

Addison C. Ellis
Curriculum Vitae

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Employment

Lecturer in Philosophy, Academic Advisor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 2021-

Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Institute for Philosophical Research, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) 2019-21

Education

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Ph.D., Philosophy 2019

University of Colorado at Boulder, M.A., Philosophy 2013

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, B.A., Philosophy (w/ distinction) and Psychology 2009

Area of Specialization: Kant, Post-Kantian European Philosophy (including German Idealism and Phenomenology/Existentialism)

Areas of Competence: Ethics, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Religion, Early Modern

Languages: English (native), Spanish (reading/intermediate speaking), German (reading)

Publications

Peer-Reviewed Articles:

-*Forthcoming*, “Freedom for Losing Oneself: Lessons in Spontaneity and Temporality in Kant and Heidegger”, *Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit der Freiheit: Kant und Heidegger über Freiheit, Willen, und Recht*, Akademie-Verlag.

-*Forthcoming*, “Self-Consciousness and the Priority Question: A Critique of the ‘Sensibility First’ Reading of Kant”, *Tópicos: Revista de Filosofía*.

-(2020) “Kant and Rödl on the Identity of Self-Consciousness and Objectivity”, *Studi Kantiani* XXXIII.

(2020) “Self-Consciousness as Self-Limitation in Kant”, *Contemporary Studies in Kantian Philosophy* 5.

(2018) “The Internality of Moral Faith in Kant’s *Religion*”. *Kant Yearbook* 10.

(2017) “The Case for Absolute Spontaneity in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*”. *Con-Textos Kantianos* no. 6, monographic issue on Kant in Current Philosophy of Mind and Epistemology.

Invited Articles:

-(2022) Contribution requested for special issue of *Studies in Transcendental Philosophy* (focusing on self, self-consciousness, self-knowledge)

Book:

In Defense of Intuitions: A New Rationalist Manifesto, Palgrave Macmillan 2013 (with Andrew Chapman, Robert Hanna, Tyler Hildebrand, and Henry Pickford).

Book Translation (under contract):

Kant and the Problem of Nothingness by Ernesto Mayz Vallenilla, Bloomsbury Press (Spanish to English)

Dissertation Abstract

Title: “Kant’s Theory of Absolute Spontaneity”

Committee: Alexandra Newton (Chair), Jochen Bojanowski, Kirk Sanders, David Sussman

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant’s concept of spontaneity refers to the ability of the understanding (the faculty of knowledge) to be the source of its own activity. Thus, when Kant calls the understanding the faculty of spontaneity, he means that the understanding is the source of knowledge. Interpreters of Kant have held one of two basic theses about the nature and extent of the spontaneity of the understanding: the *relative spontaneity thesis* (RS) and the *absolute spontaneity thesis* (AS). According to RS, the capacity to judge has a given nature, and its spontaneous acts are determined by that nature. AS, by contrast, denies that the capacity to judge has a given nature.

The basic aim of the dissertation is to show that, contrary to what many Kantians think, the objectivity of knowledge is possible only through the absolute spontaneity of the understanding. I spell out Kant’s concept of spontaneity as it appears in the first *Critique*, and then sketch the implications both for Kant interpretation as well as for contemporary accounts of objectivity in epistemology and philosophy of mind more generally.

In the first chapter, I do two things: (1) I spell out what it would mean for the spontaneity of the understanding to be absolute, and (2) I argue that Kant’s own view is that the understanding is absolutely spontaneous. I take the spontaneity of the understanding to be absolute when its acts have no given determinations—that is, no determinations that it does not give to itself. Thus, AS rejects the view that its acts are in any way passively determined. There are two broad versions of RS: one according to which the understanding’s activity is innately determined, and one according to which this activity is determined by something outside the understanding. In both cases the activity is in some sense passively determined. What we discover is that virtually every modern account of Kant’s theory of spontaneity assumes one or the other version of RS. But, Kant’s theory of spontaneity is absolute, and this can be understood primarily through his exposition of self-consciousness (as *original* and then *objective* apperception) in the B-Edition Transcendental Deduction.

