

## Daniel Muñoz

### AOS

Ethics, Philosophy of Action

### AOC

Epistemology, Metaphysics, Language

### Employment

*Monash University (2019-present)*

Lecturer (equivalent of Assistant Professor in the US).

### Education

*Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2014-present)*

PhD 2019 (expected).

Dissertation: *What We Owe to Ourselves: Essays on Rights and Supererogation*.

Committee: Kieran Setiya and Tamar Schapiro (co-chairs), Caspar Hare.

*The University of Texas at Austin (2010-14)*

B.A. in linguistics, B.A. in philosophy.

### Publications

“Defeaters and Disqualifiers” (forthcoming) – *Mind*.

“Thinking, Acting, Considering” (2018) – *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 96 (2): 255–270.

“Not Knowing Everything That Matters,” with Jonathan Dancy (2014) – *Philosophers’ Magazine* 66: 94–9.

### Revise and Resubmit

[A paper in normative ethics] – *Noûs*.

### Scholarships and Awards

2014

- Kenan Sahin Presidential Graduate Fellowship (for outstanding first-year graduate students at MIT).
- Dean’s Distinguished Graduate (highest award for an undergraduate student in the UT Austin College of Liberal Arts).
- Phi Beta Kappa Award of Distinction (\$1000, for service and academic achievement).
- Undergraduate Research Fellowship (\$1,000).
- Mary Sue Collins Hibbs Scholarship (\$1000, for excellence in philosophy and linguistics).

2013

- Robert D. King Dean’s Distinguished Graduates Endowed Presidential Scholarship (\$2,500).
- Rapoport-King Thesis Scholarship (\$2,000).

**Selected Presentations (“\*” for invited; refereed otherwise)**

## “Why Isn’t Supererogation Wrong?”

- St. Louis Conference on Reasons and Rationality (2019).
- Monash University (2018\*).
- Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress (RoME), CU Boulder (main program, 2018).
- Moral, Social, and Political Theory Workshop, Australian National University (2018\*).
- Northern New England Philosophy Association Conference (2018).

## “Better to Do Wrong”

- Australasian Association of Philosophy Conference (AAP), University of Victoria, Wellington (2018).
- Ethics Reading Group, University of Vermont (2018\*).

## “All Reasons Are Moral”

- The Australian Catholic University (2018\*).

## “Defeaters and Disqualifiers”

- Central APA (symposium, 2018).
- Epistemology Reading Group, The Australian National University (2018\*).
- American Association of Mexican Philosophers Annual Conference (2017\*).
- MIT Philosophy Club (2017).

## “Consequentialism and the Act Itself”

- Rocky Mountain Philosophy Conference, CU Boulder (2018).

## “Echo Chambers and Dependent Evidence”

- Michigan/MIT Social Philosophy Workshop (2018).

## “All Reasons Are Moral”

- The Australian Catholic University (2018\*).

## “Rights Against Oneself”

- CU Boulder Center for Values and Social Policy (2017\*).

## “Thinking, Acting, Considering”

- UT Austin Graduate Conference (2017).

## “Grounding Nonexistence”

- AAP, The University of Adelaide (2017).
- Eastern APA (poster, 2018).

## “Working Out a Theory of Naturalness”

- Metaphysical Mayhem, Rutgers University (2016\*).

**Comments**

Mica Rapstine, “Nobody You Kill is a Stranger” – Harvard/MIT Graduate Conference (2019).

Joel Archer, “Solving the Rollback Argument Using Metaphysical Grounding” – Eastern APA (colloquium, 2019).

Commentator-at-Large for Pennsylvania Reasons and Foundations of Epistemology Conference (PeRFECt4) – The University of Pennsylvania (2018).

Invited Commentator-at-Large for the Washington University Workshop in Ethics – Washington University in St. Louis (2018).

James Fritz, “What Pessimism About Moral Deference Means for Disagreement” – Pacific APA (colloquium, 2018).

Brian Bix, “Law and Economics and the Role of Explanation” – *The Future of Law and Economics* and the Legacy of Guido Calabresi, conference at Boston University School of Law (2017).

Tamar Schapiro, “Kant’s Philosophical Method and Contemporary Action Theory,” MITing of the Minds (2017).

Ralph Wedgwood, “The Pitfalls of ‘Reasons’” – MITing of the Minds (2015).

Luke Elson, “A Bad Character Response to Gratuitous Harm” – Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress (2015).

### Visits

*The Australian National University*

- July 2017
- June–July 2018.

