

KYLA EBELS-DUGGAN

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ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Northwestern University, 2007-present
Laurance S. Rockefeller Visiting Fellow, Center for Human Values, Princeton University, 2009-2010
Weinberg College Fellow (Tenure Track Position), Northwestern University, 2006-2007

EDUCATION

Harvard University, Ph.D., Philosophy, March 2007
University of Michigan, B.A., Highest Distinction, Highest Honors in Philosophy, May 1998

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Moral Philosophy, Political Philosophy, Kant's Practical Philosophy

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

History of Ethics, Applied Ethics, Philosophy of Education, Philosophy of Religion

DISSERTATION

Giving Reasons: Interpersonal Relationships and the Conditions of Autonomy

Why take others into account in our deliberations? Hobbesians think that we should do so because it is in our own interests. Some sentimentalists think that we should do so only if and because we care about them. I argue that these approaches fail to respect the agency of others, regarding them as tools or treasures rather than as persons. I advocate a Kantian view on which the reasons that others give us depend on the choices that they make. I argue that regarding others' choices as having authority is a condition for according authority to our own choices, and thus for realizing our own autonomy. At the same time it is necessary for the relationships that we value most and for interpersonal relationships more generally.

Committee: Christine M. Korsgaard (chair), Thomas Scanlon, Gisela Striker and Melissa Barry

HONORS AND AWARDS

Spencer Foundation IPEPP Grant (Granted January, 2008; Deferred and re-awarded for 2012)
Laurance S. Rockefeller Fellowship at the Princeton Center for Human Values (2009-2010)
Visiting Faculty Fellowship at the Center for Ethics at the University of Toronto (2009-2010, declined)
George Plimpton Adams Prize for outstanding dissertation (2007)
Whiting Dissertation Completion Fellowship (2004-2005)
Edmond J. Safra Fellowship, Center for Ethics and the Professions at Harvard University (2003-2004)
Francis Bowen Prize for the Best Paper in Moral or Political Philosophy (2004): "The Hobbesian Agent and the Bondage of Self-interest"
Francis Bowen Prize (2003): "Inner Freedom and Required Ends"
Bechtel Prize for the Best Philosophy Paper (2002): "Acting Together: Negotiation, Coercion and Joint Decision-Making"
Francis Bowen Prize (2001): "Disagreement and Liberal Commitment"
Harvey Fellowship, Mustard Seed Foundation (2001-2005)
Harvard Graduate Society Summer Fellowship (2001)
Derek Bok Center Certificate of Excellence in Teaching (2000, 2003)
William K. Frankena Award for Most Outstanding Graduate in Philosophy (1998)
Virginia Vos Award for Excellence in Academic Writing (1998)
National Finalist, British Marshall Scholarship (1997)
Elsa L. Haller Award for Best Undergraduate Paper in Philosophy (1997)
Otto Graf Scholarship for Most Outstanding Junior in the Honors College (1997)
Phi Beta Kappa (1997)
National Merit Scholar (1994)

PUBLICATIONS

“Kant’s Political Theory,” forthcoming in *Philosophy Compass*.

Kant’s political theory stands in the social contract tradition, but departs significantly from earlier versions of social contract theory. Most importantly Kant holds, against Hobbes and Locke, that we have not merely a pragmatic reason but an obligation to exit the state of nature and found a state. Kant holds that each person has an innate right to freedom, but it is possible to simultaneously honor everyone’s right only under the rule of law. Since we are obligated to respect each person’s right to freedom, and can do so only in a state, we are obligated to submit to the authority of the state if we have one, and to establish one if we do not. In the first half of the essay I reconstruct this argument in more detail. In the second half I survey four points of controversy: (1) What is the relationship between Kant’s political philosophy and his moral philosophy? (2) How does the innate right to freedom support the postulate that we are permitted to acquire property and other private rights? (3) How does the postulate support an obligation to found the state? (4) How should we understand Kant’s views about political revolutions?

