

Meta-ethics: Values, Motivations, Reasons
Room 7395 Monday 2.00-4.00 Spring 2020 Miranda Fricker (C)
Office Hours: Just email me and we'll fix a time

NOTE March 21st In light of the Corona virus situation and the fact that our class discussions must now all be online, I think it appropriate to add some flexibility to the assessment for this course, as follows: Your term paper grades will be *provisional in the first instance*, and anyone whose provisional grade is lower than A- will have the *opportunity to revise their paper in the light of my comments* (which will normally be in track changes on the paper itself – returned to you a week or two after you have submitted it). There is no guarantee your revisions will raise the grade, but be reassured they *cannot* lower it; and my hope is that this extra step of advance feedback will take any assessment anxiety out of our unusually alienated teaching situation☺

Learning Goals

Students will: gain a solid grounding in the key topics in meta-ethics covered week by week; further develop presentational skills, including how to compose a good handout; further cultivate skills of oral discussion (constructive criticism, explaining arguments clearly, articulating different points of view or opposing arguments); cultivate counterpoised virtues of intellectual courage, humility, rigor, honesty, generosity, and imagination; further develop the ability to plan and execute a well-structured philosophical essay; enjoy thinking carefully, critically, and creatively together.

Requirements and Assessment:

(i) Come to class having read at least the two asterisked readings and having made notes on them so that you can participate actively in class.

(ii) Please bring these readings to class with your notes so we can refer back to the texts in our discussions.

(iii) Each registered student must be ready to do one 10-minute presentation on a reading.

(iv) For credit:

Write a 1-2 page plan (mainly bullet points) for your term paper, including bibliography, and email it to me **DEADLINE midnight Friday April 10th [during Spring recess]**, so we can fix a 20-30-minute one-to-one discussion of it to help ensure you have a good basis for your term paper, due **three weeks later**.

(v) For credit:

Write a **Term paper 5000-5500 max words** (incl. any notes, but excl. bibliography, which should be (Name, Date) style with the complete list of references at the end). Please keep footnotes to an absolute minimum. Do NOT exceed the word limit or you may be marked down. **DEADLINE:** email the finished paper to me before **midnight Friday May 1st**. Or if you manage earlier, so much the better☺

All readings available on in our shared dropbox.

Jan 27

1-Moral Responsibility and the Possibility of Doing Otherwise

* Harry Frankfurt 1969 'Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility' *The Journal of Philosophy* 66/23: 829-839

*Helen Steward 2012 'The Metaphysical Presuppositions of Moral Responsibility' *Journal of Ethics* 16: 241-271

Christian List 2014 'Free Will, Determinism, and the Possibility of Doing Otherwise' *Nous* 48(1): 156-178

Daniel Dennett 1984 'I could not have done otherwise—So what?' *The Journal of Philosophy* LXXXI (10):553-67

[For recent book-length developments of Steward's and List's views respectively, see Helen Steward *A Metaphysics For Freedom* (OUP—+Oxf Scholarship Online—esp ch. 2) – an incompatibilist view that advances agential indeterminism; and Christian List *Why Free Will Is Real* (Harvard)—a view that combines indeterminism at agential level with determinism at the physical level].

Feb 3

2-The Unassailability of Moral Responsibility?

*Strawson, P. F. 1962 'Freedom and Resentment' *Proceedings of the British Academy* XLVIII; reprinted in Strawson (2008) *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (Routledge): 1–28

*Susan Wolf 1981 'The Importance of Free Will' *Mind* 90/359: 386-405

Coleen Macnamara 2015 'Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* XC(3) 2015: 546-569

R. Jay Wallace 1994 chapter 2 'Emotions and Expectations' & chapter 3 'Responsibility' from *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* [book that develops 'response-dependent' theory of responsibility from Strawson's 'reactive attitudes and feelings' framework]

Feb 10

3-Responsibility and Holding Responsible

*Gary Watson 1987 'Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme' in Schoeman, ed. *Responsibility, Character, and the Emotions* (Cambridge University Press) 256–286. Reprinted in Watson 2004 *Agency and Answerability* (Oxford University Press): 219–259

*Victoria McGeer and Philip Pettit 2015 ‘The Hard Problem of Responsibility’, D. Shoemaker ed. *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility* Vol. 3

Coleen Macnamara 2011 ‘Holding Others Responsible’ *Philosophical Studies* 152: 81–102

Michael McKenna 1998 ‘The Limits of Evil and the Role of Moral Address’ *The Journal of Ethics* 2: 123–142

