

PHIL 540 | RATIONALITY & NON-COGNITIVE ATTITUDES

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STO-132

Beliefs seem to have, as part of their job description, the carrying of information about the world around us. Perhaps this can help explain why beliefs can be rational or irrational: rationality gets its purchase on beliefs because it is a reasonable guide to the facts that beliefs are meant to track. It makes sense to talk of a rational change in belief, say, because we are confronted with *evidence* that pulls in one direction or another. But there are many other attitudes, in particular *conative* and *affective* attitudes (*non-cognitive* attitudes, for short), whose role seems to have little to do with tracking features of the environment. Does this mean that there can be no substantive rationality constraints on non-cognitive attitudes? If there are, what is their source? Is there such a thing as a rational change in non-cognitive attitudes?

The first and second parts of the seminar will revolve around the question of whether and how rationality constraints conative and affective attitudes. The final part of the seminar will be focused on the question of whether and how non-cognitivists views in meta-ethics can account for the ways in which moral thought is rationally constrained.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Meetings: T 16.30–19.00, MHP-102

Course website: <http://perezcarballo.org/phil540>

Office hours: T 14.00–16.00

Feel free to stop by my office if you want to talk about the readings for the class, or if you have an idea (or a proto-idea, for that matter) you would like to bounce off me. If you can't make it to my office hours, email me so we can arrange to meet at some other time.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

It is a good idea to think of the seminar—whether or not you are enrolled for credit—as a reading group of which you are an active participant.

For students enrolled in the seminar for credit, your grade will depend on the following three components:

- A *term paper* (70%), on a topic of your choice.
- A 15 minute *in-class presentation* (15%). Think of these as comments on a conference paper.
- Three short *response pieces* (15%). These should be short ($\leq 1.5k$ words) critical discussions of your choice from one of the readings. They are due 48h before the corresponding meeting.

In addition, you should each meet with me to discuss your final paper. This should happen by March 31 at the latest.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Subject to change. All readings will be made available in electronic format.

There is undoubtedly too much to read on this list. We will trim things down according to how the class evolves.

The Humean picture

- 01.15 Disunity: The Humean picture
Smith, “Humean Rationality” // Humberstone, “Direction of Fit” // Smith, *The Moral Problem*, ch. 4
- 01.22 Disunity: The Humean picture (cont’d)
Lewis, “Desire as Belief” // Lewis, “Dispositional Theories of Value”
- 01.29 Irrational desires?
Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, ch. 1 // Johnston, “Dispositional Theories of Value”
- 02.05 Irrational preferences?
Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, chs. 6, 8 // Dougherty, “On Whether to Prefer Pain to Pass”*

Alternatives to Humeanism

- 02.12 Anti-Humeanism
Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, ch. 1 // Stampe, “The Authority of Desire” // Korsgaard, “Acting for a Reason”

- 02.19 Anti-Humeanism (cont'd)
Smith, *The Moral Problem*, ch. 5 // Parfit, *On What Matters*, ch. 1
- 02.26 Responsiveness revisited: reasons
Parfit, *On What Matters*, chs. TBD // Dietrich and List, "A Reason-Based Theory of Rational Choice"
- 03.05 NO MEETING: SPRING RECESS
- 03.12 Responsiveness revisited: reasons (cont'd)
Railton, "Toward a Unified Account of Rationality in Belief, Desire, and Action"

Dynamics

- 03.19 Rational dynamics
Grüne-Yanoff and Hansson, "Preference Change: An Introduction" // Jeffrey, "A Note on the Kinematics of Preference"
- 03.26 Rational dynamics (cont'd)
Dietrich and List, "A model of non-informational preference change" // Jeffrey, "Preference Among Preferences"
- 04.02 Aggregation
Readings TBD

Non-cognitivism and rationality

- 04.09 Non-cognitivism in meta-ethics
Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, chs. TBD
- 04.16 The problem of rationality
Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, chs. TBD // Gibbard, *Thinking How to Live*, chs. TBD
- 04.23 The (ir)rationality of emotions
Greenspan, "Practical Reasoning and Emotion"
- 04.30 Coherence and coordination
Skyrms, *The Dynamics of Rational Deliberation*, chs. TBD

REFERENCES

- Dietrich, F. and C. List. **A model of non-informational preference change**. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 23.2 (2011), pp. 145–164.
- **A Reason-Based Theory of Rational Choice**. *Noûs* (2011). Advance access.
- Dougherty, T. **On Whether to Prefer Pain to Pass**. *Ethics* 121.3 (2011), pp. 521–537.
- Gibbard, A. *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgment*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990.
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- Greenspan, P. **Practical Reasoning and Emotion**. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Rationality*. Ed. by A. R. Mele and P. Rawling. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 206–221.
- Grüne-Yanoff, T. and S. O. Hansson. **Preference Change: An Introduction**. In: *Preference Change*. Ed. by T. Grüne-Yanoff and S. O. Hansson. Vol. 42. Theory and Decision Library. Dordrecht: Springer, 2009.
- Humberstone, I. L. **Direction of Fit**. *Mind* 101.401 (1992), pp. 59–83.
- Jeffrey, R. C. **Preference Among Preferences**. *The Journal of Philosophy* 71.13 (1974), pp. 377–391.
- **A Note on the Kinematics of Preference**. *Erkenntnis* 11.1 (1977), pp. 135–141.
- Johnston, M. **Dispositional Theories of Value**. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, supp. volumes* 63 (1989), pp. 139–147.
- Korsgaard, C. M. **Acting for a Reason**. In: *Studies in Practical Reason*. Ed. by V. B. Lewis. Catholic University Press, forthcoming, pp. 207–230.
- Lewis, D. **Desire as Belief**. *Mind* 97.418 (1988), pp. 323–32.
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- **Humean Rationality**. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Rationality*. Ed. by A. R. Mele and P. Rawling. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 75–92.
- Stampe, D. **The Authority of Desire**. *The Philosophical Review* 86.3 (1987), pp. 335–381.