

EDUCATION

Ph.D.: Philosophy, Brown University (*defense in April 2021*)

Dissertation: *Nothing is Bad, and so is Suffering: A Gentle Critique of Moral Thinking*

Drawing on insights from affective neuroscience, I argue that the 'felt normative force' of our moral commitments is an illusion – but also that suffering's felt *affective* force can take its place: I argue that it's impossible to fully understand the fact that anyone is suffering without intrinsically devaluing it.

Committee: Jamie Dreier (chair), Bernard Reginster, Christopher Hill, Peter Railton (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), and Michael Frank (Brown: Cognitive Neuroscience)

M.Sc.: Cognitive Science, Brown University (*defense in March 2021*)

Thesis: *Negative Affect as Motivational Affordance*

I defend the theory that negative and positive affective valence are realized by a constitutively motivational representational format for the target of attention ('against' or 'for,' respectively), where that way of representing is grounded in its role in the punishment and reward system.

Ph.D. Studies in Philosophy (visiting), University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (Fall 2018)

M.A.: Philosophy, Northern Illinois University (2013)

B.A.: Psychology and Philosophy, University of Notre Dame (2008)

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Areas of specialization – Ethics/Metaethics, Philosophy of Mind, Cognitive Science, Metametaphysics

Areas of competence – Philosophy of Language, Logic, Buddhist Philosophy

PAPERS IN PREPARATION

"Suffering Is Bad" (under review)

"Nothing Is Bad"

"Suffering Sucks"

PRESENTATIONS

"Moral Thinking: Curtains All the Way Down"

Michigan Mind and Moral Psychology Conference, January 2020

"Nothing is Bad"

Michigan Philosophy Graduate Student Working Group, December 2018

"Suffering is Bad, Even if it's Not Mine (or Yours)"

Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress (RoME), August 2018

"Suffering is Bad"

University of Toronto Graduate Conference, May 2018

“An Error Theory for Wittgenstein?”

Wittgensteinian Approaches to Ethics, KU Leuven, September 2017

“Real Strawsonian Compatibilism: Putting ‘Freedom and Resentment’ Back Alongside Strawson’s Philosophy of Language”

UC Riverside Graduate Conference, June 2017

“Suffering and Moral Objectivity”

Objectivity in Ethics Conference, University of Utrecht, April 2016

“Why Conceptual Competence – If Anything – Justifies Realism in A Priori Domains”

University of Connecticut Graduate Conference, November 2014

“Pleasure as the Basic Pro-Attitude, Desire as its Representation”

University at Albany Graduate Conference, April 2014

“The Subsuming Consciousness: A Model for Reconciling Personal Identity in Locke and Hume”

Southwest Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, February 2013

“On the (Im)possibility of Being a Monkey’s Uncle: A Defense of the Hook Analysis of Indicative Conditionals from a Stalnakerian Perspective”

Indiana Philosophical Association, November 2012

“On the Possibility of Compatibility Between Moral Objectivity and Plan-Based Expressivism”

Central States Philosophical Association Annual Conference, September 2012

“Boundary-Fixing Presuppositions and the Contextualist Error Theory”

University of Southern Florida Graduate Conference, March 2012

Northwest Philosophy Conference, November 2011

DELIVERED COMMENTARIES

Eliran Haziza, “Asserting, Implying, and Knowing That You Know ”

Brown Graduate Conference, November 2019

Xinhe Wu, “The Tolerant Account of Vagueness”

Massachusetts & Rhode Island (MARI) Graduate Conference, Amherst, MA, April 2019

Wooram Lee, “The Real Myth of Coherence”

Brown Graduate Conference, November 2017

William Ratoff, “Hallucination for Disjunctivists”

Brown Graduate Conference, November 2015

HONORS

Brown University

Open Graduate Education Program and Fellowship
Richard and Edna Salomon Endowed Fellowship
Professor Lorrin A. Riggs Endowed Fellowship

University of Notre Dame

Honors Program
Reilly Scholarship

Northern Illinois University

Rhoten A. Smith Graduate Assistantship
Lunsford Fellowship
University Fellowship Nominees and Alternate

TEACHING

Neuroeconomics: The Science of Decision-Making

Rhode Island School of Design, Spring 2020, Spring 2021

The course was designed to give a tour of the brain in its capacity as the 'organ of economics', exploring the neuroscience of decision-making and its implications for how we think about (among other things) rationality, motivation, emotions, bias, and the nature of value.

An Introduction to Pain and Suffering

Brown University, Spring 2019

The course was designed to give an introduction to the philosophy, neuroscience, and psychology relevant to answering three central questions – the "what?", "so what?", and "now what?" – of pain and suffering. We also investigated how they are addressed in Buddhism, which gives suffering pride of place in its spiritual and philosophical system.

Neuroeconomics: The Science of Decision-Making

Brown University, Summer 2018

Teaching Assistant

Introductory Logic (twice)

Brown University

The Philosophy & Psychology of Happiness (twice)

Brown University

Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*

Brown University

Themes from Existentialism

Brown University

Contemporary Moral Issues (three times)

Northern Illinois University

Social & Political Philosophy

Northern Illinois University

Other Teaching

Writing Center Associate

Brown University, Fall 2016 – Fall 2017

Met with undergraduate and graduate students for hour-long writing consultation meetings

French, Spanish, and Math Tutor

Monterey Peninsula College, Monterey, CA: Fall 2009

Volunteer Conflict-Resolution Teacher

South Bend Schools, South Bend, IN: Spring 2008

Taught second- and seventh-graders peaceful conflict-resolution skills

English Instructor

La Barre Middle School & St. Laud Primary School, Angers, France: Fall 2006 – Spring 2007

Instructed one fourth-grade and two sixth-grade classes in English vocabulary and grammar

Languages: I am proficient in Spanish, French, and German.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Laboratory for Neural Computation and Cognition

Brown University, Fall 2014 – present

Principal Investigator: Michael Frank

Research ranges from low-level neurochemical and genetic studies to high-level computational modeling of categorical reasoning and clinically relevant computational psychiatry

Graduate Research Assistant, Counseling, Adult and Higher Education Department

Northern Illinois University, Fall 2012 – Spring 2013

Researched and planned course materials for several courses, including a feminist education class;
Researched athletic and chronic illness identity

‘Cognition’ (Psycholinguistics) Laboratory

Stanford University, Summer 2006

Developed code for computer-based experiments and contributed to experimental design

Moral Psychology Laboratory

University of Notre Dame, 2005 – Spring 2006

Developed code for computer-based experiments, helped to develop new experiments, and coded moral content in children’s literature

SERVICE

Summer Immersion Program in Philosophy (SIPP)

Brown University, Summers 2016 – 2018

Mentored aspiring philosophy graduate students from underrepresented groups

Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, Graduate Student Committee

Brown University, Cognitive, Linguistic, and Psychological Sciences, Fall 2016 – Spring 2018

Helped develop programming and draft documents to improve departmental inclusivity

Co-Coordinator, Philosophy Graduate Conference

Brown University, November 2017

Coordinator, Massachusetts & Rhode Island (MARI) Graduate Philosophy Conference

Brown University, Spring 2017