“Critical Notice of Arthur Ripstein’s *Force and Freedom*” (article length, peer reviewed) forthcoming in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*.

I reconstruct Ripstein’s Kantian argument for the authority of the legal institutions that comprise the state. This argument treats the task of justification as that of showing that state authority is a necessary condition of each individual’s freedom. I then raise the objection that Ripstein does not adequately distinguish between standards of legitimacy and standards of ideal justice. I end by arguing for the superiority of an alternative way of understanding the notion of freedom that is so central to Kant’s approach.

“Kantian Ethics,” forthcoming in Christian Miller, ed. *The Continuum Companion to Ethics*, (Continuum 2012).

I articulate and defend the most central claims of contemporary Kantian moral theory. I also explain some of the most important internal disagreements in the field. I begin by trying to dispel common misinterpretations of the Kantian program, arising largely from misreadings of Kant’s *Groundwork I*. Then I contrast two approaches to Kantian ethics: Kantian Constructivism and Kantian Realism. I connect the former to Kant’s Formula of Universal Law and the latter to his Formula of Humanity. I end by discussing applications of the Formula of Humanity in normative ethics. I outline some normative commitments that most Kantians share and then discuss differences between Constructivists and Realists over how the formula ought to be applied.

“Kantianism” forthcoming in *The Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*. 2nd edition. (Elsevier 2012).

This article focuses largely on Kant’s *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* in which Immanuel Kant articulates several purportedly equivalent candidates for the fundamental moral principle, the Categorical Imperative. These formulations invoke, respectively, the ideas of universalization, respect for humanity, a kingdom of ends, and autonomy. Kant defends the authority of this principle, seeking to show that any rational agent must guide herself by it. I also discuss Kant’s later moral works in which he defends government authority, develops a theory of virtue, and argues that moral commitment leads the rational person to religious commitment.

“Awarding Custody: Children’s Interests and the Fathers’ Rights Movement,” *Public Affairs Quarterly*, vol 24:4, October 2010, 257-278.

Child custody cases in the United States are usually settled by appeal to what is taken to be in the children’s best interests. A growing movement for fathers’ rights asserts that an explicit recognition of parental rights should replace this practice, and further that this should lead us to favor split custody arrangements. I argue for the first part of the claim, appealing to the fundamental commitments of political liberalism. But I argue against the idea that this should make a 50/50 split the default custody arrangement. I explain how this proposal would license ongoing, intrusive state intervention, and so undermine the very parental rights it aims to recognize.

“The Beginning of Community: Politics in the Face of Disagreement,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* vol 60:238, January 2010, 50-71.

I argue that Rawls’ requirement that citizens of liberal democracies support only policies that they believe can be justified in public reason depends on a certain ideal for the relationships between

citizens. I affirm the value of this ideal, and thus hold that citizens have reasons to try to achieve it. But I argue that it is not always possible to find the common ground that we would need to do so, and thus reject Rawls' strong claim that we have an *obligation* to defend our views in public reason.

"Moral Community: Escaping the Ethical State of Nature," *Philosophers' Imprint* vol. 9:8, August 2009.
I attempt to vindicate our authority to create new practical reasons for others by making choices of our own. In *The Doctrine of Right* Kant argues that we have an obligation to leave the Juridical State of Nature and found the state. In a less familiar passage in *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason* he argues for an obligation to leave what he calls the Ethical State of Nature and join together in the Moral Community. I read both texts as addressing and trying to resolve a tension between our individual freedom and our authority to make claims on one another. I explicate the political argument, and then develop the view that Kant sketches in the *Religion*, arguing that regarding others as capable of making choices that give you reasons to act is a condition of the full exercise of your autonomy.

"Against Beneficence: A Normative Account of Love," *Ethics* vol. 119:1, October 2008, 142-170.
I argue that rather than aiming at the well-being of those whom we love, we should aim to share in their ends. The former stance runs the risk of being objectionably paternalistic and, as I explain, only the latter makes reciprocal relationships possible. I end by diagnosing our attraction to the idea that we should promote our loved-ones' well-being.

