

## Employment

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Since 2022                      Postdoctoral Researcher in the Scientific Assessments, Ethics and Public Policy working group and a member of the Rivet Project at the Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change in Berlin, Germany

## Education

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Since 2018                      PhD, University of Cambridge, History and Philosophy of Science  
Topic: Why we need to talk about preferences: A federalist proposal  
Supervisor: Dr. Anna Alexandrova

Spring 2020                      Visitor, Carnegie Mellon University, Department of Philosophy  
Host: Prof. Kevin Zollman

2016 - 2018                      Master of Arts, University of Bayreuth, Philosophy and Economics  
GPA: 1.3 (1= highest, 5 = lowest)  
First ranked graduate of my cohort

Spring 2016                      Semester at EIPE, Erasmus University of Rotterdam

2012 - 2016  
2014                                  Bachelor of Arts, University of Bayreuth, Philosophy and Economics  
Exchange Semester, Erasmus University Rotterdam  
GPA: 1.7 (1= highest, 5 = lowest)

## Areas of Specialization

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Philosophy of Economics, Philosophy of Social Science, Philosophy of Cognitive Science, Game and Social Choice Theory

## Areas of Competence

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General Philosophy of Science, Philosophy and Public Policy, Meta-Ethics

## PhD Outline

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I argue that, contrary to the appearances of unity, economists are highly disunified in their understanding of central concepts of choice- and game theory, namely, preferences and beliefs. Even though 'preference' is arguably the most central concept in economics and the discipline is very explicit about the structural assumptions that preferences are supposed to satisfy, there is neither an explicit definition of the concept in economic textbooks nor much of a current debate in the discipline. Nevertheless, the last few years have seen the emergence of several views by philosophers of economics concerning what preferences in economics really are (e.g., judgmentalism, various strands of revealed preferences theory). Trying to defend one such story

is, in my view, a mistake. Instead, I propose that we should acknowledge that there is significant disunity about concepts like preferences and beliefs in economics, and that explicating this disunity cannot only help us account for important controversies at the forefront of economic research, but also point us towards potential resolutions.

As a first step towards my aim, I demonstrate that the various grand narratives about “what preferences in economics really are” fail to account for substantial contributions and practices in economics. I then argue that this is to be expected as only a minimal conception of preferences holds the federation of economics together. This minimal conception is usually enriched with further implicit assumptions that differ across various research programs and are tailored to the specific agendas of the research programs in which they are employed. One of my central claims is that explicating and appraising these implicit assumptions will — in contrast to how the debate currently proceeds — allow philosophers of science to contribute substantially to the progress of economics.

The thesis supports this claim by looking in detail at i) the disagreements concerning what kind of experiments microeconomics needs and ii) the recent controversy about preference purification in behavioral welfare economics. Concerning the first debate, I argue that proponents of the *heuristics-and-bias* program usually put internalist restrictions on the constituents of preferences, while proponents of *experimental economics* in the tradition of Vernon Smith permit agents' environments to play a crucial role in the constitution of their preferences. Regarding the second debate, I argue that disentangling different substantial notions of rationality, which go beyond its technical meaning in economics, can help us account for the vastly different assessments of the plausibility of preference purification in behavioral welfare economics. Turning back to the big picture, my discussion of i) and ii) highlights that economics has more to gain from an explication of the implicit assumptions about choice and game-theoretic concepts made by concrete research programs than from overreaching narratives about "what preferences really are."

## Publications and Manuscripts

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### Journal Articles

- Beck, L. (forthcoming). The Econ within or the Econ above? On the plausibility of preference purification. *Economics & Philosophy*.
- Beck, L., & Jahn, M. (2021). Normative Models and Their Success. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 51(2), 123-150.
- Beck, L., & Grayot, J. D. (2021). New functionalism and the social and behavioral sciences. *European Journal for Philosophy of Science*, 11(4), 1-28.

### Other Publications

- Beck, L., & Alexandrova, A. (2019). *Measuring utility: from the marginal revolution to behavioral economics*: by Ivan Moscati, Oxford studies in history of economics, New York, Oxford University Press, 2018, 352 pages, ISBN: 9780199372775. *Journal of Economic Methodology*, 26(4), 380-384.
- Beck, L. (2017). Can economics be a separate science. *Rerum Causae*, 9(2).

