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### **AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION**

Normative Ethics, Applied Ethics, Metaphysics

### **AREAS OF COMPETENCE**

Social and Political Philosophy, Chinese Philosophy, Logic

### **EDUCATION**

#### **University of Massachusetts Amherst**

PhD, Philosophy, 2025 (*expected*)

Dissertation: *The Moral Significance of Doing Harm*

Committee: Peter Graham (chair), Alejandro Pérez Carballo, Christopher Meacham, Ana Arregui (Dept. of Linguistics)

#### **New College of Florida**

BA (Honors), Philosophy and Psychology, 2013

### **RESEARCH**

#### Publications

“Doing Harm While Allowing It: Towards a New Framework for the Doctrine of Doing and Allowing” (forthcoming in *Philosophers’ Imprint*:  
<https://doi.org/10.3998/phimp.3370>)

"Counterfactuals and Double Prevention: Trouble for the Causal Independence Thesis", 2020, *Thought: A Journal of Philosophy*, 9 (3):198-206.

#### Works in Progress

A paper on intervening agency, harm, and defense (*under review*)

A paper on accounts of causation and double prevention

A paper examining the moral significance of causation

A paper on the ethics of abortion

Presentations

"(Less) Elusive Knowledge", 2017, Midsouth Philosophy Conference

Comments on James Montmarquet's "Knowledge and Epistemic Responsibility", 2017,  
Midsouth Philosophy Conference

**AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS**

John Robison Prize (Annual prize awarded for teaching excellence by the Philosophy  
Department at UMass Amherst), 2022

Herbert Heidelberger Prize (Annual essay prize awarded by the Philosophy Department  
at UMass Amherst), 2018

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

With Full Teaching Responsibility

*Mount Holyoke College*

Foundations in Chinese Thought, Spring 2024

Ethics, Fall 2023

Medical Ethics, Fall 2022

*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Chinese Philosophy, Spring 2024

Problems in Social Thought, Spring 2023

Introduction to Ethics (Honors), Spring 2022

Business Ethics, Fall 2021

Introduction to Metaphysics, Spring 2021

Business Ethics, Fall 2020

Business Ethics, Spring 2020

Business Ethics, Fall 2019

As a Teaching Assistant

*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Introduction to Ethics (Prof. A. Pérez Carballo), Spring 2019

Early Modern Philosophy (Prof. E. Garcia), Fall 2018

Medical Ethics (Prof. S. Horowitz), Spring 2018

Ancient Philosophy (Prof. V. de Harven), Fall 2017

Other Experience

*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Committee Member for Undergraduate Honors Theses in Philosophy, Fall 2022  
Sponsor for Independent Study in Philosophy (Philosophy of Medicine), Spring 2022  
Sponsor for Independent Study in Philosophy (Ethics of Advertising), Fall 2021  
Presenter for UMass Philosophy Teaching Workshop, Spring 2021  
Volunteer for UMass Philosophy in Public Schools Program, Fall 2017

**PROFESSIONAL AND DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE**

Referee for *Ergo*  
Graduate Student-Faculty Liaison for UMass Philosophy Dept. (2023-2024)  
Conducted Gen Ed Review on behalf of the UMass Philosophy Dept. (2023)  
Social Hour and Teatime Organizer for UMass Philosophy Dept. (2020-2023)  
Prospective Grad Student Visit Coordinator for UMass Philosophy Dept. (2019)

**REFERENCES**

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## Dissertation Summary, “The Moral Significance of Doing Harm”

Many find it intuitively clear that there is a moral difference between harming others and allowing others to be harmed. For example, although it seems wrong to kill an innocent person in order to save one’s own life, it doesn’t seem wrong to let someone else die rather than sacrifice one’s own life to save them. Cases like these motivate the **Doctrine of Doing and Allowing (DDA)**: All else equal, more is needed to justify *doing* harm to others than is needed to justify *allowing* others to be harmed. The DDA remains a highly controversial view, and its truth or falsity arguably has widespread implications across ethics. My dissertation consists of a series of related papers in which I articulate the doing/allowing distinction and defend the DDA.

In **Chapter 1**, I consider the question of how we should best understand the doing/allowing distinction itself. In particular, I defend the view that doing harm just is causing harm. I respond to several objections to this view: (i) that it will lead to implausible results (or collapse the doing/allowing distinction) when combined with general accounts of causation, (ii) that it faces irresolvable difficulties with causation involving omissions, and (iii) that it suffers from counterexamples in which agents do harm by performing acts that bear non-causal explanatory connections to harm. I argue that the causal analysis of doing harm is not undermined by these objections.