### Teaching

- F 2017: Philosophical Issues in Brain Science (E.J. Green, 2 sections).
- F 2016: Problems of Philosophy (Caspar Hare, 2 sections).
- S 2016: Kant’s Ethical Theory (Christine Korsgaard, 2 sections –Harvard University).
- F 2015: Minds & Machines (Sarah Paul, 2 sections).
- 2013: Ideas of the 20th Century (Daniel Bonevac, assistant – The University of Texas at Austin and edX MOOC).

### Graduate-level Coursework

- S 2018: Deontic Logic and Topics in Semantics (Stephen Yablo: independent study).
- S 2017: Explanation (Bradford Skow & Ned Hall: MIT/Harvard), Partiality (Kieran Setiya & Ryan Preston-Roedder).
- S 2016: Ethics (Caspar Hare).
- F 2015: British Moralists (Tamar Schapiro), Time and Explanation (Skow: independent study).
- S 2015: Proseminar II (Sally Haslanger & Agustín Rayo), Moral Psychology (Setiya), Normative and Meta-normative Theory (Selim Berker & Derek Parfit: Harvard).
- F 2014: Proseminar I (Jack Spencer & Yablo), Ought and ‘Ought’ (Spencer & Justin Khoo), Meta-ethics (Berker: Harvard).
- S 2014: Semantics II (Hans Kamp: UT Austin).
- F 2013: Semantics I (David Beaver: UT).
- S 2013: *On What Matters* (Jonathan Dancy: UT).

**Service***Refereeing*

- 2019: *Philosophical Studies, Philosophy and Phenomenological Review*.

*Events*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Annual MIT/Harvard/St Andrews Rights Workshop, co-organizer (2019, with Sam Dishaw and Joe Bowen, keynote: Frances Kamm)
- 2018 Harvard-MIT Graduate Conference, co-organizer (Keynote: Carolina Sartorio).
- 2015 Harvard-MIT Graduate Conference, co-organizer (Keynote: Jessica Moss).
- MIT Philosophy Colloquium Series, co-organizer (2016-17).
- Week Stata (MIT's prospective student visiting period), co-organizer (2016).
- Sidney-Pacific Graduate Community, Social Chair (Service Award x2, 2015-17)

*Reading Groups*

- SHAPE (MIT's social, moral, and political philosophy reading group), organizer (2015-16, 2017-18).
- Social Choice Theory Reading Group, organizer (summer 2018).
- *Realm of Rights* Reading Group, organizer (fall 2017).
- Reading group on the Sidgwick-Ewing School, organizer (spring 2015)

**References****Kieran Setiya (co-chair)**

[ksetiya@mit.edu](mailto:ksetiya@mit.edu)

**Tamar Schapiro (co-chair)**

[tamschap@mit.edu](mailto:tamschap@mit.edu)

**Caspar Hare**

[casparh@mit.edu](mailto:casparh@mit.edu)

**Bradford Skow**

[bskow@mit.edu](mailto:bskow@mit.edu)

**EJ Green (teaching letter)**

[ejgr@mit.edu](mailto:ejgr@mit.edu)

**What We Owe to Ourselves:  
Essays on Rights and Supererogation**

*Dissertation Abstract*

Earlier today, without asking permission, I took a bike belonging to someone in my neighborhood and rode it to work. I then noticed that this same person, who also works in my office, was looking awfully tired. So I pinched him on the arm, opened his mouth, and poured hot coffee inside (which burned his tongue—he resented that). As if that weren't enough, I used this poor fellow's money to buy my lunch, and even spent my break thumbing through his private emails, occasionally firing off a reply to his friends and associates.

Before you reach for any moral sanctions, I should note that this neighbor of mine was me.

There is something so wonderfully elusive about the morality of how we treat ourselves. We are as important as others, and yet we may be much more cavalier in how we handle bikes and tongues and dollars when they belong to us—no need for “May I?” or consent forms.

But why? Why do we have wider permissions regarding ourselves? The standard answer is that morality is *Self-Other Asymmetric*: morality makes brute exceptions so that we may favor—or sacrifice—our own interests in ways that we may not favor or sacrifice the interests of strangers. My dissertation argues for the opposite view: we have the same rights against ourselves as against others, and we owe ourselves the same things we owe to anyone else. *Rights and duties are Self-Other Symmetric*.

*Rights Against Oneself*

At first, rights against oneself may sound outrageous. The very concept is widely seen as incoherent; and even if we did have some rights against ourselves, it seems absurd to think that they are as numerous as our rights against others, since so many acts that would wrong others are fully kosher solo—putting coffee into a mouth, extracting cash from a wallet, having spare innards taken out.

