



**University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>**

**Department of Philosophy**

---

**Master Class**

**Reasons, beliefs and persons**

**with Prof. Mark Schroeder  
University of Southern California**

16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022

## Synopsis

Ethics has taken since the last decades a reason turn. Recently, epistemology has followed a similar path. By paying attention to the study of reasons in ethics, Schroeder claims that epistemology could solve some of its most important challenges. With this hypothesis in mind, as well as a reasons-first approach to normativity – namely the thesis that reasons are the building blocks of all normativity – Schroeder provides new answers to these challenges in his last book *Reason First* (2021).

The aim of this master class is to discuss and evaluate Schroeder's proposals. In order to do so, we will focus on one specific challenge: what can make evidence sufficient to justify belief? In other words, we will address the *traditional* question of the ethics of belief anew: what you should believe and why. Are there only evidential reasons that justify belief? Is epistemic rationality also sensitive to other considerations such as the costs of error?

Our attention will also focus onto the ethics of belief in a *narrow* sense. The controversial thesis of doxastic wrongs – namely the claim that we can wrong one another in virtue of what we believe about each other – will be scrutinized and assessed. Is a father who believes that his daughter cannot succeed in a career in engineering wronging her? Or giving this question a different scope: could we wrong God by disbelieving that They exist? In the wake of this last topic, we will also turn our attention towards the concept of *person* which can cast some lights on doxastic wrongs, as they can be interpreted as a failure to relate to one another as persons. So, what are persons? And how should we relate to them?

## **Programme and Readings**

*Day 1 – 16<sup>th</sup> May 2022*

### **Session 1 – Reasons-First Epistemology**

10h00-11h00 – Introduction by Prof. Mark Schroeder  
11h00-11h15 – Comment by PhD student 1 & Response  
11h15-11h30 – Short break  
11h30-12h30 – Q&A

*Reading:*

- (i) Schroeder, Mark. (2021). “Reasons are Competitors”. In *Reasons First*. Oxford University Press.
- (ii) Schroeder, Mark. (2021). “Balance in Epistemology”. In *Reasons First*. Oxford University Press.

*Optional reading:*

Schroeder, Mark. (2021). The fundamental reason for reasons fundamentalism. *Philosophical Studies*, 178/10: 3107–3127.

**12h30 - 14h – Lunchbreak**

### **Session 2 – Pragmatic Intellectualism**

14h00-14h30 – Introduction by Prof. Mark Schroeder  
14h30-14h45 – Comment by PhD student 2 & Response  
14h45-15h00 – Short break  
15h00-16h00 – Q&A

*Reading:*

- (i) Schroeder, Mark. (2021). “Epistemic Reasons as Right-Kind Reasons”. In *Reasons First*. Oxford University Press.
- (ii) Schroeder, Mark. (2021). “Pragmatic Intellectualism”. In *Reasons First*. Oxford University Press.

*Optional reading:*

Schroeder, Mark. (2018). Rational Stability Under Pragmatic Encroachment. *Episteme*, 15/3: 297–312.

## ***Day 2 – 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022***

### **Session 3 – Doxastic Wrongs**

10h00-10h30 – Introduction by Prof. Mark Schroeder  
10h30-10h45 – Comment by PhD student 3 & Response  
10h45-11h00 – Short break  
11h00-12h30 – Q&A

#### *Reading:*

- (i) Schroeder, Mark. (2021). “Doxastic Wrongs”. In *Reasons First*. Oxford University Press.
- (ii) Schroeder, Mark (2020). Sins of Thought. *Faith and Philosophy*, 37/3: 273-293.

#### *Optional reading:*

Enoch, David & Spectre, Levi (forthcoming). There is no such thing as doxastic wrongdoing. *Philosophical Perspectives*.

### **12h30 - 14h – Lunchbreak**

### **Session 4 – New Perspectives on Persons**

14h00-14h30 – Introduction by Introduction by Prof. Mark Schroeder  
14h30-14h45 – Comment by PhD student 4 & Response  
14h45-15h00 – Short break  
15h00-16h00 – Q&A

#### *Reading:*

- (i) Schroeder, Mark. (2019). Persons as Things. In *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics Volume 9*. Mark Timmons (ed.). Oxford University Press.
- (ii) Schroeder, Mark. (forthcoming). Narrative and Personal Identity. In *Supplement to the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.

#### *Optional reading:*

Schroeder, Mark. (2020). Treating Like a Child. *Analytic Philosophy*.

Registration: [benoit.guilielmo@uzh.ch](mailto:benoit.guilielmo@uzh.ch)

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2022

Rooms:

16<sup>th</sup> of May, room KOL-H-317, Rämistrasse 71, 8044 Zürich.

17<sup>th</sup> of May, room ZOB E 2, Zollikerstrasse 115, 8044 Zürich.