

Zachary R. Agoff

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AREA OF SPECIALIZATION: Early Modern Philosophy

AREAS OF COMPETENCE: Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of Martial Arts

EDUCATION

PhD, Philosophy (expected defense: early Summer 2024)

University of Pennsylvania

(Advisor: Karen Detlefsen; Committee: Gary Hatfield and Sukaina Hirji)

MA, Philosophy (2018)

San Francisco State University

(Advisor: Alice Sowaal; Committee: David Landy and Mohammad Azadpur)

BA, Philosophy (2014)

Western Washington University

PUBLICATIONS (†: peer reviewed)

2023. “Descartes on Intellectual Joy and the Intellectual Love of God,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*.†
2023. “Hello, We’re Philosophy in the Wild,” *Public Philosophy Journal* (co-authored with M. Sidzinska and M. Gadomski).
2023. “Unification with the Divine in Teresa de Ávila,” M. E. Waite (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Concise Concepts by Women Philosophers*, <https://historyofwomenphilosophers.org/ecc/>.†
2023. “Mysticism in Teresa de Ávila,” M. E. Waite (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Concise Concepts by Women Philosophers*, <https://historyofwomenphilosophers.org/ecc/>.†
2021. “Experimentation, Distributed Cognition, and Flow: A Scientific Lens on Mixed Martial Arts,” J. Holt and M. Ramsay (eds.), *The Philosophy of Mixed Martial Arts: Squaring the Octagon*, [Routledge’s Series in Ethics and Sport](#) (co-authored with B. Gwerder and V. Keyser).

IN PROGRESS

A paper on Descartes's account of the sensuous love of God (*under review*)

A paper on the epistemology of martial arts (*under review*)

A paper on Teresa of Ávila's contemplative methodology (*draft*)

A paper on Descartes's decision theory (*draft*)

A paper on Du Châtelet, eternity, and time (*draft*)

AWARDS, DISTINCTIONS, GRANTS

2023. Award for Best Presentation
(Croatia Libori Summer School)
2022. SAS Dean's Travel Subvention
(University of Pennsylvania)
2022. Event Grant for Philosophy in the Wild – \$1600
(Greater Philadelphia Philosophy Consortium)
2021. Event Grant for Philosophy in the Wild – \$1500
(Greater Philadelphia Philosophy Consortium)
- 2019- Benjamin Franklin Fellowship
(University of Pennsylvania, 2019-current)
2018. Graduate Student Award for Distinguished Achievement
(San Francisco State University)
2018. Distinction on Thesis Defense
(San Francisco State University)
2018. Graduate Travel Award
(San Francisco State University)
2017. Distinction on Qualifying Exam
(San Francisco State University)
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PRESENTATIONS (†: invited; *: refereed; +: other)

2023. “Teresa of Ávila and the Art of Introspection.” Women Philosophers and Scientists on Psychology, Mind and Body Awareness, Croatia Libori Summer School, online.*
2022. “Descartes on the Intellectual Love of God.” The Wisdom of Love, Society of Christian Philosophers Mountain-West Conference, USA.*
2022. “Descartes and Astell on Sociality and the Love of God.” Focus Group Presentations, Method and History of Philosophy, Extending New Narratives, USA.†
2022. “Descartes on the Sensuous Love of God.” Dissertation Seminar, University of Pennsylvania, USA.+
2021. “Du Châtelet and the Early Modern Conceptions of Eternity.” Early Career Research Seminar, Extending New Narratives, online.*
2021. “Descartes on the Intellectual Love of God.” Dissertation Seminar, University of Pennsylvania, USA.+
2020. “Du Châtelet and the Early Modern Conceptions of Eternity.” Philosophy in the Wild Graduate Workshop, USA.+
2019. “A Metaphysical Method for Moral Development: Descartes and Elisabeth on Morally Relevant Knowledge.” Sixth Finnish-Hungarian Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, University of Helsinki, Finland.*
2018. “A Metaphysical Method for Moral Development: Descartes and Elisabeth on Morally Relevant Knowledge.” Visiting Presentation for Graduate Seminar (on Descartes), San Francisco State University, USA.†
2018. “Cartesian Love.” Northwest Student Philosophy Conference, Western Washington University, USA.†
2018. “Elisabeth’s Challenge for Descartes: Does the Cartesian Account of Contentedness and Altruism Necessitate an Infinite Science?” Elisabeth of Bohemia: A Workshop, Paderborn University, Germany.*

INVITED, UNABLE TO ATTEND

2019. “A Metaphysical Method for Moral Development: Descartes and Elisabeth on Morally Relevant Knowledge.” First International Conference of Women in Modern Philosophy, Rio de Janeiro State University, Brazil.†

COMMENTS

2020. “On Evan Thomas’s ‘Descartes and the Monstrous Thesis’.” Western E-vent in Early Modern Philosophy, Western University.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE*JOURNAL REFEREEING*

Journal for the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists

RESEARCH

2022. Research Assistant, *Routledge Handbook of Women and Early Modern European Philosophy*, Extending New Narratives.

DEPARTMENTAL / ACADEMIC VOLUNTEER

2021. Ethics Bowl Coach, Academy at Palumbo, Philadelphia, USA.
(Philadelphia Regional Champions, Playoff Champions, National Competitors, Winners of the Spirit of the Ethics Bowl at the National Competition)
2020. Ethics Bowl Judge, Philadelphia Ethics Bowl, USA.
2018. SFSU Philosophy Department Representative, San Francisco State University, USA.

