

International Conference

# Owning our Emotions

## Emotion, Authenticity, and the Self

Institute of Philosophy, School of Advanced Studies  
Senate House, University of London  
21-22 September 2016

Invited and Selected Speakers:

**Professor Monika Betzler**

Philosophy, Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, München

**Professor Kristján Kristjánsson**

Philosophy, University of Birmingham

**Professor Denis McManus**

Philosophy, University of Southampton

**Dr Carolyn Price**

Philosophy, The Open University

**Professor Christine Straehle**

Philosophy, University of Ottawa

**Professor Fabrice Teroni**

Philosophy, University of Geneva

**Mr Daniel Vanello**

Philosophy, University of Warwick

**Dr Jonathan Webber**

Philosophy, University of Cardiff

**Professor Justin White**

Philosophy, Brigham Young University

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# Conference Programme

Wednesday, 21 September 2016

*Registration and refreshments (from 10:30 am)*

11:00–12:15 Session 1 (Chair: Carolyn Price)

Fabrice Teroni: Emotions and the self

*Lunch*

13:00–14:15 Session 2 (Chair: Manuel Dries)

Kristján Kristjánsson: Awe and self-transcendence

14:15–15:30 Session 3 (Chair: Sophie-Grace Chappell)

Christine Straehle: Vulnerability and love

*Break and Refreshments*

15:45–17:00 Session 4 (Chair: Manuel Dries)

Jonathan Webber: Authentic and inauthentic shame

17:00–18:15 Session 5 (Chair: Carolyn Price)

Daniel Vanello: Emotions, value, and pursuit of the self

*Conference Dinner*

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Thursday, 22 September 2016

*Arrival and refreshments (from 9:30 am)*

10:00–11:15 Session 6 (Chair: Manuel Dries)

Denis McManus: Norms, narratives, and all things considered:  
three Heideggerian models for the owning of  
emotions

11:15–12:30 Session 7 (Chair: Sophie-Grace Chappell)

Carolyn Price: Authenticity: emotions, values, and likes

*Lunch*

13:15–14:30 Session 8 (Chair: Manuel Dries)

Justin White: Self-conception, self-ignorance, and authenticity

14:30–15:45 Session 9 (Chair: Carolyn Price)

Monika Betzler: Inverse akrasia: a case for reasoning about one's  
emotions

*End of official programme*

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# Titles and Abstracts

## (1) Professor Fabrice Teroni

*Title:* Emotions and the self

*Abstract:* We are prone to think that the emotions someone undergoes are somehow revelatory of the sort of person she is, and philosophers working in the field have frequently insisted upon the existence of an intimate relation between a subject and her emotions. But how intimate is the relation between emotions and the self? I first explain why interesting claims about this relation must locate it at the level of emotional intentionality. Given that emotions have a complex intentional structure—they are about an object and evaluate it—this means that the relation between emotions and the self may take different shapes. My discussion focuses on three different claims about this relation. According to the first claim, all emotions are about the subject who undergoes them. The second claim appeals to a more moderate form of reflexivity and affirms that emotions always feature a representation of other psychological states of the subject. The third understands the relation between emotions and the self in evaluative terms: emotions are said to evaluate relationally, one of the terms of this relation being the subject who undergoes it. I argue that all three claims apply, at best, only to a limited subset of emotions and that they must sometimes give way to claims that do not presuppose any intentional connection between emotions and the self.

## (2) Professor Kristján Kristjánsson

*Title:* Awe and self-transcendence

*Abstract:* While interest in the emotion of awe has surged in psychology (especially positive psychology), philosophers have yet to devote a single self-standing article to awe's conceptual contours and moral standing. The present presentation aims to rectify this imbalance and begin to make up for the unwarranted philosophical neglect. In order to do so, awe is given the standard Aristotelian treatment to uncover its conceptual contours and moral relevance. Aristotelianism typically provides the most useful entry point to 'size up' any emotion—more problematically here, however, as Aristotle did not himself explicitly identify awe or other self-transcendent emotions. The presentation critiques and proposes to improve upon existing psychological conceptual analyses of awe; probes the question why Aristotle ignored it; addresses an often-presumed link between awe and humility, which bears on its moral status; and finally explores some educational ramifications of the emerging account.

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### (3) Dr Christine Straehle

*Title:* Vulnerability and love

*Abstract:* To be vulnerable is often taken to be the opposite of being autonomous. In this paper, I propose instead that vulnerability in love be self-constituting, i.e. that it may help us foster our sense of self. I examine the source of vulnerability in love and argue that vulnerability may arise because our sense of self in love depends on another. But if we are recognized by the loved one, then vulnerability is not opposite to sense of self. Instead, it can be part of the constitutive framework, along which we constitute ourselves. Vulnerability can help us find principles guiding our lives. The fact that we are dependent on another for the realization of our self-constituting principles, I argue, is not unique to vulnerability and love as human emotions. Instead, we simply experience the *End of willing* just like with all other conceptions we adopt for ourselves. To love, then, and even when it inflicts vulnerability, is one of the acts of self-creation we engage in.

