

Jack Samuel
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Education

Degrees Awarded or In-Progress

<i>expected</i> 2023	J.D. , New York University School of Law
2020	Ph.D., Philosophy , University of Pittsburgh
2013	M.A., Philosophy , University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
2007	B.A., Philosophy <i>cum laude</i> , New York University

Other

Spring 2018	Cornell University, Visiting Graduate Student
Fall 2017	UCLA, Visiting Graduate Researcher
2014, 2015	Universität Bonn, Summer School in German Philosophy
2003–2004	Vassar College

Areas of Specialization

| Ethics, Metaethics, Philosophy of Law

Areas of Competence

| 19th Century Philosophy, Social/Political Philosophy

Dissertation: *The Sociality of Agency*

Practical philosophy is dominated by two pictures of human agency: the Kantian image of a rational, empirically unaffected will and the Humean image of instrumental reasoning from desires, aims, values, or interests. Because Kantian and Humean accounts of agency emphasize the individual over the social, they lack explanatory resources important to understanding how others can matter to us as agents in the right way. Insufficiently social conceptions of agency, I argue, risk depicting agents as alienated from one another, leaving mysterious how we can get a normative grip on one another. Taking inspiration from GWF Hegel and Iris Murdoch, I develop a conception of agency on which it constitutively depends on standing in relations of mutual recognition with other agents. I argue that a crucial part of becoming an agent is becoming reflectively self-conscious of our sociality—of the historically conditioned nature of mutually recognitive relations. A significant upshot of the picture of agency that emerges is a new perspective on individual moral progress. It's not the purely personal achievement suggested on the Kantian and Humean accounts of agency. Rather, individual moral progress is a political achievement, bound up in both the inner struggle to achieve moral clarity and the social struggle for an ethical form of life.

Committee: Japa Pallikkathayil & John McDowell (co-chairs), Michael Thompson, Kate Manne (Cornell University)

Papers

Publications

| “An Individual Reality, Separate from Oneself: Social Alienation and Social Integrity in Moral Theory”
forthcoming in *Inquiry*
| “The Right and the Wren” (with Christa Peterson)
forthcoming in *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility* volume VII

Under Review

| “Thin as a Needle, Quick as a Flash: on Murdoch on Agency and Moral Progress”
| “Backgrounding Humeanism”
| “Alienation and the Metaphysics of Normativity: on the Quality of Our Relations with the World”
| “Toward a Post-Kantian Constructivism”

Presentations*Peer-reviewed*

November 2019	“The Sociality of Agency” New Orleans Workshop on Agency and Responsibility
March 2017	“What Could Alienation Be?” (<i>Early version of “An Individual Reality, Separate from Oneself.”</i>) Chicagoland Graduate Conference, University of Illinois Chicago
May 2015	“Humean Constructivism or Hegelian Constructivism? A Reply to Sharon Street” Normativity and German Idealism Conference, Sussex University
October 2012	“It Doesn’t Matter What You ‘Meant’: The Pragmatic Topography of Sexist Slurs” Society for Analytic Feminism annual Conference, Vanderbilt University
March 2012	“The Myth of Given Reasons” 15th annual Inland Northwest Philosophy Conference, University of Idaho

Invited

May 2021	“The Right and the Wren” (with Christa Peterson) Forms of Normativity: Transitions and Intersections Invited Talk Series, Universität Wien
January 2020	Author Meets Critics: Jeremy Koons, <i>The Ethics of Wilfrid Sellars</i> APA, Group Meeting of the Wilfrid Sellars Society; invited critic
April 2013	“It Doesn’t Matter What You ‘Meant’: The Pragmatic Topography of Sexist Slurs” External Determinations of Meaning Workshop, University of Pittsburgh

Comments etc.

May 2019	on “Anscombe on the Difference Rationality Makes” (Eric Marcus) Saint Louis Annual Conference on Reasons and Rationality (invited discussant and chair)
January 2019	on “When Forgiveness Comes Easy” (Julius Schoenherr) APA Eastern Division (comment)
April 2016	on “The Kantian Conception of Obligation and the Directedness Constraint” (Aleksy Tarasenko-Struc) Pitt-CMU Graduate Conference, University of Pittsburgh (comment)

Teaching Experience (at University of Pittsburgh unless otherwise noted)*Instructor; full teaching responsibilities, including course design*

Summer 2018	Political Philosophy: Justice and Revolution
Spring 2013	Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy (at UW Milwaukee)
Fall 2012	Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy (at UW Milwaukee)

Graduate Assistant; responsible for grading and 3–4 discussion sections per term

Fall 2019	Concepts of Human Nature
Spring 2019	Ethics
Fall 2018	Introduction to Logic
Fall 2016	Ethics
Fall 2015	Philosophy and Public Issues
Spring 2015	Introduction to Logic
Fall 2014	Philosophy and Public Issues
Spring 2012	Philosophy 101: Reflections on the Human Condition (at UW Milwaukee)
Fall 2011	Philosophy 101: Reflections on the Human Condition (at UW Milwaukee)

Guest Lecturer

April 2012	“Feminist Responses to Pornography and Censorship” <i>Philosophy of Film</i> class—Schiller (at UW Milwaukee)
April 2012	“Searle and the Unconscious” <i>Philosophy of Mind</i> class—Schiller (at UW Milwaukee)

Service*Professional Service*

Reviewer: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Res Philosophica, European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*

Departmental Service: University of Pittsburgh

2017–18 | President, *Philosophy Graduate Student Body*
 2016–17 | Vice-President, *Philosophy Graduate Student Body*
 2017 | Conference Co-Organizer, *Reconsidering Hegel's Logic*
 2014–17,19 | Reviewer, *Pitt-CMU Graduate Conference*
 2015–17 | Member, *Climate and Liaison Committee*
 2014–16 | Member, *Outside Speakers Series Organizing Committee*
 2014 | Member, *Prosecutive Student Visit Committee*
 2013–14 | Member, *Faculty/Student Colloquium Organizing Committee*