Book Reviews

Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Dorrance Kelly, *All Things Shining. Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, September 9, 2011.

Bennett Helm *Love, Friendship and the Self. Ethics* vol. 121:4, July 2011, 808-812.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

"Dealing With the Past: History, Responsibility, and Salience" (under review)

We are dependent on others for our moral formation, and need others' help if we are to develop well. Many people think that, if we lack this help during our formative years, we cannot be held responsible or blamed for things that we do in adulthood. I reject this position, and argue that unfortunate formative circumstances do not undermine the warrant for either responsibility or blame. I then diagnose the tendency to think that formative circumstances do matter in this way, arguing that knowledge of these circumstances can play an essential epistemic role in our interpersonal interactions.

"Autonomy as Intellectual Virtue"

Many thinkers agree that facilitating the development of students' autonomy is a proper aim of education generally and higher education in particular. I defend a version of the autonomy view, but not as I think its other advocates imagine it. I suggest that an important aim of education is the facilitation of intellectual virtues. What is right about the idea that education should facilitate students' autonomy is best captured in virtue terms as intellectual charity and humility.

"Moral Education in the Liberal State"

Educating a child is in part a matter of transmitting information, but it is also a matter of shaping character. Those who play a large role in a child's education will inevitably influence not only her intellectual but also her moral development. Yet it seems impossible to provide moral education without relying on a particular worldview to provide an account of what counts as a reason for acting. Our pedagogy and public policy will benefit from acknowledging that we thus cannot avoid imposing a worldview. This presents a problem for education within a liberal state, which is supposed to maintain neutrality among competing worldviews. This paper develops the contours of this problem and suggests a solution.

"Kant on Freedom and Moral Education"

I consider the possibility of moral education in light of two apparent problems: First, moral education seems to require that we have a causal influence on another's will, but such influence

seems incompatible with the very idea of a will. Second, the influence to which moral education subjects people risks being objectionably coercive. I argue that we can simultaneously resolve both issues by understanding the influence of moral education as rational rather than causal. I also argue that our need and ability to appreciate reasons, and the obstacles that we face in doing so, provide a crucial bridge between a conception of ourselves as radically free and as susceptible to empirical influence.

“Kant on Morality, Religion, and Purpose in Life”

Kant rejects all of the standard accounts of the dependence of morality on religious claims or commitment. He nevertheless thinks that morality “leads to” religion. I defend an account of this “leading to” relationship, arguing that it is the result of his struggle to characterize the normative import of happiness.

“Anselmian Moral Skepticism”

Many contemporary moral philosophers think that it is a mistake to take moral skepticism seriously. I argue that there are many different skeptical challenges to morality that one might raise, and some are worth engaging. In fact, an acknowledged inability to answer a certain kind of moral skepticism is a serious problem for moral theory.

“Inner Freedom and Required Ends”

I argue for a more robust role for required positive ends within a Kantian moral theory than others have acknowledged. Reason must give us a task to work towards, not merely limit our actions, if we are to be free in Kant’s own sense. I explicate the relevant sense of freedom, give some reasons for supposing that Kant endorses the claim, and finally reconstruct his arguments for it.

PRESENTATIONS

“Moral Education in the Liberal State”

The Virtue of Justice Conference, Conway, AR, March 2012
Northwestern Practical Philosophy Workshop, Evanston IL, May 2011
Vanderbilt Political Theory Workshop, Nashville, TN, September 2010
Northeastern Political Science Association Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, November 2009

“Dealing with the Past: History, Responsibility, and Salience”

University of Chicago Practical Workshop, Chicago, IL, December 2011.
Indiana University, Bloomington IN, March 2010
Mid-Atlantic Reading Group in Ethics, New York, NY, February, 2010
Fellows Seminar, Center for Human Values, Princeton University, Princeton NJ, February 2010