### (4) Dr Jonathan Weber

*Title:* Authentic and inauthentic shame

*Abstract:* I argue for two claims about the evaluative structure of the feeling of shame. First, shame is inherently individual. There is nothing that another person can do to make a feeling of shame no longer warranted. Guilt can be expunged by the forgiveness of the wronged person, which makes guilt that was warranted no longer warranted. There is no equivalent of this in the case of shame. In this sense, shame is inherently individual, whereas guilt is inherently interpersonal. Second, the evaluative content of a feeling of shame does not necessarily embody a judgment that the person feeling the shame would endorse. It can rather embody a judgment that the person has made often in the past but no longer agrees with, or that reflects an evaluative outlook common in the person's surroundings now or in the past, or a combination of these. Where the feeling of shame manifests the individual's currently endorsed evaluative outlook, it is authentic. Where it does not, it is inauthentic. I conclude that while authentic shame is a spur to moral self-improvement, inauthentic shame can be a source of great psychiatric distress.

### (5) Daniel Vanello

*Title:* Emotions, value and the pursuit of the self

*Abstract:* In Sartre's early writings we find a close relationship between the themes of emotional experience, value, and the pursuit of a sense of self. These three themes have been interpreted as constituting Sartre's rampant use of invention in our relationship with the world. The agent chooses his Self by creating value and projecting it onto the world. In this paper I offer a revisionist interpretation of these themes in Sartre according to which emotional experiences are not our means of projecting value onto the world but rather are potential disclosures of value. I argue that once we recognise the disclosing account of emotional experience and value, the pursuit of the Self

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need not be read anymore as the locus of the creation of value but rather as the process by which we shape our sensitivity to the evaluative features of the world.

## (6) Professor Denis McManus

*Title:* Norms, narratives and all things considered: three Heideggerian models for the owning of emotions

*Abstract:* Despite the prominence in his early work of the notion of *Eigentlichkeit*—‘authenticity’ or more literally ‘ownedness’—and his insistence that emotion is crucial to our understanding of the world around us, Heidegger devotes little attention to the notion of owning one’s emotions. This paper will explore how we might remedy that lack by bringing those two prominent themes together.

I will consider three different construals of Heideggerian authenticity. Despite their various interpretive and philosophical virtues, my discussion of the first two construals—which stress ideas of owned norms and narratives—will focus on the objection that the authentic individual thus construed is disengaged from the demands of the situation in which she finds herself. I argue that this objection can be met. But this response reveals a further feat that authenticity on those construals presupposes and one which might itself instead be seen as capturing what authenticity is: according to this third construal, the authentic individual judges her situation all things considered.

Viewed in the light of Heidegger’s depiction of emotional openness to the world as making judgments of that world possible, these three construals of authenticity yield three models of just what owned emotion might be; and my final concern will be to explore the plausibility of these models and how that sheds light back on the plausibility of those construals.

## (7) Dr Carolyn Price

*Title:* Authenticity: emotions, values and likes

*Abstract:* What does it mean for an emotional response to be authentic—that is, a true reflection of the self? Two different approaches can be found in the existing literature: on one account, inauthentic emotional responses are emotional responses that are manufactured by the subject; on the other, an authentic emotion is one that is rooted in the subject’s evaluative beliefs or commitments. I argue that the first type of account fails, while the second—though it appropriate for some types of emotion—does not apply to a significant class of emotions, including sorrow, anxiety and happiness. I argue that, for these emotions, authentic responses are responses that are rooted—not in the subject’s values—but in their likes and dislikes, and I consider what this might imply concerning the boundaries and unity of the self.

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## (8) Justin White

*Title:* Self-conception, self-ignorance and authenticity

*Abstract:* The notions of identification and externality play important roles in discussions of agency and moral responsibility. The possibility of self-ignorance, however, should make us wary of the agent's own experience of identifying with a passion and of her self-conception in determining where she stands as an agent and whether actions are truly her own. I draw on Agnieszka Jaworska's distinction between subjective identification and objective identification to explain the limitations of self-conceptions, and on Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to explain the phenomenological underpinnings of agential self-ignorance. On Heidegger's account, because our primary self-awareness comes through our practical engagement with the world, our introspective assessments of ourselves may be unreliable. But at the same time, given this priority of engaged coping, whether or not I consciously take ownership for the emotions I experience, there is an important sense in which these emotions are already very much my own.

## (9) Professor Monika Betzler

*Title:* Inverse akrasia: a case for reasoning about one's emotions

*Abstract:* So-called "inverse akrasia" is meant to describe cases in which an agent acts against his or her better judgment out of an emotion. Such cases of akrasia are "inverse" as violating one's best judgment and acting according to one's countervailing emotions proves in the end to be the right thing to do.