In the second chapter, I show why all versions of RS miss Kant’s insights about self-consciousness as illustrated in chapter one. As chapter one demonstrates, truth is essentially self-conscious. This implies that there are no truths that can hold independently of our consciousness of them. Each version of RS—including naturalism and functionalism about judgment, as well as strong non-conceptualism—tries to allow for the kind of externality of truth that Kant’s view does not permit, and so should be discarded.

In the third and fourth chapters, I argue that the absolute spontaneity of the understanding is not inconsistent with the idea that our knowledge relies on a sensibly given manifold. Understanding this point requires an account of why what have been called “sensibility first” readings of Kant fail. Then what could it mean for ‘the given’ to play a role in experience without *determining* our knowledge (limiting what we can think or judge)? That is, how can sensibility play a role in experience without determining what I think or judge? I argue that sensibility *enables* me to determine *myself*. I then discuss how this is and is not compatible with what McDowell calls the “unboundedness of the conceptual”.

Works in Progress

“Neither Something nor Nothing: Kant on the Emptiness of the ‘I think’”

“Kant’s Concept of Nothing in the *Critique of Pure Reason*”

“Absolute Noumenal Ignorance”

“The Self-Conscious Form of Rational Faith”

Honors, Awards, and Fellowships

University of Illinois List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent: ¹ Fall 2013, Spring 2017, Fall 2017

University of Illinois Smalley Fellowship: Spring 2016

Travel Stipend Award: Summer 2014, Universität Bonn Summer Seminar in German Philosophy, on Hegel’s *Philosophy of Spirit*

Teaching Experience

Post-PhD:

Graduate Seminars

Conceptualism and Self-Consciousness in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, UNAM, F 2019 (co-taught with Dr. Pedro Stepanenko)

Knowledge of Appearances and Things-in-Themselves, UNAM, F 2020

Advanced Undergraduate courses

Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, UIUC, F 2021

Phenomenology (Heidegger), UIUC, S 2022

Ethical Theories, UIUC, S 2022

As Adjunct Professor

Kant’s Philosophy of Religion, Universidad Panamericana, F 2021

Rights and Wrongs, Illinois Wesleyan University, F 2021

As graduate student:

Independent courses

Introduction to Ethics, University of Illinois, F 2016, S 2017, F 2017 (~50 students each)²

The Ethics of Authenticity (Existentialism, 200-level), University of Illinois, SU 2018 (~5 students)

Introduction to Philosophy, Red Rocks Community College, F 2010, S 2012 (~20 students)

¹ For receiving a 4.5 or higher out of 5 in “Overall teaching effectiveness”

² Including two honors sections and one section of the Living-Learning Community at UIUC (in-residence teaching)

As Teaching Assistant (typically two sections per semester)

Introduction to Philosophy, University of Illinois, F 2012, S 2013*³, F 2014, F 2015*
University of Colorado, S 2011
Introduction to Ethics, University of Illinois, F 2013, S 2014
Introduction to Logic, University of Illinois, F 2018, S 2019
Philosophy and the Sciences, University of Colorado, F 2011

As Grader

Kant, University of Colorado, S 2012 (20 students)
Epistemology, University of Colorado, S 2012 (20 students)
Ancient Philosophy, University of Illinois, S 2015 (50 students)
Introduction to Logic, University of Illinois, SU 2017, F 2017
Early Modern Philosophy, University of Illinois, S 2018

As Outreach and Community Teaching (~10 students each)

Existentialism, Illinois Lyceum, SU 2014, SU 2015
The Mind-Body Problem, Illinois Lyceum, SU 2015
The Ethics of Famine & Affluence, Illinois Lyceum, SU 2014

Other Academic Employment

Managing Editor of open-access journal *Critique & Contemporary Kantian Philosophy*:
<http://www.cckp.space/about>
2015-2017

Assistant Archivist, University of Colorado's Norlin Library
Managing personal collection of, and an exhibit on, philosopher Hazel Barnes
Spring/Summer 2012

Conference and Workshop Presentations (peer-reviewed or by invitation)

