

SEUNGCHUL YANG

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Department of Philosophy
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EDUCATION

2020 – 2026 (Expected)	Ph.D., Philosophy, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Dissertation: <i>The Rationality of Regret</i> Committee: Mark van Roojen (chair), John Brunero, Aaron Bronfman, Regina Werum
2015 – 2017	M.A., Philosophy, Soongsil University Thesis: <i>A Naturalistic Account of Morality and Normativity</i> Advisor: Seon-Wook Kim
2007 – 2015	B.A., Philosophy, Soongsil University

RESEARCH AREA

AOS	Metaethics, Normative Ethics
AOC	Moral Psychology, Applied Ethics

PUBLICATIONS

[Choosing, Picking, and Reason to Choose](#)
[*Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 28, 5–16 \(2025\)](#)

UNDER REVIEW

R&R, <i>Erkenntnis</i>	Reasons as First-Order Evidence
Under Review	‘Decisive Reason’ Implies ‘Can’
Under Review	The Conditional Fallacy Problem and the Scope of ‘Can’ in Internalism about Reasons
Under Review	The Rationality of Regret

PAPER PRESENTATIONS

2026

- APA Eastern, Colloquium, “Montage of the Best Internalist Formulation of Reasons,” January 7-10.
- APA Central, Colloquium, “Three Arguments for the ‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can’ Principle,” February 18-21
- APA Pacific, Symposium, “Reasons in Reality and Reasons in Reflection,” April 8-12
- Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress, Poster, “Reasons as First-Order Evidence,” August 6-9. (*Upcoming*)
- Tennessee Value and Agency: Grief, Trauma, Anger, and Resilience, “Why Benefits Can Be the Right Kind of Reasons for Regret,” October 29-31. (*Upcoming*)

2025

- APA Central, Colloquium, “The Way Reasons Transmit to Necessary and Non-necessary Means,” February 27-March 1.
- Iowa Philosophical Society Conference, “Reasons in Reality and Reasons in Reflection,” November 15.
- Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress, Poster, “Epistemic Bars on Beliefs About Reasons,” August 7-10.
- Austin Graduate Ethics and Normativity Talks (AGENT), “Three Arguments for the ‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can’ Principle,” January 31-February 1.

2024

- Grad-Faculty Philosophy Research Colloquium at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, “The Way Reasons Transmit to Necessary and Non-necessary Means.”
- Indiana Philosophical Association (IPA) conference, “Three Arguments for the ‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can’ Principle.”

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Graduate Chancellor’s Research Grant: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Awarded \$800.
- Graduate Student Travel Award: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Awarded \$500.
- Soongsil Scholarship: Soongsil University, Awarded ₩10,000,000 (approximately \$7,172 USD).
- Scholarship for Excellent Entrance Grades: Soongsil University, Received full tuition from 2015 to 2017.
- Scholarship for Academic Excellence: Soongsil University, Received full tuition for Spring 2014.
- APA Travel Stipend: American Philosophical Association, Awarded for Central APA 2024, 2025, and Eastern APA 2025.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Research Fellow

- Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Spring 2025
Project: Initiated and developed an undergraduate philosophy journal initiative, including its editorial structure and publication model

Commentator

- Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress, “Reasons and Cares: A Deep Self View of Practical Rationality” by Jacob C. MacDavid, August 2025
- Indiana Philosophical Association, “Filling in the Details about Explanatory Abstraction” by Cory Wright, November 2024

Reviewer

- University of Nebraska–Lincoln Graduate Philosophy Conference, March 2025

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Lead Instructor with Full Responsibility for Course

2026 Summer	(PHIL 213) Medical Ethics
2025 Fall	(PHIL 213) Medical Ethics
2025 Summer	(PHIL 213) Medical Ethics
2024 Fall	(PHIL 106) Philosophy and Current Issues
2024 Spring	(PHIL 106) Philosophy and Current Issues
2023 Fall	(PHIL 106) Philosophy and Current Issues
2023 Summer	(PHIL 101) Introduction to Philosophy

Teaching Assistant Recitation Instructor

2026 Spring	(PHIL 101) Introduction to Philosophy
2023 Spring	(PHIL 107) Ethics of Emerging Media Arts
2022 Fall	(PHIL 101) Introduction to Philosophy
2022 Spring	(PHIL 106) Philosophy and Current Issues
2021 Fall	(PHIL 101) Introduction to Philosophy
2021 Spring	(PHIL 101) Introduction to Philosophy
2020 Fall	(PHIL 106) Philosophy and Current Issues