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

2023. Co-Organizer, Philosophy in the Wild, Poe Paddy State Park, PA, USA.
2022. Co-Organizer, Philosophy in the Wild, Ridley Creek State Park, PA, USA.
2021. Co-Organizer, Philosophy in the Wild, Poe Paddy State Park, PA, USA.
2020. Co-Organizer, University of Pennsylvania’s Virtual Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, online.
2019. Chair, Princeton-Penn Workshop on Plato’s *Republic*, Princeton University, USA.
2018. Chair, Berkeley-Stanford-Davis Graduate Conference, Stanford University, USA.
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TEACHING (UNIVERSITY)

University of Pennsylvania – *Teaching Assistant*

- 2022. PHIL004–History of Modern Philosophy (Spring)
- 2021. PHIL003–History of Ancient Philosophy (Fall)
- 2021. PHIL004–History of Modern Philosophy (Spring)
- 2020. PHIL008–Social Contract Theory (Fall)

San Francisco State University – *Graduate Teaching Associate (Instructor)*

- 2018. PHIL105–Philosophy and Religion (Spring)
- 2017. PHIL105–Philosophy and Religion (Spring)

San Francisco State University – *Teaching Assistant*

- 2018. PHIL303–Modern Philosophy (Spring)
- 2017. PHIL470–Environmental Ethics (Spring)

TEACHING (NON-UNIVERSITY)

American Cultural Immersion Program on Crystal Springs Uplands Campus – *Instructor*

- 2018. An Introduction to Western Philosophy (Summer)

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

University of Pennsylvania

- PHIL 405 (Lisa Miracchi): Philosophy of Language
- PHIL 468 (Rolf Horstmann): Hegel
- PHIL 479 (Samuel Freeman): Modern Political Philosophy
- PHIL 505 (Daniel Singer): Formal Logic
- PHIL 510 (Susan Sauvé Meyer and Sukaina Hirji): Late Plato
- PHIL 526 (Gary Hatfield): Philosophy of Psychology
- PHIL 551 (Gary Hatfield): Descartes on Representation
- PHIL 551 (Gary Hatfield): Descartes’s Meditations
- PHIL 551 (Karen Detlefsen): Topics in Early Modern Philosophy (Émilie du Châtelet)
- PHIL 551 (Karen Detlefsen): Topics in Early Modern Philosophy (Embryology)
- PHIL 600 (Errol Lord and Daniel Wodak): Proseminar
- PHIL 699 (Karen Detlefsen): Independent Study on Kant’s Third Critique

San Francisco State University

- PHIL 715 (Vadim Keyser): Seminar in Philosophical Writing
- PHIL 717 (Shelley Wilcox): Projects in Teaching Philosophy (x2)

GRADUATE COURSEWORK, CONT'D

PHIL 718 (Shelley Wilcox): Teaching Philosophy Workshop Series (x2)
 PHIL 770 (Alice Sowaal): Seminar on Descartes's Ethics
 PHIL 770 (Alice Sowaal): Seminar on Cambridge Platonism and Philosophy of Religion
 PHIL 770 (David Landy): Seminar on Hegel's Phenomenology
 PHIL 770 (Mohammad Azadpur): Seminar on the Myth of the Given
 PHIL 772 (Alice Sowaal): Seminar on Spinoza's Ethics, pts. I-II
 PHIL 795 (Alice Sowaal): Seminar on Spinoza's Ethics, pts. III-V
 PHIL 891 (Vadim Keyser): Probabilistic Reasoning Reading Group
 PHIL 896 (David Landy): Directed Reading in Fundamental Philosophical Texts
 PHIL 899 (Alice Sowaal): Independent Study: Descartes on Love
 PHIL 898: Thesis Defense

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT:

“Essays on Moral and Theological Themes in Teresa of Ávila and René Descartes”

Central philosophical characters of the early modern period have their roots in the Catholic meditational tradition, which utilizes a variety of intellectual and imaginative exercises to yield affective mental states. My dissertation draws on this connection, focusing primarily on Teresa of Ávila and René Descartes. Across five essays, I offer (i) a novel interpretation of Descartes's account of the love of God, (ii) an argument that Descartes and Teresa focus on quite distinct cognitive states in their respective meditational texts, and (iii) interpretations of Teresa's underlying philosophy of mind and her treatment of self-deception. With respect to (i), I demonstrate that there is a metaphysical basis for Descartes's account of the love of God and that he has the psychophysical resources for allowing that love to be communicated to the body. I also show that there are substantive moral reasons for Descartes's development of such an account. It is as though his metaphysics were primed for the love of God and allowing the moral benefits of doing so to be codified in the brain. This casts Descartes's moral philosophy in a new light. With respect to (ii), I show, contrary to some existing secondary literature, that Descartes and Teresa are up to substantially different projects. This does not mean, however, that Teresa is not worthy of further philosophical attention. (iii) demonstrates that Teresa is engaged in robust philosophical projects, embedded within a mystical framework. By pulling out the underlying philosophical content, I display straightforward methods for reading her texts in philosophically relevant ways. In doing so, I not only show that we can engage in a more nuanced historical landscape, but I also demonstrate that philosophical content is a great deal more diverse than commonly assumed.

REFERENCES

Karen Detlefsen

Vice Provost of Education and
Professor of Philosophy and Education
University of Pennsylvania
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Sukaina Hirji

Assistant Professor of Philosophy
University of Pennsylvania
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Vadim Keyser

Associate Professor of Philosophy
Fresno State University
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Gary Hatfield

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Alice Sowaal

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