- "Self-Consciousness and the Priority Question: A Critique of the Sensibility First Reading"
6th Annual Contemporary Kantian Philosophy Workshop on Kant and the Primacy of Sensibility, October 2021 at Washington University, St. Louis
- Symposium on Dennis Schulting's *Apperception and Self-Consciousness in Kant and German Idealism*
Kant and Classical German Philosophy Group of UNAM, June 2021
- "Transcendental Idealism: The Synthetic Reading"
Centro de Estudios Filosóficos, a conversation on Kant's idealism, April 2021 (invited keynote)
- "Two Senses of Timelessness in Kant"
Kant Seminar at UNAM, March 2021

³ * Denotes advanced writing sections

- “Freedom as the Possibility of Inauthenticity and Heteronomy in Heidegger and Kant”
The Possibility and Reality of Freedom: Kant and Heidegger on Freedom, Will, and Right
Martin-Heidegger-Gesellschaft Annual Conference, February 2021
- “Kant’s Noumenal Ignorance Without Contrary”
Researchers seminar of the Institute of Philosophy at UNAM, August 2020
- “The Original Nothingness of the Transcendental ‘I’”
Kant Seminar at UNAM, May 2020
- “The Original Nothingness of the Transcendental ‘I’”
Kant Workshop at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, October 2019
- “The Empty Representation ‘I think’ as the Source of the Limits of Knowledge”
Researchers seminar of the Institute of Philosophy at UNAM, September 2019
- “Kant on Thinking Beyond the Space of Reasons”
Con-Textos Kantianos Conference, June 2019 at UNAM, Mexico City
- “Thinking Beyond the Space of Reasons, Being Beyond the Limits of Thought”
International Kant Conference, 4-5 June 2019 at Wuhan University, China
- “Unity of Apperception and Unity of Space: The Self-Articulation of Understanding”
5th Annual C&CKP Workshop on Kant and Enlightenment, April 2019 in Kaliningrad, Russia (Declined due to scheduling)
- Comments, Thomas Land’s “The Importance of Faculty Psychology in Kant”, 2019 Pacific APA
- “Kantian Statism and Ideal Political Theory”
4th Annual C&CKP Workshop on Global Ethics & Politics in Kant, May 2018 in NYC
- “The Case for Absolute Spontaneity in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*”
3rd Annual C&CKP Workshop on Kant and Normativity, December 2017 in Mexico City
- “Against the Medicalization of Philosophy”
Future of Philosophical Practice Summer Seminar, July 2017, UNC Asheville
- “Moral Despair as Crisis of Faith in Kant’s *Religion*”
2nd Annual C&CKP Workshop on Kant, Religion, and Politics, December 2016 in Mainz, DE
- “Absolute Spontaneity and Original Unity in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*”
Pittsburgh Area Philosophy Colloquium (workshop), September 2016
- “The Nature and Plausibility of Kant’s Anti-Mechanistic Spontaneity”
Pittsburgh Area Philosophy Colloquium (workshop), September 2014
- “Defeating the Phenomenological Arguments against Representationalism”
Pittsburgh Area Philosophy Colloquium (workshop), September 2012
- “Kantian Normativity and Representational Semantics”
Pittsburgh Area Philosophy Colloquium (workshop), September 2011
Northwest Philosophy Conference, Western Wash. U. (declined), September 2011

Other presentations/comments (not peer-reviewed)

- Comments on Anastasia Berg’s “Overcoming the Dualism of Reason and Sensibility in Kant’s Practical Philosophy”
University of Illinois, Philosophy Grad Conference, April 2016
- Comments on Emily Sullivan’s “Understanding from Testimony”
Pittsburgh Area Philosophy Colloquium, September 2014