In “Rights Against Oneself,” I defend the Symmetric view on both fronts. First, why do some acts seem to violate rights only when done to others, not when done to ourselves? My answer: by deciding to do an act, we *consent* to it, thereby waiving our rights. Second, how could rights against oneself be coherent? The worry, due to Kant, is that rights against oneself would entail the power to release oneself from an obligation; obligations, unlike hobbies, are supposed to be “binding;” and we aren't bound if we can wiggle out. My response: self-release makes good sense. We are “bound” *until* we exercise our power to release ourselves, just as a sovereign is bound by the law until deigning to change it. I then treat some tough cases: drunken decisions, harmful accidents, privacy, autonomy.

My conclusion is that Self-Other Symmetry is not just coherent but illuminating, giving a fresh account of how and when it is possible to wrong oneself. We wrong ourselves by doing something just if the act would wrong someone else in a relevantly similar situation—a consenting other who knows what we know and wants what we want. Most notably, we wrong ourselves when consent isn't enough, as is true in the case of unwaivable rights, like the right not to be pointlessly maimed.

*From Rights to Prerogatives*

What about *waivable* rights against oneself? Are they just idle? In a way, yes. They aren't *normative reasons*. Since they are sure to be waived when we act against them, they don't constrain deliberation or change what's choiceworthy. But these rights can still be called on to justify an action to others, as

when we say “That’s *my* kidney” (so I may keep it),” or “I have a *right* to be here” (even though I should really be somewhere else). Instead of being reasons, waivable rights against oneself are *prerogatives*: they make acts permissible without making them choiceworthy, allowing us to do less than best. This line of argument, developed in “From Rights to Prerogatives,” is the pivotal move of the dissertation. The last three papers argue that rights-based prerogatives are essential for understanding supererogation—optimal yet optional action “beyond the call of duty.”

### *All Reasons Are Moral*

On the influential “reasons first” view, supererogation isn’t about prerogatives at all; it is just a tradeoff between two flavors of reason. “Moral” reasons favor the greater good of others (giving the kidney); “non-moral” reasons favor self-preservation (keeping it)—and only moral reasons obligate. But how do we draw the line? How do we pick out the moral reasons from the rest? I argue, in “All Reasons Are Moral,” that any attempt faces a dilemma. If self-interest is non-moral, then we can’t forbid pointless harms to oneself; if self-interest is moral, then we have obligations to benefit ourselves, e.g. by flossing our teeth—which seems unduly moralistic. I conclude by arguing that we can better explain the cases by going beyond reasons and using prerogatives.

### *Why Isn’t Supererogation Wrong?*

But what do prerogatives permit? The orthodox view is that they let us promote (or sacrifice) our own interests. In “Why Isn’t Supererogation Wrong?” I argue that prerogatives aren’t fundamentally based in *interests* at all. The appeal to interests requires ad hoc tweaks—a Self-Other Asymmetry, and an exception so that prerogatives don’t let us get away with murder. But the fundamental problem is that supererogation can happen even when the agent’s interests aren’t at stake: we don’t have to do costless favors, and no one is entitled to our organs just because they have offered compensation. The basis of prerogatives isn’t the Asymmetric specialness of self-interest, but the Symmetric normalness of rights against oneself. My prerogatives let me omit the same acts that are forbidden by my rights against others: moving my body, removing my kidney, shipping off my things.

### *Better to Do Wrong*

I conclude, in “Better to Do Wrong,” by applying my view of prerogatives to a recent paradox of ineffective altruism. Suppose that, at the cost of serious injury, you can save either one or two children from a falling building. Several writers argue that it must be permissible to save just one, since it is permissible to save zero, and no worse to save just one. (Analogous arguments are used to defend the choice to open sweatshops, which is said to be no worse than permissibly hiring no one.) But this argument can be resisted: you might have a prerogative to do your worst option (save zero), but only a negligible prerogative to do your second-worst (save just one); when this happens, a wrong act is better than a permissible one. Here prerogatives bring out the difference between being *wrong* and being *worst*—just as, in the case of vanilla supererogation, they put a gap between what is *best* and what is *required*.

In the end, on a Symmetric view, the specialness of our relation to ourselves turns out to be illusory. Instead of a cosmic rift between self and other, we have the simple split between patients who do and who don’t consent, who share and who repudiate the agent’s values—plus the contingent fact that, when the agent *is* the patient, mental alignment is guaranteed. Our prerogatives, in turn, don’t reflect the perspectival priority of self-interest, but rather the equality of each in the order of rights. What we owe to others is limited because we owe the same things to ourselves.