embodiment of destruction at the heart of creation.

David Roden
Independent

Xenopoetics and the Necroconcept

In their 'poetheory' work On Incontrò / Trānstulī / Metempsúkhōsis Daniel Harris and Andrew Wenaus theorise Xenopoetics, described as the 'combinatorial functionality of information and data aimed at the execution of operations divorced from semantic import.' Xenopoetics - exemplified at length in Harris' epic Posthuman Series - does not produce meaning but interrupts it to invoke a materialised posthuman reality not of the order of meaning. One discerns a similar trajectory in other experimentalists, notably Gary Shipley whose biomorphic 'concept horror' does violence not just to the Bios, but to the grammar of the concept itself.

Can we begin to attach a sense, let alone a referent, to the annihilation of all sense or the necroconcept? In this paper, I want to take my cue from the conjunction of the semantic and corporeal disfiguration in this corpus. The disarticulation of the Body in Necroconceptuality, I will argue, constitutes a referent, albeit one whose sense is the immanent disarticulation and death of sense. And this, in turn, is symptomatic of our 'posthuman condition', a technological itinerary that - while metaphysically real - lacks all conceivable horizons or teleology.

Martin E. Rosenberg
Independent researcher

Zen Paradox, Contradiction, and Arakawa and Gins' Making Dying Illegal (2006)

The avant-garde architects Arakawa and Gins approach language and logic to subvert dualism and embrace monism. One tactic is a "terminological junction," for example, the term "cleave" which refers simultaneously to cleave = bifurcation, and to cleave = aggregation or fusion, as with "bioscleave" and their "Bioscleave House," also called the "Life-span Extending Villa." We find this approach in both of their manifestos. Their first manifesto, Architectural Body (2002), uses paradox and contradiction to blur, neuro-phenomenologically, the distinction between body and environment, subject and object, embracing a monist perspective. Their second manifesto, Making Dying Illegal (2006), embraces paradox and contradiction to deploy a satirical meditation on the act of dying, enacting Arakawa and Gins' "crisis ethics" spelled out in the Architectural Body, and through their bizarre landscapes and architecture. Both manifestos are grounded in what Yasuo Deguchi calls the monist dialetheism of Zen, which traces back to Eihei Dōgen (1200-1253). This paper will dig into the logic of paradox and contradiction associated with Zen philosophy, and its relation to monist thought more deeply, that I began in my most recent publication on Arakawa and Gins: "Situating Cognitive Science Between Zen and DADA in the Works of Arakawa and Gins: From Blankness to Landing Sites."

Kathryn Ruthven Body
University of Bristol

Risky bodies: Resilience amongst extremely clinically vulnerable (CEV) populations during the COVID-19 pandemic

In the face of widespread, collective adversity, some individuals – or at least those who are able – develop coping strategies that enable them to withstand and adapt. Drawing on responses to phenomenologically designed online qualitative surveys (Froese et al., 2021; James et al., 2022), this paper examines how certain individuals, particularly those who identified as extremely clinically vulnerable (CEV), developed coping strategies that enabled them to better withstand factors such as social distancing and a heightened state of bodily vulnerability. While research has investigated CEV populations from public health policy (Hodgson et al., 2021; Lasseter et al., 2022; Greig et al., 2024; Snooks et al., 2025), epidemiological (Di Gessa and Price 2021), and clinical perspectives (Danziger-Isakov et al., 2022), the phenomenological dimensions of these experiences remain underexplored.

To address this gap, this paper develops a phenomenologically grounded (Køster and Fernandez 2023) account that attends to how individuals in this group conceptualise and relate to their bodies in response to infection risks posed by others and the environment. It builds on phenomenological research conducted during the pandemic, highlighting changes to embodiment and hypervigilant bodily awareness (Rodrigues, Ruthven Body and Carel 2023), showing how physical bodies are transformed into sites of risk. It considers whether this is especially true of CEV individuals, whose sense of bodily certainty is already destabilised, sometimes leading to 'radical bodily doubt' (Carel 2016, 2025). Using phenomenological concepts such as intercorporeality and intertwinement (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012; Dolezal 2020; Tanaka 2019, 2020), it shows how interpersonal communication is undermined by infection concerns and distancing measures, while disclosing experiences of dependency, vulnerability, and finitude.