Cases of inverse akrasia challenge the widespread assumption that akrasia is always irrational. This insight has motivated philosophers to draw further lessons from cases of inverse akrasia. They maintain that (i) best judgments are nothing but beliefs (Arpaly), and that (ii) emotions can track reasons equally well and even lead to a particular kind of understanding (Brady).

This seems a radical move, however. The first view gives up on any plausible idea of agential guidance. The second view does not have the resources to distinguish between emotions that are reason-tracking and those that aren't. In light of this diagnosis two further proposals have been made, both of which have problems of their own. One proposal tries to account for the agent's guidance by implementing a kind of regulative control (Jones). The other proposal introduces a criterion that is supposed to help distinguish between reason-tracking emotions and irrational emotions: only those emotions that cohere with a person's character are reason-tracking (Audi).

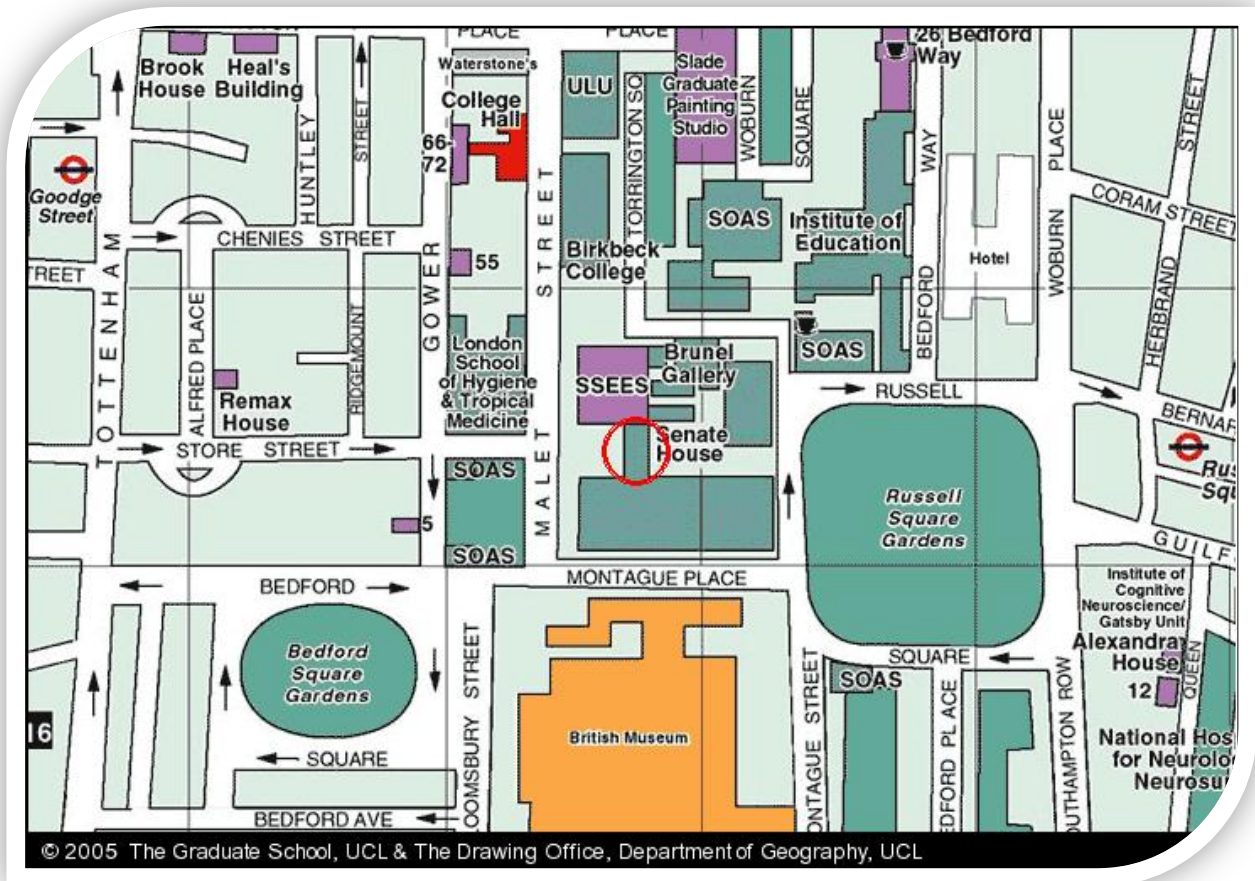
But whatever view has been defended, little work has been devoted to the question of what cases of inverse akrasia can teach us, especially with respect to our reasoning. In this paper I will argue that inverse akrasia is a case that invites the agent to reconsider her best judgment. My aim is to examine how we can reason about our emotions (and thus "own" them) so as to distinguish reason-tracking emotions from irrational emotions, and come to transform our best judgment on the basis of our reasoned emotions.

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