Feb 24

4-Holding Responsible in Contexts of Social Inequality

*Vanessa Carbonell 2019 ‘Social Constraints on Moral Address’ *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* XCVIII(1)

*Michael McKenna ‘Power, Social Inequalities, and the Conversational Theory of Moral Responsibility’ *Social Dimensions of Moral Responsibility*, eds. Katrina Hutchison, Catriona Mackenzie, Marine Oshana (2018) [discusses Calhoun 1989 below]

Cheshire Calhoun 1989 ‘Responsibility and Reproach’ *Ethics* 99 (2): 389–406

Marine Oshana 2004 ‘Moral Accountability’ *Philosophical Topics* 32: 255–74

** NO CLASS March 2nd **

March 9

5- Moral Subjectivism and Error Theory

*J. L. Mackie *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* ch. 1

*Hallvard Lillehammer 2004 ‘Moral Error Theory’ *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 104(1): 95-111

Simon Blackburn 1993 ‘Errors and the phenomenology of value’ in Ted Honderich ed. *Morality and Objectivity*; reprinted as essay 8 in *Essays in Quasi-Realism*

Bart Streumer 2017 ‘Why We Really Cannot Believe The Error Theory’ in D. Machuca ed. *Moral Scepticism: New Essays* [See also Streumer’s 2018 book *Unbelievable Errors*]

Richard Rorty 1989 *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* esp chapter 4 ‘Private Irony and Liberal Hope’

March 16 – CANCELLED owing to CUNY-wide Coronavirus precautions

6- Moral Realisms

*John McDowell 1998 'Values and Secondary Qualities' in *Mind, Value, & Reality* (Harvard) [originally published 1985]

*David Enoch 2007 'An outline of an argument for robust metanormative realism' *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* 2: 21-50
[For Enoch's 2011 book-length treatment, see *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism* (OUP)]

Peter Railton 1986 'Moral Realism', *Philosophical Review* 95(2): 163-207

Mark Schroeder 2005 'Realism and Reduction: The Quest for Robustness', *Philosophers' Imprint* 5(1)

Gilbert Harman 1977 ch.1 *The Nature of Morality* (OUP) [attacking realism]

Some precursor monographs to know of:

D. O. Brink 1989 *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (CUP)

Russ Shafer-Landau 2003 *Moral Realism: A Defence* (OUP)

Sabina Lovibond 1983 *Realism and Imagination in Ethics* (OUP)

March 23

7- 'Debunking' Moral Realism

*Sharon Street 2006 'A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value', *Philosophical Studies*, 127: 109-166

*Guy Kahane 2011 'Evolutionary Debunking Arguments' *Nous* 45(1): 103-125

Richard Joyce 2000 'Darwinian Ethics and Error', *Biology and Philosophy* 15, 713-732

David Enoch 2010 'The Epistemological Challenge to Metanormative Realism: How best to understand it, and how to cope with it' *Philosophical Studies* 148(3): 413-438

March 30

8- Kant and Duty's commands

* Immanuel Kant (1785) 'Moving from popular moral philosophy to the metaphysics of morals', ch. 2 of *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* [the CUP version ed. Mary Gregor has v clear Intro by Christine Korsgaard]

(Try to read the whole Groundwork if possible, but in class we'll focus on ch. 2; if you're able to get hold of *Reading Ethics: Selected texts with interactive commentary*, Fricker & Guttenplan (Wiley-Blackwell 2009), I did an introductory chapter on this part of the *Groundwork*.)

* Onora O'Neill (1989) 'Universal laws and ends-in-themselves' in her *Constructions of reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy* pp. 126-144

Barbara Herman (1981) 'On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty' *Philosophical Review* 66/2: 233-250

Christine Korsgaard (1986) 'The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil' *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol. 15, No. 4; 325-349

April 6

9- Intrinsic and Extrinsic Value

* Christine Korsgaard 1983 'Two Distinctions in Goodness' *The Philosophical Review* 92/2: 169-195

* Samuel Scheffler 2011 'Valuing' in R. J. Wallace, R. Kumar, and S. Freeman eds. *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T. M. Scanlon* (OUP)

Thomas Scanlon 1998 'Values' ch.2 of *What We Owe To Each Other* (Harvard)

Harry Frankfurt 1971 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person', *Journal of Philosophy* 68: 5-20; reprinted in Gary Watson ed. *Free Will* (1982)

