

# Reid Blackman

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## Areas of Specialization

Ethics (esp. history and Meta-ethics), Philosophy of Mind (esp. emotions), Nietzsche

## Areas of Competence

Environmental Ethics, Biomedical Ethics, Social & Political Philosophy

## Employment

**Colgate University**, Visiting Assistant Professor, January 2009 – May 2011

**Courses taught:** Meta-ethics, Practical Reason, Philosophy of Mind, Ethics, Environmental Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy, Introduction to Philosophy

**Misc.:** Academic Advisor for eleven students, chair and/or member of eight honors committees, organizer of undergraduate reading group on biomedical ethics, faculty advisor for undergraduate philosophy club, faculty advisor for Ethics Bowl team

## Education

**University of Texas-Austin**, Ph.D. Philosophy, January 2009

## Dissertation

### **Cultural Aristotelianism: An Explication and Defense**

ABSTRACT: Aristotelians like Foot, Thompson, and Hursthouse argue that the goodness and badness of people, actions, and lives, is grounded in facts about "the forms of life" characteristic of human beings, understood in a biological sense. I show that this program cannot succeed. But, I argue, if we appeal instead to facts about non-biological, or cultural, kinds, e.g. mother, philosopher, and citizen, then the general Aristotelian approach can be vindicated. I develop Cultural Aristotelianism, a view according to which evaluative judgments are grounded in facts about cultural kinds: a person might be a good mother, bad citizen, good philosopher, and so on. I go on to show that Cultural Aristotelianism also provides an account of the semantics of moral terms by way of an analysis of the meaning of 'good moral agent'. (Please see the extended abstract, below).

Committee chairs: Jonathan Dancy, John Deigh

Teaching at UT: Sole Instructor for Social and Political Philosophy, Ethics, Introduction to Philosophy. Teaching Assistant for Contemporary Moral Problems, Philosophy of Law, Epistemology and Ethics, Philosophy of Mind, World Philosophy.

**Northwestern University**, M.A. Philosophy, 2003

**Cornell University**, B.A. Philosophy, 2001

## Publications

- "Nietzsche's 'Interpretation' in the *Genealogy*," *The British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 18 (4) 2010: 693-711.
- Review of [The Nature of Intrinsic Value](#), by Michael Zimmerman, *Ethics*, January 2008.

**Papers Under Review** (abstracts and drafts can be found at [www.reidblackman.com](http://www.reidblackman.com))

- Meta-Ethical Realism with Good of a Kind
- Two Varieties of Aristotelianism
- What is an Ideal?
- Intrinsic Value without Final Value
- In Defense of Cognitivism about the Emotions
- Intentionality and Compound Accounts of the Emotions

**Professional Service:** Referee for *The Journal of Value Inquiry*

**Awards and Fellowships**

- Cogburn Philosophical Prize, Essay Competition, UT-Austin, 2005
- First-Year Fellowship, Northwestern University, 2001

**Presentations**

“Comments on Travis Rieder’s ‘Why Parity Arguments Cannot Save Normative Realism’

- Pacific Meeting, APA, April 2011

“Nonconceptual Content and the Philosophy of Emotion”

- Colgate University, October 2010

“What Should We Learn from Nietzsche’s Ethics?”

- Pacific Meeting, APA, April 2010.

“Rousseau and the Universal Healthcare Debate”

- Northern Michigan University, April 2010

“Meta-Ethical Realism with Good of a Kind”

- SUNY-Oneonta, April 2009

“Two Kinds of Goodness”

- UT-Austin Graduate Colloquium, November 2007

Reply to Ken Gemes’s “Nietzsche on Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual”

- Conference on Nietzsche, UT-Austin, February 2007

“Intrinsic and Extrinsic Final Value”

- UT-Austin Graduate Colloquium, January 2007

“Non-Instrumentally Valuing Persons”

- UT-Austin Graduate Colloquium, March 2006

“Philosophy of Emotion and Neurobiology”

- Neurobiology Graduate Student Conference, UT-Austin, 2004

**Extra-Academic Philosophy Venture**

- Co-Founder, Co-President, Co-Writer, *Let’s Think About It!*, 1998-present
  - A non-profit organization that writes and sells books for children, teaching how to think about issues of ethical import from a variety of perspectives (grades 2-8).
  - Website: <http://www.intellikit.com>

## Graduate Courses Taken (\* indicates the class was audited)

### University of Texas-Austin

- Meta-ethics, John Deigh, Fall 2007\*
- Practicality of Moral Judgment, Jonathan Dancy, Spring 2007\*
- Ethics in the Twentieth Century, Jonathan Dancy, Spring 2006\*
- Philosophy of Emotion, John Deigh and Robert Solomon, Fall 2004\*
- Nietzsche and Foucault, Brian Leiter, Fall 2004\*
- Logic, Nicholas Asher, Spring 2004
- Moral Psychology, John Deigh, Spring 2004
- Concept of Rights, David Braybrooke, Spring 2004
- Virtue Ethics, Tara Smith, Fall 2003
- Nietzsche and Ethics, Brian Leiter, Fall 2003
- Ontological Commitment, Joshua Dever, Fall 2003

