Moral Progress Through Thick and Thin

Dale Jamieson (New York University) May 30, 15:30-16:30 (CET)

In a pair of 2002 publications, (Morality's Progress and "Is There Progress in Morality?"), I argued that moral progress was both possible and actual, a view that I restated in my 2017 ("Slavery, Carbon, and Moral Progress"). The broadly pragmatic view that I defended eschewed moral realism, yet retained the optimism of more robust accounts. In this talk I explain what I now see as some of the deeper sources of my view, reassert it as an analytical account, but distance it from the optimism of my earlier writing. I close with a brief discussion of a view that is becoming fashionable among many philosophers and even more broadly: that the best approach to moral progress involves biologically or psychologically reconfiguring moral agents, rather than by appealing to the reason or sentiments of moral agents as they are currently constituted.