Michael Smith 1992 'Valuing: Desiring or Believing?' in D. Charles and K. Lennon eds. *Reduction, Explanation, and Realism* (OUP)

Wlodek Rabinowicz & Toni Ronnow-Rasmussen 'A Distinction In Value: Intrinsic and For Its Own Sake' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100/1 (2000): 33-5

Spring recess -- no classes Monday 13th

April 20

10- Moral motivation and moral worth

*Nomy Arpaly 2002 'Moral Worth' *Journal of Philosophy* 99: 223-245

*Paulina Sliwa 2016 'Moral Worth and Moral Knowledge' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 93(2): 393-418

Julia Markovits 2010 'Acting for the Right Reasons' *Philosophical Review* 119(2): 201-242

For background re the 'moral fetishism' charge against externalism:

Michael Smith 1994 ch. 3 'The Externalist Challenge' of *The Moral Problem*

Hallvard Lillehammer 1996 'Smith on Moral Fetishism' *Analysis* 57(3): 187-195

April 27

11- Reasons for action—'internal' vs 'external' interpretations

* Bernard Williams 1981 'Internal and External Reasons' in *Moral Luck*

* Michael Smith (1995) 'Internal Reasons' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. LV No. 1: 109-131

John McDowell (1995) 'Might there be external reasons?' in *World, Mind and Ethics: Essays on the Ethical Philosophy of Bernard Williams* eds. J. A. J. Altham and R. Harrison (see also Williams' reply at the back). Re-printed in McDowell's collected papers *Mind, Value, and Reality* (1998).

Kate Manne (2014) 'Internalism About Reasons: Sad But True?' *Philosophical Studies* 167: 89-117

Historical background – Hume's view that only a *passion* can produce an action:

David Hume (1739/40) *Treatise of Human Nature*:

Book II Part iii Section 3 'The influencing motive of the will'

May 4

12- 'Loving attention' and the Reasons of Love

*Iris Murdoch 1970 'The Idea of Perfection', in *The Sovereignty of Good* (Routledge) pp. 1-45

*Harry Frankfurt The Reasons of Love chapter 2 'On Love, And Its Reasons'

Bernard Williams 1981 'Persons, Character, and Morality' in *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980*

Lawrence Blum 1986 'Iris Murdoch and the Domain of the Moral' *Philosophical Studies* 50(3):343-367

Martha Nussbaum 1985 'Finely Aware and Richly Responsible: Moral Awareness and the Moral Task of Literature, *Journal of Philosophy* 82: 516-529

May 11

13- Moral Relativism—For and Against

* David Velleman 2013 ch. 4 ‘Doables’ and ch. 5 ‘Foundations for Moral Relativism’ of *Foundations For Moral Relativism* (Open Book)

<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/reader/416#page/114/mode/2up>

* David B. Wong 1995 ‘Pluralistic Relativism’ *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 20: 378-399

Miranda Fricker 2012 ‘Styles of Moral Relativism’, in Roger Crisp ed. *Oxford Handbook of the History of Ethics* (OUP)

Mary Midgely 2007 ‘Trying Out One’s New Sword’ in Shafer-Landau (first ed. only), *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*; originally from 1981 *Heart and Mind: The Varieties of Moral Experience*

Gilbert Harman 1975 ‘Moral Relativism Defended’, *Philosophical Review* 84: 3-22. Reprinted in Harman, *Explaining Value* (OUP) [Note: for his later and more developed view, opposed by Thomson’s objectivism, see Gilbert Harman & Judith Jarvis Thomson 1996 *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* (Blackwell) – each authors one half of the book.]

Two relativisms one might rather classify as moral pluralism (and in Williams case, historicism):

Bernard Williams 1981 ‘The Truth In Relativism’ *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980* (CUP)

David B. Wong 2006 *Natural Moralities: A Defense of Pluralistic Relativism* (OUP)

May 18

14-Moral Progress

*Michele Moody-Adams 1999 ‘The Idea of Moral Progress’ *Metaphilosophy* 30(3)

*Elizabeth Anderson ‘The Social Epistemology of Morality: Learning from the Forgotten History of the Abolition of Slavery’ in M. Brady and M. Fricker eds. *The Epistemic Life of Groups: Essays in the Epistemology of Collectives* (OUP 2016)

Joseph Raz 1994 ‘Moral Change and Social Relativism’ in *Cultural Pluralism and Moral Knowledge* eds. Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred Miller Jr, Jeffrey Paul

David Wong 1992 ‘Coping with Moral Conflict and Ambiguity’, *Ethics* 102: 763-84