“Autonomy as Intellectual Virtue”

Spencer Foundation Conference on Achieving the Aims of Higher Education: Problems of Morality and Justice Evanston, IL, October 2011
Spencer Foundation Workshop on Achieving the Aims of Higher Education: Problems of Morality and Justice Chicago, IL, June 2011

“Kant on Morality, Happiness, and Religion”

International Symposium on the Foundations of Morality, Wuhan, China, October 2011
Felician Ethics Conference, Rutherford NJ, April 2011

“Kant on Morality, Religion, and Purpose in Life”

Wheaton College Philosophy Speaker Series, Wheaton IL, January 2011

“Taking Responsibility”

American Philosophical Association, Central Division, Chicago IL, February 2010
Conference on Developing Character: Moral and Intellectual Virtues, Dubuque IA, March 2007
Grand Valley State University, Allendale MI, March 2007
Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture, Conference on Modernity, South Bend IN, November 2006

“Kant on Freedom and the Development of Character”
UK Kant Society Conference on Kant and Society, Lancaster, England, UK, July 2009

“Anselmian Moral Skepticism”
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee WI, April 2009
University of British Columbia, Vancouver BC, January 2009
Baylor University, Waco TX, December 2008

“Children’s Interests and the Fathers’ Rights Movement”
American Philosophical Association, Central Division, Chicago IL, February 2009
Grand Valley State University Philosophy Club, Allendale MI, March 2007
Harvard Workshop in Moral and Political Philosophy, April 2006

“Inner Freedom and Required Ends”
North American Kant Society Midwest Study Group, Milwaukee WI, November 2006
Boston University, Graduate Student Conference on Kant, Boston MA, April 2004
Harvard Workshop in Moral and Political Philosophy, February 2003

“Against Beneficence”
Northwestern University, Evanston IL, February 2006
University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, Champaign IL, February 2006
University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Amherst MA, February 2006
University of Vermont, Burlington VT, February 2006
Bowdoin College, Brunswick ME, February 2006
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA, February 2006
University of Notre Dame, South Bend IN, January 2006
University of Western Ontario, London ON, January 2006
MIT Workshop on Gender and Philosophy, Cambridge MA, January 2006
Harvard Department of Philosophy, Cambridge MA, November 2005

“Moral Community: Escaping the Ethical State of Nature”
Harvard Workshop in Moral and Political Philosophy, September 2005

“Relationships as Sharing Ends”
Harvard Workshop in Moral and Political Philosophy, April 2005

“The Problem with Taking Care of What We Care About”
Harvard Workshop in Moral and Political Philosophy, October 2004

“The Beginning of Community: Politics in the Face of Disagreement”
Center for Ethics and the Professions, Harvard University, May 2004

“Sovereign Autonomy and Interpersonal Authority”
Harvard Workshop in Moral and Political Philosophy, April 2004

“Conservative Christians as Political Liberals”
Baylor University, Conference on Christianity and the Soul of the University, Waco TX, March 2004

“The Hobbesian Agent and the Bondage of Self-Interest”
Center for Ethics and the Professions, Harvard University, January 2004

“Two States of Nature”
Harvard Workshop in Moral and Political Philosophy, October 2003

“Autonomy and Others’ Authority”
University of California-Irvine, Graduate Student Colloquium, Irvine CA, November 2002

“Acting Together: Negotiation, Coercion, and Joint Decision-Making”
University of California-Irvine, Graduate Student Colloquium, Irvine CA, May 2002

University of California-Los Angeles Workshop in Moral Philosophy, Los Angeles CA, May 2002

“Commitment to Principles and Persons”

Harvard Workshop in Moral and Political Philosophy, October 2001

“Disagreement and Liberal Commitment”

Harvard Workshop in Moral and Political Philosophy, February 2001

COMMENTS

Sharon Anderson-Gold’s “The Metaphysics of Marriage: Kant on Real Personal Rights”

First Bi-Annual Meeting of the North American Kant Society, Urbana-Champaign IL, June 2011

David Sussman’s “Korsgaard on the Reality of Pain”

Northwestern University Society for Ethical Theory and Political Philosophy Conference, Evanston IL, May 2010

Abe Roth’s “Can Shared Activity Simply Be Willed?”

