

The Posthumanist Quest for the Universal: Butler, Badiou, Žižek



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10-301, 3F, Building 10

Sophia University Yotsuya Campus

“My presentation considers the divergent efforts of Judith Butler, Alain Badiou, and Slavoj Žižek to arrive at a postmetaphysical conception of ethics. Butler approaches this task through her ethics of precarity, which posits vulnerability as a foundation for a generalizable ethics of relationality in the Levinasian vein. Badiou and Žižek, in turn, work from a more Lacanian perspective, attempting to leap directly from the singular to the universal by bypassing the particular. After considering

the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches, I argue that posthumanist theory needs to reconsider its resistance to a priori normative limits, for without such limits, ethics too easily becomes either a celebration of masochism (as in Butler) or a celebration of courage (as in Badiou and Žižek). I draw on feminist philosopher Amy Allen’s commentary on the “historical a priori” to argue that a priori norms do not need to be metaphysical in order to be ethically compelling and politically useful.”

Mari Ruti is Professor of Critical Theory at the University of Toronto, where she teaches contemporary theory, psychoanalysis, continental philosophy, and feminist and queer theory. She is the author of five books: *Reinventing the Soul: Posthumanist Theory and Psychic Life* (2006); *A World of Fragile Things: Psychoanalysis and the Art of Living* (2009); *The Summons of Love* (2011); *The Singularity of Being: Lacan and the Immortal Within* (2012); *The Call of Character: Living a Life Worth Living* (2013).

Lecture in English / No prior registration necessary