### Northwestern University

- Aesthetics, Richard Wollheim, Spring 2003
- The Self (Psychology department), Wendi Gardner, Spring 2003
- Hegel's Philosophy of Right II, Terry Pinkard, Spring 2003
- Hegel's Philosophy of Right I, Terry Pinkard, Winter 2003
- German Philosophy from Kant to Nietzsche, Terry Pinkard, Winter 2003
- Virtue Ethics, Richard Kraut, Winter 2003
- Expressivism and Sensibility Theory, John Deigh, Fall 2002
- Philosophy of Mind, Ariela Lazar, Fall 2002
- Multiculturalism and Constitutional Limits, Jurgen Habermas, Fall 2002
- Reasons for Action, Jonathan Dancy, Spring 2002
- Modern Philosophy, Bob Gooding-Williams, Spring 2002
- Kant's Ethics II, Derrick Darby, Spring 2002
- Kant's Ethics I, Derrick Darby, Winter, 2002
- Heidegger, Cristina LaFont, Winter 2002
- Ethical Theory, John Deigh, Winter 2002
- Philosophy of Language, Cristina LaFont, Fall 2001
- Philosophy of Emotion, John Deigh, Fall 2001
- Ancient Philosophy, Richard Kraut, Fall 2001

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

### Cultural Aristotelianism: An Explication and Defense

I think we ought to be Aristotelians about ethics, but not because people are members of a biological kind, human being, in which there are implicit standards for what counts as a good member of the kind. Instead, I think evaluations of people and their lives are grounded in people's memberships in various non-biological kinds, e.g. philosopher, citizen, and moral agent, where these evaluations are truth evaluable and at least sometimes true; I am an Aristotelian cognitive realist.

Before defending this view in my dissertation, I try to weaken the grip other views about the good might have on us. First, I argue, along with Hume, Peter Geach, J.L. Mackie, Richard Kraut, Richard Joyce, and others, that we ought to be anti-realists about the property of being good simpliciter (or good "full stop", "period" or "sans phrase"), and second, I argue against Philippa Foot's, Michael Thompson's, and Rosalind Hursthouse's view that we can ground evaluations of people and their lives in their membership in the biological kind 'human being'. From the criticisms I offer I draw two important lesson: i) claims about something being a good member of its kind does not give rise to the skeptical worries we have about good simpliciter, and ii) our evaluations of people and their lives often concern their memberships in non-biological kinds, or as I prefer to put it, *cultural kinds*. The challenge, then, is this: to

conceive of what it is to be a good person, and what it is to lead a good life, in terms of people's memberships in cultural kinds and *not at all* in terms of what is good simpliciter. The core of my dissertation is concerned with illustrating how this can be done.

As regards how to conceive of the goodness of a life, I argue as follows. First, people are members of various cultural kinds, sometimes voluntarily and sometimes involuntarily, and people attain various levels of goodness as members, e.g. good philosopher, bad citizen, etc. Second, one is not only a member of a cultural kind, but lives the life of a member of that kind, and that life may be a good or bad one of that kind. Lastly, a person's life is, in large part, a set of different cultural kinds of lives; one lives not just a philosopher's life, but a philosopher's, parent's, thrill-seeker's life, and one's life goes well to the extent one lives a good life of each of the kinds of which one is a member, viz. by achieving the ends that are appropriate to members of those kinds. Put differently, it is not the good life of a human being that is of ethical interest – since there is no such thing – but the good life of, for example, a philosopher/citizen/moral agent that is of ethical interest.

As regards how to conceive of the goodness of a person, or as I prefer to put it, the goodness of a person qua moral agent, we may extend the structure of our understanding of 'good philosopher' to 'good moral agent'. We understand that a good-making feature of a philosopher is open-mindedness; open-mindedness is a virtue of a philosopher qua philosopher. More generally, 'philosopher virtue' means 'good-philosopher-making' and refers to those traits that make a philosopher a good one. Similarly, we understand that a good-making feature of a moral agent is being compassionate; being compassionate is a virtue of a moral agent. More generally 'moral virtue' means 'good-moral-agent-making' and refers to those traits that make a moral agent a good one. As with a philosopher, what the moral virtues are is a function of the ends of a moral agent, and what those ends are is a matter of great dispute. In fact, that is exactly the dispute with which normative ethicists are concerned, and it is a virtue of the meta-ethical view I defend that it is neutral as regards what that end is (or what those ends are).

My dissertation concludes with an analysis of what it is to have an ideal, which I take to be a central part of an agent's psychology. I argue that having an ideal is a matter of various facts striking the agent as reasons for action and emotion, where those facts relate to her being a good member of the kinds of which she is a member. Having the ideal of being a good philosopher, for example, involves seeing the fact that studying Plato would sharpen one's philosophical skills as a reason for studying Plato, and having the ideal of being a good moral agent is constituted, in part, by seeing the fact that she is suffering as a reason to help her.

## Academic References

### Ethics and Philosophy of Emotion

- **Jonathan Dancy**, jdancy@mail.utexas.edu
- **John Deigh**, jdeigh@law.utexas.edu
- **Robert Kane**, rkane@uts.cc.utexas.edu
- **Richard Kraut**, rkraut1@northwestern.edu
- **Gary Watson**, gary.watson@ucr.edu

### Nietzsche

- **Maudemarie Clark**, mclark@mail.colgate.edu
- **Brian Leiter**, bleiter@law.utexas.edu
- **Kenneth Gemes**, k.gemes@bbk.ac.uk

### Teaching

- **David McCabe**, dmccabe@colgate.edu
- **David Dudrick**, ddudrick@colgate.edu