Northwestern University Society for Ethical Theory and Political Philosophy Conference, Evanston IL, April 2009

Edward Hinchman’s “Receptivity and the Will”

Northwestern University Society for Ethical Theory and Political Philosophy Conference, Evanston IL, May 2008

Helga Varden’s “Kant’s Non-Absolutist Conception of Political Legitimacy”

American Philosophical Association, Central Division Meeting, Chicago IL, April 2008

Helga Varden’s “International Political Obligation”

Northwestern University Society for Ethical Theory and Political Philosophy Conference, Evanston IL, May 2007

Richard Galvin’s “The Practical Contradiction Interpretation Reconsidered”

American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division Meeting, San Francisco CA, April 2007

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Northwestern University Courses Taught:

Phil 477: *Seminar in Moral Theory: Virtue Ethics*, Winter 2011

Phil 273-2: *Brady Scholars Seminar: The Good Neighbor*, Winter 2011

Phil 109: *Freshman Seminar: If God is Dead, Is All Permitted?* Spring 2011

Phil 360: *Topics in Moral Theory: Contemporary Moral Theory*, Winter 2009; Spring 2011

Phil 363: *Kant’s Moral Theory*, Winter 2011

Phil 410: *Special Topic in Philosophy: Kant’s Political Theory*, Fall 2010

Phil 264: *Classics of Political Theory*, Spring 2009

Phil 477: *Seminar in Moral Theory: Moral Skepticism*, Fall 2008

Phil 263: *Classics of Moral Theory*, Spring 2008

Phil 360: *Topics in Moral Theory: Kant’s Moral Theory*, Spring 2007

Phil 410: *Special Topics in Philosophy: Responsibility*, Fall 2006

Graduate Advising (Students on whose committees I have served):

Tyler Zimmer (in progress)

Seth Mayer (in progress)

Heidi Chamberlain (in progress at Baylor University)

Max Cherem (in progress)

B. Scott Rouse (2011)

Laura Papish (2010)

Kelby Harrison (2010)

Brad Cokelet (2008)

Harvard University Tutorials:

I designed and independently taught these semester-long seminars for undergraduate philosophy majors.

Phil 97hf: *Applied Ethics: Commodification*, Fall 2005

Phil 98hf: *Morality and Practical Reason*, Fall 2004

Phil 98hf: *Hobbes' Leviathan*, Fall 2003

Phil 97hf: *Plato's Republic*, Fall 2001

Phil 97hf and Phil 98hf: *Theology and Moral Theory*, Spring 2000

Harvard University Teaching Fellowships:

I planned and led sections, graded papers, and held office hours for these lecture courses.

Phil 175: *Ethical Theory*, Melissa Barry, Spring 2003

Phil 102: *Aristotle*, Gisela Striker, Fall 2001

MR 66: *Moral Reasoning About Social Protest*, Susanna Siegel, Fall 2000

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Search Committee in Ethics (2011-2012)

Appointments Committee for Brady Scholar (2011-2012)

Co-organizer of Northwestern University Society for Ethical Theory and Political Philosophy Conference
(2006-2007; 2007-2008; 2008-2009; 2009-2010, 2010-2011; 2011-2012)

Search Committee in 19th Century German Philosophy (2008-2009)

Speakers Committee (2008-2009, 2010-2011)

Undergraduate Studies Committee (Spring 2008)

Referee for *Philosophers' Imprint*, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, *The Journal of Ethics*, *Public Affairs Quarterly*, *Mind*, *Philosophical Studies*

Graduate Representative to Faculty (2000-2001)

Co-organizer of Harvard-MIT Graduate Conference (1999-2000)