

The Role of Emotion in Rational Decision-Making.

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Abstract

Within philosophy of emotion, there has been the development of a pro-emotion consensus that claims emotion plays a positive and important role within decision-making. It has been suggested that the pro-emotion consensus is replacing 'traditional' views of emotion which claim emotion is disruptive to rationality and is often the cause of irrational behaviour; claims which appear to be supported by empirical evidence.

In this thesis I will be examining several pro-emotion theories and historical theories of emotion. I will argue that the suggestion that all historical theories of emotion are 'anti-emotion' theories is incorrect and fails to take into account the many differences between historical accounts. In fact, claims made by some of these historical theories are not unlike those made by some pro-emotion accounts; the view that emotion is disruptive to rationality is limited to a small number of historical theories.

Although all pro-emotion theories agree that emotion is necessary for decision-making, there are differences between accounts regarding the exact function emotion serves. I will argue that perceptual pro-emotion theories provide the best explanation of the role of emotion and of emotionally-driven irrational behaviour. I aim to show that the claims made by these perceptual theories and (some) historical theories are compatible and when we combine the insights of these accounts we have a comprehensive explanation of the role of emotions within rational decision-making, which can account for emotionally driven irrational behaviour and still maintain that emotions are necessary for decision-making.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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