Graduate Coursework and Training (*=audited)*University of Pittsburgh*

Topics in Ethics: Hume and Rationality (Schafer)	*Love and Justice, Personal and Political (Whiting)
Hegel's <i>Phenomenology</i> (Brandom)	*Kant: Practical Reason (Engstrom)
Hegel and Self-Consciousness (McDowell)	*Kant's Critical Philosophy (Rödl)
Kant's First <i>Critique</i> (Engstrom)	*Hegel's Logic (Rödl)
Schopenhauer (Jauernig)	*German Idealism (McDowell)
Leibniz (Rescher)	*Wittgenstein (Ricketts)
Aristotle's Ethics (Whiting)	*Plato and the Sophists (Allen)
The Gene: History of a Concept (Schaffner)	*Topics in Logic: Conditionals (Caie)
Topics in Logic: Relevance Logic (Dunn)	*Topics in Logic: Expressing the Structure of Reasoning (Brandom)
M&E Core (Shaw)	*Decision Theory and Deontic Modals (Caie & Shaw)
Ethics Core (Schafer)	*Metaphysics of Fundamentality (Shumener)
*Political Philosophy: Consent (Pallikkathayil)	*Metaphysics of Relations (Shumener)
*Political Philosophy: Natural Rights and Convention (Lewinsohn & Pallikkathayil)	*Philosophy of Science core (Woodward)
*Philosophy of Action (McDowell)	*Philosophy of Cognitive Science (Machinery)
*Topics in Ethics: The Second-Person (Thompson)	*Sellars (Brandom)
*Topics in Ethics: Life, Action, and Temporal Consciousness (Thompson)	*Philosophical Writing (Whiting)

UCLA

*Ethical Theory: Life, Time, World History (Julius)
 *Kant's Ethics (Herman)

Universität Bonn

2015 Summer School on German Idealism (Forster, Gabriel)
 2014 Summer School on Hegel's *Phenomenology* (Forster, Gabriel)

University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Normative Powers (Westlund)	Language & Meaning (Schiller)
Self-Knowledge & Self-Consciousness (Bristow)	Modality and Quantification (Mondadori)
Kant's Practical Philosophy (Sensat)	*Nietzsche's Philosophy (Bristow)
Hegel's <i>Phenomenology</i> (Sensat)	*Phenomenology (Mondadori)
Kant's <i>Critique of Judgment</i> (Bristow)	*Beyond Possibility (Spencer)
Marx & Philosophy (Sensat)	

References

Japa Pallikkathayil

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Kate Manne

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James Shaw (teaching)

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Dissertation Summary

Metaethical inquiry is at least partly a matter of making sense of ourselves, of the dimension of our lives that involves thinking and acting as moral agents. We must be able to understand ourselves as the kinds of agents a theory envisions, and to understand our relations with one another through the theory's lens, at the risk of leaving us with a sense of alienation.

As Kantians emphasize, one way that metaethics can be alienating is by conceiving of agents as potentially estranged from the normative facts that it is designed to explain. It must be able to account for the grip that reasons have on us. The threat of this kind of *normative alienation* urges placing the agent (the valuer, the reasoner, the creature with desires) at the center of any explanation of normativity. I argue, however, that philosophical work on agency is dominated by pictures too austere and abstract to account for the ways that it materializes in a particular social contexts, and that its ethical significance is tied to the social nature of its exercise. This points toward another, under-theorized kind of alienation that metaethics must resist: alienation between an agent and the concrete others with whom morality is principally concerned. The threat of *social alienation* reveals a need to emphasize the significance of moral subjects, external to the agent and equally real. A theory of normativity suited to avoid both forms of alienation would thus paradoxically seem to need to center both the agent and the subject. The tension can be resolved, I argue, by appealing to a more social conception of agency.

Drawing on G.W.F. Hegel, I argue that standing in historically-conditioned relations of mutual recognition with other agents is a constitutive element of agency. I first develop a conception of mutual recognition as a normative attitude that places another with respect to oneself, such that the mutuality of mutual recognition is something over and above mere symmetry of attitudes between agents: it is a form of social self-consciousness. This formal characterization of constitutive recognitional relations suggests a form of metaethical constructivism that can answer some of the objections against its Humean and Kantian rivals.

Drawing on Iris Murdoch, I argue that agency is not only actualized in the moments of choice and action but is constantly at work in cultivating and improving our unique practical standpoints, through which we make contact with a normatively saturated world. I then argue that for Murdoch practical standpoints are conditioned by social context, and that a crucial part of cultivating and improving them is the struggle to become reflectively self-conscious of our sociality. The aim of agency, according to Murdoch's conception of moral progress, is to transcend the socially alienated standpoints through which we encounter a world obscured by ideology and self-focus, and to develop a standpoint through which we can become self-conscious of our social relations and the political forces in which they are embedded.

This way of thinking about moral progress leaves open the following question: to what extent is the moral standpoint necessarily a political standpoint, and thus difficult or impossible to occupy alone? The reflective activity of agency involves, centrally, refining ethical concepts, concepts given to us from public discourse and thus infected with ideology, and ideology is not plausibly transcended through internal struggle alone. The answer, I argue, involves thinking of morality as embodied in norms, practices, mores and institutions that are constructed and revised in historical time by actual agents engaged in an ongoing negotiation over how to live together. Mutual recognition is thus determined by and realized through the ongoing development of a shared form of life.

The picture of agency that emerges is at once ethical and political, bound up in the inner struggle to achieve moral clarity and the social struggle for an ethical form of life.