

## ***FUNKY CAUSATION***

G4900 *Topics in Early Modern Philosophy: Funky Causation*

Friday, 11:10-12:55, 716 Philo Hall

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Office Hours: (probably T 2:30-5)

**Funky Causation:** There are a number of causal notions in the history of metaphysics and science that differ significantly from contemporary philosophical views. This course is a survey of the most prominent of these “funky” notions. We’ll analyze emanative, immanent, formal, sympathetic, and occasional notions of causation through works by authors like Plotinus, Ficino, Aquinas, Suárez, Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Conway, and Newton.

**Books:** See separate sheet.

**Class Requirements:** Come to class prepared to discuss assigned material. Turn in a total of 16 pp. of philosophically rich analysis. These pages may be submitted in a series of short papers (4 papers of 4 pages, e.g.,) or one long paper. But I must see a plan and/or outline of a long paper project by mid-November.

### **Weekly Schedule of Topics**

Courseworks will contain readings, detailed assignments (update every couple weeks), and additional materials to read. Emails will be sent announcing the added materials. Even if you’re not officially registered, make sure you’re put on Courseworks list.

#### ***9/11 Introduction to Funky Causation***

Topics: A brief history of causation. Causes as inactive things, as active things, as funky things.  
Readings: Some Aristotle, Aquinas, and Seneca, Hume, and Kant (details will be put on Courseworks by Friday, Sept. 4).

#### ***9/18 Methodological Questions about the History of Philosophy***

Topics: what are we doing when we do the history of philosophy, how can we do it well, and why should we do it at all?  
Readings: (1) the Introduction, Chpt. 1 (Charles Taylor), and Chpt. 3 (Richard Rorty) in Richard Rorty, J.B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner, *Philosophy in History* (CUP, 1984); Daniel Garber, “What’s Philosophical about the History of Philosophy,” in *Analytic Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, eds. Tom Sorell and G.A.J. Rogers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005); and Christia Mercer, “Scholarly History of Philosophy: Yes, You Can,” draft for collection w/ OUP.

### **PART I. Emanation, Immanence, and Universal Sympathy**

#### ***9/25 Plotinus and Ficino***

Topics: Original notions of emanation, immanence, sympathy, and funky causal dependence  
Readings: (1) Plotinus’ *Enneads* is a several volume text (not too expensive in the Loeb edition if you are interested!) and available as an e-book. The Essential Plotinus is a good short collection. Read: (a) *Enneads*, Book I, sect. 6 (1-9) [*Essential Plotinus*, pp.33-57] and (b) Book VI, sect. 9 (1-10) [*Essential Plotinus*, pp.72-89]; Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, tba. Also, read (3) Lloyd P. Gerson, “What is Platonism?,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* - Volume 43, Number 3, July 2005, pp. 253-276; and (4) Eyjofur Emilsson, “Emanation and Activity in Plotinus.” Recommended: Mercer, *Leibniz’s Metaphysics*, relevant parts of chpt 5; Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, relevant parts of chpt. 3.

10/2-3 ***Women, Philosophy, and History: Conference Celebrating Eileen O'Neill and her Work***

This conference will take the place of our seminar meeting.

Reading: Eileen O'Neill, "Disappearing Ink: Early Modern Women Philosophers and their Fate in History," *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critique and Reconstruction*, ed. Janet A. Kourany, pp.17-61. For general information, see <http://www.barnard.edu/bcrw/events.htm#oneill>

10/9 ***Spinoza***

VISITOR: Yitzhak Melamed (Johns Hopkins).

Topic: What happens to funky causation in Spinoza.

Reading: *Ethics*, Part I [use Curley translation if possible]; and parts of Short Treatise (tba); and new paper by Melamed (tba).

10/16 ***Anne Conway***

Topics: Emanation and sympathy

Readings: Conway's *Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophies*, esp. Bks. 1-5; Mercer's "Anne Conway and the Metaphysics of Pluralism."

10/23 TBA [There may not be a seminar this week; we'll reschedule it for later in the semester]

10/30 ***Malebranche***

VISITOR: Steve Nadler (U. Wisconsin, Madison)

Topics: Immanent causation and Malebranche's arguments for occasionalism

Readings: tba

**PART 2. Formal Causation**

11/6 ***Aristotelians, ancient, scholastic, and early modern***

Topics: Formal causation in Aristotelianism, from ancient to Leibniz.

Readings: Aristotle, Aquinas, Suarez, and Leibniz (tba).

Robert Pasnau, "Form, Substance, and Mechanism," *Phil Review*, Vol. 113, No. 1; Pasnau, chpt 4 of new book on scholasticism; Tad Schmaltz, *Descartes on Causation* (tba); Dennis Des Chene, *Physiologia* (tba).

11/13 ***Spinoza***

VISITOR: Karolina Huebner (U. of Toronto)

Topic: What formal causation becomes in Spinoza

Reading: *Ethics*, Part I (including Appendix); and Huebner, "On the Significance of Formal Cause in Spinoza's Philosophy;" other readings tba.

11/20 ***Newton***

VISITOR: Andrew Janiak (Duke University)

Topics: Emanation in Newton and the denial of formal causation

Reading: Newton's *De Gravitatione* in Newton, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Janiak. New article by Janiak, tba.

11/27: Thanksgiving Recess

12/4 ***Leibniz and Preestablished Harmony***

Topics: Leibniz on emanation, formal, sympathetic, and immanent causation  
Readings: tba

12/11 *Students' Choice: What should we do for a finale?*