

PHIL G 9528x
Reason and Value
Fall 2006

Wednesdays 11:00-12:50
S. Beardman

Metaethics seminar:
Desires, sentiments, and science

Course Description:

This seminar has three overlapping concerns: the nature of desire, the role of desire in metaethical theory, and the relevance of empirical inquiry to each of these. Readings include several well-known classics in metaethics, as well as parts of two new books. The latter draw on empirical studies concerning moral reasoning and the nature of desire, respectively. The aim is, in part, to discover the import of these empirical studies. Our subject matter is wide, and straddles normative and psychological questions.

The course is rooted in metaethics. It begins with a brief history of the debate between cognitivism and noncognitivism. We then address questions about internal reasons, phenomenological accounts of desire, the adequacy of characterizing desire in terms of 'direction of fit', and the relation between value and desire. We will also examine the belief/desire model of psychology, and the various pressures it faces in accounting for practical reasons. The order of topics can be grouped roughly as follows: (i) Introduction and historical overview, (ii) Moral realism, (iii) Noncognitivism and sentimentalism, (iv) Reason-providing desires & philosophical accounts of the nature of desire, (v) Internal reasons, (vi) Motivation, pleasure, and reward.

Certain issues that are not addressed fully head-on are touched upon in the readings and will quite naturally come up in discussion. These include the topics of weakness of will; second-order desires and the notion of identification; the nature of emotions; the practical syllogism; incommensurability and conflicts among values, and so on. You may want to do extra reading in these areas, especially for your seminar papers. If there is time and interest, we may amend the readings to expand and/or shift our areas of focus. Content of the final section of the course is to be determined by students' background and interests.

Prerequisites:

This course is open only to degree candidates in the Department of Philosophy.

All others *must* receive the instructor's permission to attend. Please note that this is an advanced course: experience with philosophical methods will be presupposed.

Course Requirements:

For E-credit :

- 6-8 page discussion papers posted online
- Oral presentations of discussion paper
- One 15-20 page paper, on a separate topic from the discussion paper, due a week after the last day of class
- Attendance, class participation, and keeping up with the readings

Please note: There will be no incompletes given to any student in the course.

For R-credit:

- 6-8 page discussion papers posted online
- Oral presentations of discussion paper
- Attendance, participation in class, and keeping up with the assigned readings

Please note: Signing up for R-credit is not sufficient for receiving R-credit.

Required Texts:

The following books are available for purchase at Labyrinth Books:

- [MDP] Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, Peter Railton, eds., *Moral Discourse & Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) ISBN 0-19-509669x
- Shaun Nichols, *Sentimental Rules: On the Natural Foundations of Moral Judgment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) ISBN: 0-19-5314204

If time and student interest permit, we will order:

- Timothy Schroeder, *Three Faces of Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) ISBN: 0-19-517237-x

Other readings can be found online at the password-protected course website via CourseWorks, at <<https://courseworks.columbia.edu/>>, or at the online database JSTOR.

Question: Why do you want a Mercedes?
Answer: How else am I going to get one?

Course Syllabus:

- J. S. Mill, "Of What Sort of Proof the Principle of Utility is Susceptible", ch. IV of Mill's *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1861/1979)
- G. E. Moore, from *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), reprinted in [MDP]
- C. L. Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms", *Mind* 46 (1937): 21-25, reprinted in [MDP]
- Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, Peter Railton, "Toward *Fin de siècle* Ethics: Some Trends", *The Philosophical Review* 101 (1992): 115-189, reprinted in [MDP]

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- Richard Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist", in *Essays on Moral Realism*, ed. G. Sayre-McCord (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), reprinted in [MDP]
- Peter Railton, "Moral Realism", *Philosophical Review*, 95 (1986): 163-207, reprinted in [MDP]
- Shaun Nichols, *Sentimental Rules*, Chapters 1 and 3

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- Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), excerpts from pp. 3-102 adapted and reprinted in [MDP]
- Nicholas Sturgeon, "Gibbard on Moral Judgment and Norms", *Ethics* 96 (1985): 22-33
- Allan Gibbard, "Reply to Sturgeon", *Ethics* 96 (1985): 34-41

- Philippa Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives", *The Philosophical Review* 81 (1972): 305-316, reprinted in [MDP]
- John McDowell, "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. 52 (1978): 13-29

- John McDowell, "Values and Secondary Qualities", in Honderich, ed. *Morality and Objectivity: A Tribute to J.L. Mackie* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), reprinted in [MDP]
- John McDowell, "Projection and Truth in Ethics", Lindley Lecture (University of Kansas, 1987), reprinted in [MDP]
- Simon Blackburn, *Ruling Passions* (Oxford: Oxford/Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 84-104

- Simon Blackburn, "How to be an Ethical Anti-Realist", *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 12 (1988): 361-375, reprinted in [MDP]

- David Wiggins, "A Sensible Subjectivism?", in Wiggins, *Needs, Values, Truth*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford/Clarendon Press, 1998), reprinted in [MDP]
- David Wiggins, "Moral Cognitivism, Moral Relativism, and Motivating Moral Beliefs", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 91 (1991): 61-85

Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, "Sentiment and Value", *Ethics* 110 (2000): 722-748

Shaun Nichols, *Sentimental Rules*, Chapters 4 and 5

Allan Gibbard, "Moral Feelings and Moral Concepts", in Russ Shafer-Landau, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford/Clarendon Press, 2006)

J. L. Mackie, from *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, reprinted in [MDP]
Shaun Nichols, *Sentimental Rules*, Chapters 7 and 8

Michael Stocker, "Psychic Feelings: Their Importance and Irreducibility",
Australasian Journal of Philosophy 61, 1 (1983): 5-26

Michael Stocker, "Intellectual Emotion, Desire, and Action" in A. O. Rorty, ed.,
Explaining Emotions (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980)

T. M. Scanlon, Chapter 1 of *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA,
Harvard University Press, 1998), pp.17-77

T. M. Scanlon, "Reason and Passions," in S. Buss and L. Overton, eds., *Contours of Agency: Essays on Themes from Harry Frankfurt* (MIT Press, 2002)

Harry Frankfurt, "Reply to T. M. Scanlon", in S. Buss and L. Overton, eds., *Contours of Agency: Essays on Themes from Harry Frankfurt* (MIT Press, 2002)

Dennis Stampe, "The Authority of Desire", *The Philosophical Review* 96, 3 (1987): 335-381

Michael Smith, "The Humean Theory of Motivation", *Mind* 96, 381 (1987): 36-61

R. Jay Wallace, "How to Argue about Practical Reason", *Mind* 99 (1990): 355-85

David Sobel and David Copp, "Against Direction of Fit Accounts of Belief and Desire", *Analysis* 61, 1 (2001): 44-53

J. David Velleman, "The Guise of the Good", *Nous* 26, 1 (1992): 3-26

Stephen Darwall, "Reasons, Motives, and the Demands of Morality: An Introduction", in [MDP]

Bernard Williams, "Internal and External Reasons", in Ross Harrison, ed., *Rational Action*, (Cambridge University Press, 1979), reprinted in [MDP]

Christine Korsgaard, "Skepticism about Practical Reason", *The Journal of Philosophy* 83, 1 (1986): 5-25, reprinted in [MDP]

J. David Velleman, "The Possibility of Practical Reason", *Ethics* (July, 1996): 694-726

Derek Parfit, "Normativity", in Russ Shafer-Landau, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford/Clarendon Press, 2006)