Kristina Simanaitė
Vilnius University

The Spectrum of Death in Psychosis: Phenomenological Approach

Psychoses are well known for their tendency to involve a wide variety of overlapping or noncongruent shifts in both self and world experience. One of the particularly existentially charged aspects is the renewed relationship with death. In some psychoses, this relationship comes about no longer as the "usual" theoretical grasping of death as an inevitable though often distant horizon. Instead, it manifests through certain immediate feelings that the affected individuals experience as challenging their life-abilities.

This presentation aims to sketch the spectrum of death in psychotic experiences through three interconnected points. Phenomenological approach will suggest a way for lived experiences to be understood through their relation to one another and to the basic structures of experience as marked by Husserl.

Firstly, the spectrum of death-related psychotic experiences may begin with one of the most apparent – the famous Cotard delusion case, which marks a set of experiences where a person experiences themselves as deceased or putrefying, or non-existing at all. Le délire des négations, as named by Jules Cotard himself, raises several implications: it can be experienced either as a negation of life (usually in relation to severe or psychotic depression) or as a negation of death (in which case the belief in one's immortality is prevalent).

In the light of the contemporary phenomenological psychopathology, we can then turn to more nuanced cases of the manifesting death-relation. With the help of EASE and EAWE interviews, we can discover subtypes such as Diminished Presence, Dissociative or Somatic Depersonalization, Identity Confusion or Bodily Disintegration, which help fine-grain descriptions and differences across the various ways in which death-experience is present in first-person narratives.

The third and final point on the spectrum would mark the death of protentional opening to the future in psychotic subjects. One of the ways in which it manifests is the disturbance of anticipation of the latent sides in the encounter with objects. The fragmentation to which it leads can then be recognized as lying not only "on the side" of the object, but also in the experiencing subject themselves.

Minvydas Simanaitis
Vilnius University

"And to eat a fruit is to know its meaning": Death as Formal Indication

Being-towards-death is one of the most accentuated aspects of Heideggerian studies. Death, as the imminent horizon of Dasein, ought to catalyze its authenticity. However, the straightforward understanding of the term "death", as well as "Dasein" and many other concepts in Heidegger, marks something intentionally different from everyday understandings (which creep into philosophizing).

Early Heidegger dedicates a considerable amount of time to the concept of formal indication, which he, and later his researchers such as T. Kisiel, consider to be the fulcrum of the whole Being and Time project.

Considered in such circumstances, the concept of death can be understood as pointing towards nothingness. The question of "nothing," or, differently put, "thingness-of-nothing," is an old problem. Heidegger's analysis of "nothing" tries to answer a fundamental problem for phenomenologists – how is it possible to talk about nothing? Only if we have our own connection to "nothing" do we have a possibility to judge the correctness of propositions about "nothing".

The presentation will initially provide a phenomenological approach to "nothing". By distinguishing between perish, demise, and death, Heidegger can conceptualize death as a central phenomenon of human existence. The phenomenon of living through death and extinction of our worldly projects while still projecting ourselves, reveals "nothing" as a source of meaning that is not itself meaningful. This position will be contrasted with a technological attitude by asking whether "nothing" and death can be conceptually grasped within it. To emphasize the uniqueness of death as a philosophical concept, we will use formal indication as a way of opening up its meaning without defining it.

Dalia Staponkutė
University of Cyprus

Quoted Lives, Living Deaths: Under the Star of Malta—the Afterlife of Plot in Marina Tsvetaeva

I have long placed life and death in quotation marks,
as if they were fabrications, known to be empty.
—Marina Tsvetaeva, "New Year's Eve"

