

Philosophy 848 – Seminar in Moral Psychology

Fall 2010 - Dan Moller

This seminar will examine variations on the “strangers to ourselves” theme in moral psychology and epistemology. The idea is that key aspects of our psychology are in conflict or are closed off to us, raising questions of self-command, weakness of will, and moral responsibility. We will also examine public policy implications, such as whether paternalism is justified by our ignorance of what we want, and whether the law is right to ask jurors and prosecutors often to ignore their evidence.

Requirements: 20 page paper, due Jan. 30 & brief presentation of paper proposal.

Texts: Nomi Arpaly, *Unprincipled Virtue*, Richard Holton, *Willing, Wanting, Waiting*

Articles are available on Google scholar (login as Maryland > UMCP under preferences and use “get at UMCP”), unless indicated by an “(e)” in which case they’re on e-reserves on Blackboard (elms.umd.edu > log in > phil 848 > course tools > reserves.

Self-command

1. **Introduction** (8/31)
2. **Acting against your best judgment** (9/7): Arpaly 1-2, Wilson “Knowing Who We Are” (e)
3. **Moral worth & quality of will** (9/14): Arpaly 3, Stocker “Desiring the Bad”
4. **Autonomy and blame** (9/21): Arpaly 4-5, Watson “Responsibility and the Limits of Evil” (e)
5. **Intention, belief and choice** (9/28): Holton 1-3, Wilson “Knowing Why” (e)
6. **Weakness of will** (10/5): Holton 4, Watson “Skepticism about Weakness of Will,” Schelling “The Intimate Quest for Self-command”
7. **Addiction and temptation** (10/12): Holton 5-6, Watson “Excusing Addiction,” “Disordered Appetites” (e)
8. **Rationality** (10/19): Holton 7-8, Bratman “Toxin, Temptation and the Stability of Intention” (e)

Knowledge

9. **Deferring to peers, experts and crowds** (10/26): Christensen “Disagreement,” Cowen & Hanson “Are Disagreements Honest?” Hanson “Terrorism Futures” Hanson “Shall We Vote on Values But Bet on Beliefs?”

Optional: Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds* chs. 1-2 (e)

10. **Should the law ignore the evidence I?** (11/2): Shoeman “Statistical vs. Direct Evidence,” Schauer “In Defense of Rule-based Evidence Law,” Gigerenzer “How to Make Cognitive Illusions Disappear”

Optional: Thompson and Schumann “Interpretations of Statistical Evidence”

11. **Should the law ignore the evidence II?** (11/9): Tribe “Trial by Mathematics” (e), Rawling “The Case of the Bayesian Juror,” Laudan “Elementary Epistemic Arithmetic”

Optional: Faigman and Baglioni “Bayes’ Theorem in the Trial Process”

Happiness

12. **Hedonism and its enemies** (11/16) – Haybron “Happiness and Pleasure,” Crisp “Hedonism Reconsidered,” Feldman “Whole Life Satisfaction Concepts of Happiness”

13. **Miswanting and the hedonic treadmill** (11/23): Gilbert “Miswanting” (e), Haybron “The Pursuit of Unhappiness,” Milgram “What is the Use of Utility?” Moller “Draft of Paper He Should Probably Write”

Optional: Wilson “Introspection and Self-narratives” (e), “Looking Outward to Know Ourselves” (e)

14. **Irrational preferences and public policy** (11/30): Elster “Sour Grapes,” Sunstein and Thayer “Libertarian Paternalism”

15. **Presentations** (12/7)

Papers due January 30