## Under review

### · Why We Need to Talk About Preferences: Economic Experiments and the Where-Question

Conditional Accept, resubmitted

Two traditions of experiments in economics are especially prominent, namely cognitive psychology experiments in the heuristics and biases tradition (*H&B-experiments*) and *experimental economics* in the tradition of Vernon Smith. In this paper, I aim to offer a novel reconstruction of the two experimental paradigms that can highlight a plausible source of their pervasive disagreements. Towards this aim, I focus on preferences as one of the most fundamental concepts in economics. I argue that *experimental economics* can be reconstructed as holding that the constituents of preferences can be partially located in agents' environments, while *H&B-experiments* implicitly assume that the constituents of preferences are entirely located within agents' bodies. The paper (i) outlines how my reconstruction can account for the disagreement between the two paradigms, (ii) defends the plausibility of this reconstruction, (iii) and highlights its implications for the debate about the nature of preferences in economics.

### · Dual process theory and the challenges of functional individuation: a philosophy of science perspective

Co-authored with James Grayot and Thijs Heijmeskamp

Despite on-going debates in philosophy and cognitive science, dual process theory (DPT) remains a popular framework for theorizing about human cognition. Its central hypothesis is that the majority of cognitive processing can be subsumed under two types: Type 1 processing is fast, automatic, and reactive, whereas Type 2 processing is slow, controlled, and deliberative. In this paper, we argue that the putative success of this framework is overstated. If DPT has predictive or explanatory power, it is through offering functional descriptions of cognitive phenomena. But functional descriptions require an individuation strategy to identify and demarcate the properties of Type 1 and Type 2 processes. We consider three individuation strategies (i.e., abstraction, reification, fictionalization) and assess the legitimacy of each in relation to DPT's scientific goals. This leads us to the verdict that the most viable route for saving the functional foundations of DPT is to construe Type 1 and Type 2 processes as reifications. We then show that, even under a reificationist interpretation, there remain substantial obstacles for DPT. We take these obstacles to indicate that DPT ultimately lacks a rationale for demarcating Type 1 and Type 2 processes. We conclude by considering alternative justifications, which might salvage DPT as a psychological framework; we consider two such routes (the 'commonsense story' and the 'meta-theory story') and determine both to be untenable.

## Completed Manuscripts

### · Do you believe in deep down?: On two notions of personal values

Co-authored with Marcel Jahn

In this paper, we present a distinction between two conceptions of valuing that has been underappreciated in the extant philosophical literature. These conceptions are based on two different models of what it means to value something. On the first – which we refer to as the surface-model – valuing something is exclusively a matter of having certain behavioral, cognitive, and/or emotional dispositions. In contrast, the second model – which we call the layer-model – assumes that valuing necessarily involves the presence of certain representational mental states underlying those dispositions. Drawing on the recent debate between so-called dispositionalists and psychofunctionalists about the nature of mental states, we a.) outline the two models in proper detail, and b.) point out that they can lead to diverging attributions of valuing to agents. Thereafter, we illustrate that the distinction can be utilized to illuminate several debates in which the concept of valuing plays a central role. In particular we look at i.) the metaethical debate about the correct conceptualization of valuing, ii.) the debate about so-called valuing accounts of

wellbeing, and iii.) the debate about the plausibility of preference laundering in behavioral welfare economics.

- The spectre of revealed preference theory

My aim in this paper is to argue that the recent defenses of revealed preference theory do not withstand scrutiny. Towards this aim I first outline revealed preference theory. I then briefly present the two most common arguments that the received view offers against it. Afterwards, I outline three argumentative strategies for rehabilitating revealed preference theory, and successively rebut each of them.

## Professional Experience

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2021

Organizing and coordinating a successful panel submission for the 2022 Annual meeting of the American Economic Association on the notion of 'mistakes' in behavioural welfare economics (Speakers: Prof. Johanna Thoma (LSE), Prof. Douglas Bernheim (Stanford), Lukas Beck (Cambridge); Chair: Prof. Kate Vredenburg (LSE))

2020

Teaching (full responsibility), University of Bayreuth

- BA Seminar: Preferences and Welfare in Economics (Summer 2020)

Designing and Recording a Podcast with Dr. Anna Alexandrova as supplementary material for her Philosophy of Economics Lecture at the University of Cambridge.

2019-2020

Graduate Assistant of the BSPS Committee

2019

Convener (together with Olesya Bondarenko) of the "Social Epistemology of Science" reading group at HPS Cambridge

Convener (together with Dr. Christopher Clarke) of the "Measuring Wellbeing by Eliciting Preferences?" reading group at CRASSH Cambridge

Since 2018

Supervisor, University of Cambridge

- Epistemology and Metaphysics of Science (Michaelmas 2021, Lent 2022)
- Philosophy and Scientific Practice (Michaelmas and Lent 2018, Michaelmas and Lent 2019)
- Philosophy of Economics (Michaelmas 2018, Michaelmas, Michaelmas 2020)