At the threshold where quotation marks suspend certainty, this paper turns to Tsvetaeva's poetry to think Life and Death not as opposites, but as mutually translating states—each already inhabited by the other. Reading "Poem of the End" as a metaphysical stage, I shall approach love as a perilous bridge stretched between being and extinction, where language fractures under the pressure of separation and time moves "as death is." Here, life does not unfold but leans toward its own vanishing; death does not arrive but lingers, intimate, already at one's side. From this poetics of rupture—posts, embankments, crossings—I follow the afterlife of the plot as something not concluded but translated. Plot, like the lovers, survives its ending as a revenant form: altered, estranged, walking without belonging to the order of the living. Translation of culture thus exceeds the linguistic; it becomes ontological—a passage between states of being where meaning is neither preserved nor lost, but suspended, transformed. Within this spectral economy, the Star of Malta appears as an emptied sign, its sharp geometry marking the commodification of desire against Tsvetaeva's organic imagery of wound and flesh. It signals a modernity in which even intimacy is estranged from itself. What my generation inherits are not origins but crossings. We live translation as condition rather than method, carrying fragments that no longer resolve into a single narrative. The plot, long declared dead, returns as echo and persistence—no longer law, but afterlife. To think Life and Death here is to think in thresholds: where life is already a mode of dying, and death the final clarity of love's impossible demand.

Luciana Taddei & Albanese, Antonio
University "Magna Graecia" of Catanzaro; Indipendent Researcher

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After Prometheus: Algorithmic Power, Residual Life, and the Fate of the Human

Today, Prometheus appears finally unbound—released not by the gods, but by those he once served. The ancient order is overturned: technical power, once stolen for humankind, now unfolds autonomously, exceeding its origin. In the age of large language models and algorithmic infrastructures, the accumulation of technical capacity no longer requires the human concentration that sustained the political and productive forms of the twentieth century. The apparatus replaces action; individuals, though hyperconnected, become progressively superfluous to one another.

This paper interrogates the fracture opened by the automation of logos—language, reasoning, and sense-making—through LLMs. What is at stake is not simply delegation, but the displacement of that which has historically defined the human. As knowledge is incorporated into devices and decision processes distributed across opaque systems, the technical apparatus begins to sever itself from its ground.

Against this background, vulnerability and residuality emerge as key categories. Drawing on phenomenological and post-foundational perspectives, and engaging Socrates and Blanchot, community is rethought as shared exposure. The paper traces "residual life" as what persists at the limits of algorithmic capture, arguing that the future of the human depends on what exceeds power: the fragile, the superfluous, the inassimilable.

Giovanni Temporin
Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne - Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

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The Irrelevance of Our Fate: Future and Immanence in Contemporary Materialism

This presentation argues that beliefs in our mortality or immortality should have no necessary bearing on the meaningfulness of life, action and ethico-political engagement.
In the wake of renewed interest in posthumanistic conceptions of mortality, from Lyotard's solar catastrophe and mass extinction to transhumanist views on immortality, questions concerning how imagined futures shape present activity have become increasingly urgent.
Two specular proposals from contemporary materialist thought are examined. Quentin Meillassoux's "divine ethics" contends that a revised form of immortality is necessary to ground meaningful action: following a tradition running from Plato to Kant, immortality is reframed as the rekindling of human community capable of reigniting hope. Conversely, Martin Hägglund's "secular faith" grounds practical engagement precisely in the consciousness of mortality: drawing on a lineage that runs from Seneca to Heidegger, he treats the finitude and unrepeatability of life as the only viable basis for coherently conceiving freedom and moral action.
Contrary to both positions, it will be argued that they fail to demonstrate the cogency of the link between imagined futures and present practical engagement. Beyond respective weaknesses, the shared problem lies in the fact that such future-based ethics undermine any professed commitment to immanence.

Helen Upfield
St Mary's University

Choreographies of everyday living: Quotidian belongings in the workplace

To write about living in modern society is to walk through hostile terrain in a space where 'loss prevails' (de Certeau, 1984, p.198). Thinking with de Certeau's tactics of belonging opens up possibilities to consider creative daily acts of living against the literal and symbolic presence of death. This presentation therefore approaches the imposing duality of life and death from a deliberately playful, idiosyncratic, and micro-realised stance. Utilising a nomadic theory of immanence, I suggest that it is through the documentation of our habitual, personal, and relational practices of life that that we might assemble responses, or moments of endurance, to neoliberal biopolitical and necropolitical forces (Braidotti,2011; Federici, 2004; Murray, 2022). In this manner, acts of everyday belonging can contribute to more nuanced, local perceptions of being-the-world, whilst recognising that the practices of living and dying will always be entangled within socio-political structures of power and place.

