

## **Melina Tsapos**

**Title:** "Betting on Conspiracy: A Decision Theoretic Account of the Rationality of Conspiracy Theory Belief"

**Abstract:** The question of the rationality of conspiratorial belief -divides philosophers into mainly two camps. The particularists believe that each conspiracy theory ought to be examined on its own merits. The generalist, by contrast, argues that there is something inherently suspect about conspiracy theories that makes belief in them irrational. Recent empirical findings indicate that conspiratorial thinking is commonplace among ordinary people, which has naturally shifted attention to the particularists. Yet, even the particularist must agree that not all conspiracy belief is rational, in which case she must explain what separates rational from non-rational conspiratorial thinking. In this paper, I contrast three strategies to this end: 1) the probabilistic objectivist, who assesses the objective probability of conspiracies; 2) the subjectivist, who rather focuses on the perspective of the believer, and typically views the decision to believe in a conspiracy as a problem of decision making under risk. Approaches 1) and 2) rely on assessments of the probability of conspiracy which, I argue, limits their applicability. Instead, I explore 3) viewing the problem facing the potential believer as a decision problem under uncertainty about probabilities. I argue, furthermore, that focusing solely on epistemic utilities fails to do justice to the particular character of conspiracy beliefs, which are not exclusively epistemically motivated, and I investigate the rationality of such beliefs under a number of standard decision rules.

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