2018

Organizer of the 2018 Bayreuth Wittgenstein Lectures

Topic: Climate Change and Obligations to future Generations

Lecturer: Prof. Joseph Heath (University of Toronto)

2017

Teaching (full responsibility), University of Bayreuth

- Philosophical Writing (Summer 2017)

2015 - 2018	Teaching Assistant, University of Bayreuth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Introduction to Philosophical Analysis (Winter 2017)</li> <li>· Introduction to Philosophy of Science (Winter 2016)</li> <li>· Introduction to Ethics (Winter 2015)</li> <li>· Introduction to Philosophy of Science (Summer 2015)</li> </ul>
2016 - 2017	Organizer of Think! (International Student Conference in Analytic Philosophy)
February - April 2015	Internship at The Institute for Economic Policy, Cologne
2012 - 2013	Project Manager of Bayreuth Dialogue (Symposium for Philosophy, Economics and Society)

## Talks and Comments

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### Upcoming

- Utility and Circularity (with Isaac Kean)  
- 10th Conference of the European Network for the Philosophy of the Social Sciences, 21-23.09.2022, in Malaga, Spain.
- Do you believe in deep down?: On two notions of personal values  
- 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Gesellschaft für Analytische Philosophie, 12-15.09.2022, in Berlin, Germany.

### Past

- Panel participant "What is a Mistake?"  
- 2022 Annual meeting of the American Economic Association, 7-9.01.2022, in Boston, USA.
- Why we need to talk about preferences!  
- Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association, 11-14.11.2021, in Baltimore, USA.  
- Annual meeting of the British Society for the Philosophy of Science 2020 [cancelled due to Covid-19].
- The Econ within or the Econ above? On the plausibility of preference purification  
- 15th Conference of the International Network for Economic Method, 12-14.11.2021, in Tempe, USA
- Normative Models and their Success (with Marcel Jahn).  
- DGPhil 2021, 05-08.09.2021, in Erlangen, Germany.  
- Philosophy of Social Science Roundtable, 13-15.03.2020, in Atlanta, USA.
- New functionalism and the Social and Behavioral Sciences (with James Grayot).  
- 5th International Economic Philosophy Conference, 23-25.06.2021, in Warsaw, Poland.

- Joint meeting of the Asian Network for the Philosophy of the Social Sciences, the European Network for the Philosophy of the Social Sciences, and the Philosophy of Social Science Roundtable, 04-07.03.2021, in Tokyo, Japan.
- Q&A Session on Normative Models and their Success (with Marcel Jahn).
  - Session 67 of the [Working models reading group](#), 18.06.2021, online.
- On the Dispositional Conception of Preferences.
  - Biennial meeting of the European Philosophy of Science Association, 11-14.09.2019, in Geneva, Switzerland.
  - 14th Conference of the International Network for Economic Method, 19-21.08.2019, in Helsinki, Finland.
  - INEM Summer School - Economic Behaviours: Models, Measurements, and Policies, 30.06-05.07.2019, in Como, Italy.
  - Philosophy of Social Science Roundtable, 12-14.04.2019, in Burlington, USA.
- The Econ above or the Econ within?
  - 8th Conference of the European Network for the Philosophy of the Social Sciences, 28-30.08.2019, in Athens, Greece.
- Comment on “Representing moral choice dispositions: from moral preferences to moral reasons” by Prof. Christian List
  - Preference-based modelling workshop at LSE, 10.11.2018, in London, UK.
- Can Economics be a Separate Science?
  - 5th LSE-Bayreuth Student Philosophy Conference, 11-12.05.2017, in London, UK.

## Funding and Travel Grants

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### Funding

- PhD completion grant of the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge (2021-2022)
- PhD Scholarship of the German Academic Scholarship Foundation (2019-21)
- PhD Scholarship of the Foundation of German Business (sdw) (2018-2019)

### Travel Grants

- Travel grant of King’s College Cambridge for POSS-RT 2019 and POSS-RT 2020
- Travel and accommodation grant of HPS Cambridge for visit at CMU
- Travel grant of the German Academic Scholarship Foundation for EPSA 2019, ENPOSS 2019, INEM 2019
- Travel grant of Young Scholars Initiative for INEM

## Service to the Profession

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### Referring

- Philosophy of Science

### Non-academic work

- Secretary of the King's College Graduate Society (2020)
- Co-organizer of the seminar Mental Health in the Workplace for awardees of the Foundation of German Business (2019)
- Co-Representative of my Master Cohort (2016 - 2018)

## Other Experience

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### Languages

- German (native)
- English (proficient)

### IT Skills

- SciLab (advanced)
- NetLogo (beginner)

Berlin, 12.05.2022