Specifically, my presentation will draw on recent fieldwork from a research project exploring how people working within education mediate the physical and metaphysical elements of their labour through a post-qualitative, rhizomatic methodology. Visual and textual vignettes taken from walking interviews will be used to consider the different ways my participants consider temporal and spatial entanglements within their everyday lives. Through fragments of joy and frustration within working life, I share embodied navigations of post-industrial work-scapes which reflect the precariousness of existence but also its potentialities (Tsing, 2015). In this manner I argue that the navigation of a life-course is both – and at the same time – a constrained and liberating undertaking which offers up, in Haraway's terms, modes of discovering how to 'live and die well with each other within a thick present' (Haraway, 2016, p.1).

Ahmet Uruk
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Overlapping of Life and Death as the Technological Uncanny: Posthuman Gothic in Don DeLillo's The Body Artist

This paper examines The Body Artist through the intersection of the technological uncanny, liminality of life and death, and the posthuman gothic. It argues that the novel displaces traditional gothic motifs onto mediated forms of presence, where voice recordings, repetition, and temporal distortion produce an uncanny effect detached from conventional technology. In opposition to the creature in Frankenstein, composed of macabre parts of inanimate corpses, the figure of Mr. Tuttle embodies a posthuman monster and subjectivity constituted through fragmented language and recursive temporality, destabilizing distinctions between the living and the dead. Mr. Tuttle, therefore, functions as a technological haunting transgressing the boundaries between organic/inorganic, self/other, and human/posthuman. In this framework, death does not signify absence but persistence as a mediated trace, transforming grief into a distributed, posthuman process. Through its minimalist style and disrupted temporality, Don DeLillo's text, which is argued predominantly to be a posthuman gothic, reconfigures and restructures the gothic tradition as a condition of technological and posthuman mediation, where identity, embodiment, and mortality are continuously deferred and reassembled.
Keywords: Posthuman Gothic, Don DeLillo, The Body Artist, Technological Uncanny, Liminality of Life and Death.

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Inner sense of gender: an ontological account of gender identity oppression

In this paper I will argue for the importance of a notion of a malleable essence for emancipatory politics against gender identity oppression. I will first argue that while feminist philosophies have rightly rejected notions of universal, fixed, and taxonomic essence, anti-essentialist feminist philosophers (e.g., Butler, Haraway) have difficulty providing an ontological conceptualisation of the oppression of gender identity. Namely, if there is no ontological notion to account for robustness within the subject, gender identity would be merely relational with nothing held in reserve. Without a principle that is irreducible to relations, it becomes difficult to evaluate norms as oppressive rather than merely different. Drawing upon Graham Harman's Object-Oriented Ontology, focussing on the notions of withdrawal and allure, I then aim to demonstrate that a notion of malleable essence – one that does not coincide with the essence rejected by anti-essentialist feminist thought – can account for gender identity to be oppressed by means of misrecognition and denial of something real and more authentic than oppressive norms imposed on the subject, resulting in a conceptualisation of gender identity that is suitable for an emancipatory politics against oppression and in favour of a liveable life.

David Vella
University of Malta

The Neoliberal Self In Ruins: Surrender and the Phenomenology of Exhaustion

Philosophical discussions of life and death are often approached through metaphysical speculation or ethical debates concerning dying, care, and responsibility. Yet mortality also manifests within lived experience itself. It appears in moments when our capacities falter, when disempowerment confronts us with the limits of our ability to control ourselves and our lives. Such experiences reveal finitude not only as a future event but as a condition already present within life.

This paper situates these experiences within the cultural context of neoliberalism, which persistently reinforces ideals of autonomy, control, and self-optimization. Converging in the aspirational model of the entrepreneurial identity, the neoliberal self, analyzed by thinkers such as Ulrich Beck and Byung-Chul Han, encourages individuals to treat their lives as projects of continuous self-production geared toward performance, achievement, and status. Within this framework, mortality appears primarily as a threat to be managed, postponed, or technologically overcome. At the same time, however, this culture has produced a widespread condition of exhaustion marked by burnout, depression, and alienation. Exhaustion exposes the limits of our ability to sustain the demands of self-production and can therefore be understood as a lived encounter with finitude within life itself.