- Comments on Francois Kammerer’s “Conscious Experiences as Ultimate Seemings”
University of Illinois, Philosophy Grad Conference, March 2014
- Comments on Fatema Amijee’s “Kant’s Transcendental Idealism and the Grounding Constraint”
University of Illinois, Philosophy Grad Conference, March 2013
- Comments on Andrew Seremetis’s “Can Functionalism Accommodate Extended Cognition?”
Rocky Mountain Philosophy Conference, CU-Boulder, April 2010
- “Self-Consciousness in German Idealism”
University of Illinois, Undergraduate Philosophy Club Talk, October 2017
- “The Case for Absolute Spontaneity in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*”
University of Illinois, Grad Student Talk, October 2017
- “Moral Despair as a Crisis of Faith in Kant’s *Religion*”
University of Illinois, Practical Philosophy Workshop, November 2016
- “Kant’s Absolute Spontaneity”
University of Illinois, Practical Philosophy Workshop, May 2016
- “Self-Consciousness and Spontaneity”
University of Illinois, Grad Student Talk, September 2015
- “The Phenomenology of Intuitions: What Grasping Teaches Us”
University of Colorado-Boulder, Philosophy Club Talk, March 2012

Professional Service

Journal Refereeing

Diametros

Con-Textos Kantianos

Contemporary Studies in Kantian Philosophy

Other Professional Duties

Co-host for Philosophy & Film series at University of Colorado, 2010

Rocky Mountain Philosophy Conference Committee, University of Colorado, 2010, 2012

Paper Referee for Rocky Mountain Philosophy Conference, 2010, 2012

Mentor for Undergraduate Philosophy Students, University of Colorado, 2011-12

Graduate Student Representative, University of Illinois, 2012-13

Graduate Student Conference Committee, University of Illinois, 2012-2019

Paper Referee for University of Illinois Philosophy Grad Conference, 2012-2019

Referee for Oxford University Press manuscript, 2013

Member, Teacher’s Workshop with Center for Writing Studies, University of Illinois, Summer 2015

Graduate Student Conference Organizer, University of Illinois, 2015-16

Graduate Philosophy Organization Treasurer, University of Illinois, 2015-16

Graduate Philosophy Organization Secretary, University of Illinois, 2016-2017

Reading Groups & Research Groups: Foundations of Analytic Philosophy Research Group/Intuitions in Philosophy Research Group (2010-2012, CU-Boulder), Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (Summer/Fall 2013, UIUC), Kant & German Philosophy (Fall 2015-2019, UIUC), Heidegger Reading Group (Fall

2015-2018, UIUC), Practical Philosophy Workshop (2016-2019, UIUC), Sebastian Rödl Reading Group (Fall 2019, UNAM), Kant's antinomies (Spring 2020, UNAM), Reflective Judgment and German Idealism (Spring 2020, UNAM/UCSD/LMU/Emory), Schopenhauer (Spring 2020, UIUC), Phil & Lit Reading Group (Spring 2020, Harvard/UNAM/etc.)

Student Groups: Founder of the Ethics & Social Philosophy Group – a subsidiary of the UIUC undergraduate philosophy club

Memberships: North American Kant Society, American Philosophical Association

Courses Taken and Audited

(* indicates audited course)

Ethics: Ethics Proseminar (Norcross), Utilitarianism (Sussman), Ethical Theories (Sussman), Practical Reason (Sussman)*, Freedom and the Reactive Attitudes (Sussman)*

Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Mind: The Mind-Body Problem (Hanna), Epistemology (Korman), Philosophy of Time (Livengood), Causation (Livengood), Philosophy of Mind (Rupert), Epistemology (Rupert), Epistemology (Tooley), Mind & Cognition (Waskan)

History: Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (Hanna), Analytic Hegelianism (Hanna), Kant's Theory of Spontaneity (Melnick), Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (Newton), Kantian Theories of Self-Consciousness (Newton), Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Newton)*, Hellenistic Philosophy (Sanders), Hegel (Schacht), Locke (Weinberg), Nietzsche (Zimmerman), Phenomenology (Newton)*, Negation and Nothing (Newton)*

Miscellaneous: Advanced Formal Logic (Ernst), Philosophy of Religion (McKim), Philosophy of Religion (Morrison), Experimental Philosophy (Talbot)

References

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Shelley Weinberg (teaching reference)
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Department of Philosophy
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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job39@illinois.edu

Robert Hanna
Professor (ret.)/Independent Scholar
Department of Philosophy
University of Colorado at Boulder
Robert.hanna@colorado.edu

Pedro Stepanenko (postdoc supervisor)
Level B Researcher
Institute for Philosophical Research
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pedros@unam.mx