In **Chapter 2**, I turn to discussion of the moral significance of the doing/allowing distinction. I argue here that doing and allowing are not exclusive, that most cases of doing harm are also cases of allowing harm, and that there is an interesting moral synergy between doing and allowing harm. In fact, it turns out that, by itself, doing harm carries *less* moral weight than allowing harm. I argue that ordinary harm-doing is especially hard to justify because it involves a convergence of both doing *and* allowing harm. I show that this is not simply the result of an additive effect, but rather, there is a moral synergy between doing harm and allowing the same harm to the same victim. I conclude by offering two possible ways to recast or clarify the DDA in light of this moral synergy.

In **Chapter 3**, I turn to cases involving double prevention (*viz.* cases in which something *A* prevents some *B* from preventing some *C*). Here, I ask, do we count as doing harm when we bring about a harm via double prevention? Attending to the mechanisms by which, e.g., guns work suggests an affirmative answer. But attending to some of the very kinds of cases that motivate drawing the distinction between *doing* and *merely allowing* suggests a negative answer. This raises a puzzle. I propose that we should draw a distinction between different kinds of double prevention, where one kind of double prevention can serve as a link in a sequence running from an agent to a harm, but the other cannot. Roughly, terminating some process that is already preventing some outcome falls in the former category (because it constitutes causation in the relevant sense), whereas preventing something from *later* preventing some outcome falls in the latter (because it does not constitute causation in the relevant sense). I also argue that this view has advantages over approaches that build a sensitivity to expectations into the doing/allowing distinction itself: these other approaches will only partly solve the puzzle about double prevention, and at the same time generate new problems.

In **Chapter 4**, I offer the core defense of the DDA. I engage in two tasks: first, offering a principled *explanation* for why doing harm (while allowing it) is harder to justify than merely allowing harm; and second, responding to objections that the DDA delivers implausible verdicts. In the first part, I articulate and appeal to a notion of interpersonal control with which certain duties of justice are concerned. When we harm others, we exercise control over them in a way that we don't when we merely allow them to be harmed. This, I argue, constitutes an unjust way of relating to others. Because ordinary harm-doing *also* involves allowing harm (as argued in chapter 2), I conclude that ordinary harm-doing has strictly more wrong-making features than mere harm-allowing. The second part defends the DDA from the charge that it delivers counterintuitive verdicts in certain types of cases. I focus here on two types of cases: (i) cases involving people wickedly allowing others to die for personal gain (*viz.* the cases driving James Rachels's<sup>1</sup> bare difference argument), and (ii) cases in which we launch a threat and subsequently must decide whether to do harm to someone else to prevent that earlier threat from coming to fruition (a challenge raised by Jason Hanna<sup>2</sup>). I argue that the DDA can deliver plausible verdicts in both of these kinds of cases, and further, that we are left with implausible verdicts in certain variations of these cases *unless* we accept the DDA.

In **Chapter 5**, I turn to the question of whether indirect harming – that is, causing someone else to voluntarily do harm to a victim – infringes that victim's right not to be harmed. For example, if *A* throws a pipe on the ground that *B* subsequently picks up and uses to commit an assault, clearly *B* infringes the victim's moral right not to be harmed. But what about *A*? Is *A* liable to be harmed in defense of the assault victim? Using a series of cases, I argue that indirectly doing harm to someone does not infringe their right not to be harmed unless done with the intention to cause harm. (So *A* does not infringe the victim's right to be harmed unless *A*'s act of throwing the pipe on the ground was intended to cause the victim harm.) I also argue that the intuitive moral difference between direct and indirect harming cannot be explained by appeal to uncertainty about how other agents will act. This view has widespread implications. For one, it undercuts a recent argument that the DDA requires us to make as little impact on the world as we can (so as to minimize the risk of causing people to come into existence who will later go on to do harm).<sup>3</sup> It also bears on the notion of *novus actus interveniens* in the law and non-combatant liability to attack in war. In the second part of the chapter, I address purported counterexamples to this view. I conclude by suggesting how the notion of interpersonal control discussed in chapter 4 could help to explain both the general moral difference made by intervening agency and the exceptional cases in which harm is intended.

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<sup>1</sup> Rachels, J. (1975). Active and passive euthanasia. In S. Cahn (ed.), *Exploring Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Hanna, J. (2015). Doing, allowing, and the moral relevance of the past. *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 12: 677-698.

<sup>3</sup> Mogensen, A. & MacAskill, W. (2021). The Paralysis Argument. *Philosophers' Imprint*, 21(15).