Drawing on the phenomenological tradition, this paper argues that encounters with finitude need not simply provoke anguish or defensive strategies of self-preservation. They may also open the possibility of surrender, initiating a transformation in the structure of subjectivity.

The paper distinguishes two moments in this experience. The first involves an exposure to the existential groundlessness of the self. Here, the self comes to accept the limits of its attempts to secure itself against finitude along with the anguish that accompanies this realization. The second entails a subsequent return to the world in which this exposure is integrated into a renewed way of living. After surrender, life is no longer organized around the pursuit of self-sovereignty, but tends instead toward attentiveness, ethical responsiveness, and a heightened sensitivity to the vulnerability of others.

By interpreting surrender as a phenomenological response to mortality within neoliberal conditions of life, the paper contributes to contemporary debates about life and death by showing how encounters with finitude can open new possibilities for ethical life and shared responsibility.

Susana Viegas
NOVA University Lisbon

Genre After Death: Testament-Films

How does the filmed philosopher, as a figure of posthumous address, transform film genre into sites where thought survives beyond death? This talk examines how death unsettles and reconfigures film genre through what I call the "testament-film". In contemporary media environments shaped by the circulation, storage, and reactivation of voices and images beyond the life of their subjects, the filmed figure of the philosopher offers a privileged site for reflecting on posthumous presence. When philosophy is recorded in anticipation of absence, images no longer simply document thought, but stage its survival. While classical genres, such as melodrama, war film, or documentary, organize death as event, resolution, or spectacle, the testament-film displaces death from representation to enunciation. Here, death is not something shown, but a condition structuring the act of speaking itself. Taking "L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze" as a central case study, this presentation argues that the filmed conversations between Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet exceed the conventions of interview and documentary by situating discourse within a deferred temporality. Conceived for posthumous circulation, the work presents a voice that persists beyond the life of its speaker, where thought becomes inseparable from its own disappearance. Drawing on Deleuze's philosophy of time and cinema, alongside Jacques Derrida's notion of spectrality and survival, I propose that the testament-film marks a limit-point of genre itself, where cinema ceases to organise death as representation and instead stages its persistence within time.

Martina Volarevic
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek

Dasein's Listening to Death

The aim of this presentation is to point out the significance of death in understanding human existence. The starting point of such an understanding is the position that human existence precedes essence. Dasein does not have a predetermined essence based on belonging to a species, but rather determines its own essence. It has the freedom to independently determine the possibilities of its own being, limited only by the givenness of its thrownness (Geworfenheit) into the false existence of the Anyone (Sich). Dasein in understanding, throws up possibilities of its own existence, in which it is shown the "There" of its possibilities of being-in-the-world. Death stands in a direct relationship to the truth of existence, because if Dasein is attuned to its own death as its ultimate possibility, it is directed towards the truest form of its existence. In the running forward toward death (Vorlaufen zumTode) Dasein grasps its ultimate possibility. In accordance with the discovery, it throws itself towards its truest existential possibility. In it, it becomes clear to Dasein that in this possibility it has escaped from the dictature of Anyone and that it has become free.

Kurt Zammit
Radboud University

Dying for the Highest Good

In The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, Lacan problematises the ethical notion of the highest good. He claims that the highest good is indistinguishable from radical evil, since attaining it brings an end to the subject's desire by realising it, resulting in the death of the Lacanian subject. In this paper, I aim to compare and analyse two different views of the relation between the highest good and death in Lacanian ethics, those of Marc de Kesel and Alenka Zupančič. While Zupančič argues for an 'ethics of the real', where the excessive nature of ethics is revealed through the realisation of the subject's desire, de Kesel criticises Zupančič for romanticising an ethics of death. Instead, de Kesel emphasises the necessity for ethics to give space to desire without realising it. To do this, I will first develop an account of the highest good and its relation to desire, which will be underscored by death. Then, I will argue in favour of Zupančič, claiming that de Kesel lacks an orientation to the highest good. Consequently, de Kesel's ethics is defined by a struggle against death, which I will argue renders the subject undead and removes the radical ethical potential of the subject.