This talk will describe the major themes in our recent book, *Rational Sentimentalism,* and sketch a few of its arguments. The book addresses issues in metaethics, value theory, moral psychology, and the philosophy of emotions.

*Rational Sentimentalism* develops a new theory of what we call ‘sentimental values.’ These values are profoundly important because they set standards for natural emotions that (we claim) are part of human nature. Examples include the funny, the shameful, and the fearsome.

Philosophical discussions of ethics and values tend to focus instead on the broad category of goodness, or value, and on moral categories such as right and wrong. Such discussions neglect the sentimental values, and thereby miss a lot that is important to human beings.

The theory of sentimental value that we defend is sentimentalist because it holds that sentimental values are emotion-dependent—contrary to some prominent accounts on which the emotions respond to independent properties, as disgust might respond to contamination. It is rational in that it appeals to reasons for emotions. The shameful is not whatever *elicits* shame, for example, but what *merits* shame—or, equivalently, what gives one *reasons of fit* to be ashamed. Thus rational sentimentalism requires compatible accounts of the emotions and of emotional fittingness, which make the emotions explanatorily prior to sentimental values but open to rational criticism.

The pluralist theory of sentimental value that we develop holds that all natural emotions, including some morally dubious ones, are sometimes fitting. Hence, the sentimental values conflict with each other and with ideals of virtue, in ways that undermine certain common moralistic assumptions.