



COLLOQUIUM SERIES 2023-2024 THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY



Dr. Manuel Vargas
University of California San Diego

Adaptive Agency

Friday, February 2, 3-5pm

**Women's Studies Lounge, Mazur
Hall 821**

Abstract: What should we think about the culpability of action that derives in some significant way from attitudes whose content is a product of oppression, domination, or deprivation? There are reasons to be skeptical that there is much that can be usefully said about this topic. However, one reason for aspiring to work out a systematic approach is that there are recognizable syndromes in how contexts of oppression, domination, and deprivation shape agency in ways that matter for culpability. Focusing on something we can call adaptive agency enables us to work our way toward a relatively unified way of characterizing some of the complicated ways contexts shape agency and culpability. On the account on offer, an important aspect of adaptive agency is the way in which environments shape people so that their agency is “fitted to” circumstances of injustice, often making that injustice less apparent and less readily contested. Even so, this fact is compatible with at least some exercises of adaptive agency being instances of culpability.

Manuel Vargas is Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, San Diego. He has written on free will, moral responsibility, topics in moral psychology, the history of philosophy in Latin America, and ethno-racial social identities. He is the author of *Building Better Beings: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Oxford, 2013), which was awarded the American Philosophical Association’s biennial Book Prize, the forthcoming *Mexican Philosophy* (Oxford), and he is one of the authors of the widely used textbook *Four Views on Free Will* (Wiley-Blackwell 2007, second edition 2024). He has co-edited several volumes, including *The Oxford Handbook of Moral Psychology* (Oxford, 2022), *Rational and Social Agency: The Philosophy of Michael Bratman* (Oxford, 2014), *The Latinx Philosophy Reader* (Routledge, forthcoming), and a forthcoming volume of *Oxford Studies on Agency and Responsibility* (2024).