Tutor

2022 Fall	(PHIL 211) Introduction to Modern Logic
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Grader

2024 Summer	(PHIL 213) Medical Ethics
2022 Fall	(PHIL 211) Introduction to Modern Logic

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

Ph.D., Philosophy, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Ethics & Metaethics	Love; Recent Books on Rationality; MishMashed Metaethics; Incommensurable Value; Recent Books related to Moral Epistemology/Justification/Methodology; Why Be Moral?; Advanced Ethics; Philosophy of Action
Metaphysics & Epistemology	Non-being; Truth in Fiction; Scepticism: Mathematical and Moral; Advanced Epistemology
Phil Mind & Science	Mental Content; Philosophy of Mind; Philosophy of Science
History of Phil & Logic	Kant; Formal Logic

M.A., Philosophy, Soongsil University

Heidegger, Normative Ethics, Metaphysics, Analytic Philosophy, Philosophy of Mind, Political-Ethical Theories, Utilitarianism, Contemporary Epistemology, Song Dynasty Philosophy

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT: THE RATIONALITY OF REGRET

Seungchul Yang

We often sincerely regret what we did or failed to do, believing that we should have acted otherwise. In many such cases, the action we now wish we had performed was one we could not have performed; it was, as we say, not our fault that we failed to do it. This is why we so often console someone who regrets by telling her “it was not your fault”—a consolation that has force partly because it suggests that her belief “I should have done it” is, strictly speaking, false, and there is, after all, nothing to regret.

However, such consolations are rarely offered as the literal verdict that the agent’s regret is inappropriate. We offer them in the hope that she will be eased of a pain we do not really think she is wrong to feel. Consider someone whose grave loss—say, the death of someone he loved—a very simple act would have prevented. Even if the failure was in no way his fault, his regret seems entirely natural. We might even expect it of him; it seems more appropriate for him to regret and to be eased by being told, “It was not your fault,” than to have no regret at all, thinking, “It was not my fault, so there is nothing to regret.”

Here is the puzzle. What is happening when we sincerely regret, believing that we should have acted otherwise, even if the action we believe we should have performed was not genuinely available to us? And what could make regret of this kind rational? My primary goal is to show that regret, even when based on a false belief about what one should have done, can still be rational.

The first two chapters establish that the puzzle is genuine—that the central belief in such regret really is false. The first chapter defends the principle that one has a decisive reason to do something only if one can do it. The second chapter defends an internalist constraint on reasons whose ‘can’ covers not only the action but also the agent’s motivation in performing it. Together, they show that when an agent could not do, or could not have been motivated to do, what she now wishes she had done, she had no decisive reason to do it—so her belief “I should have done it” is false, even though, in regretting, she feels as if she had such a reason.

The third chapter explains how that false belief about practical reasons (“I should have done otherwise”) can nonetheless be justified. I defend a Presumptive View of justification: one is justified in believing that a reason exists on the basis of evidence for its source, without needing evidence that its background conditions—including the internalist constraint—are satisfied. Since evidence of one’s own past incapacity is rarely available, an agent can be fully justified in believing that she had a reason, and thus that she should have acted, even when in reality she did not. This is what allows the central belief of regret to be rational despite being false.

The fourth chapter applies this result to regret itself, showing how both of its components—the belief “I should have done . . .” and the fitting negative emotion toward not having done it—can be justified even when the regretted action was beyond the agent’s capacity, and how the two components can further justify one another. The fifth chapter then turns to a common answer to why regret is appropriate: its benefits, such as forming a rational disposition toward better future decision-making. Such benefits look like the wrong kind of reasons for an attitude. I argue, however, that because regret is a dynamic process rather than a static state, its benefits can be generated within the process of regretting and shape its course and object—and when this is so, they can be the right kind of reasons for regret.

While the main aim of this dissertation is to solve the philosophical puzzle of regret, I also hope it offers some relief to those who suffer from regret. By showing that one can have reasons for regret even without actual fault, and that it is not irrational to regret as if one were at fault even when one is not, I hope to provide both a philosophical resolution and a measure of personal consolation.