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CONTACT  
INFORMATION

Department of Philosophy  
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Harvard University  
Cambridge, MA 02138

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AREAS OF  
SPECIALIZATION

Philosophy of Social Science, Philosophy of Economics, Applied Ethics and Philosophy of Technology, Philosophy of Science

AREAS OF  
COMPETENCE

Social/Political Philosophy, Applied Ethics, Metaphysics, Epistemology

EDUCATION

**Harvard University**, Cambridge, MA

Ph.D., Philosophy, May 2019 (*expected*)

Thesis: *The Explanatory Role of Preferences in the Social Sciences*

Committee: Ned Hall (chair), Susanna Rinard, Lucas Stanczyk, and Michael Strevens (NYU)

M.A., Philosophy, Aug. 2014

**London School of Economics**, London, UK

Visiting Student at the Center for Philosophy of Natural and Social Science, Summer Term, 2018

**New York University**

Visiting Student, Fall Semester, 2016

**Oxford University**, Oxford, UK

BPhil, Philosophy, 2009 – 2011

Thesis: *The Epistemic Norm of Assertion*, supervised by Elizabeth Fricker (*distinction*)

Examination Topics: Hume, Logic and the Philosophy of Language, Metaphysics and Epistemology

**Gettysburg College**, Gettysburg, PA

B.A. Philosophy, English Literature, 2005 – 2009 (*summa cum laude*)

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT	My dissertation examines how epistemic, practical, and ethical commitments influence modeling in the social sciences. It does so using two case studies: revealed preference approaches and market design. I argue that revealed preferences do sometimes explain an agent’s choices, on either a unificationist or an interventionist account of explanation. Here I oppose a widespread consensus that revealed preferences have no power to explain consumption and other choices. This explanatory defense is driven by the epistemic and practical goals behind revealed preference modeling, such as the efficient summary of patterns. Second, I argue that ethical commitments other than preference utilitarianism, such as equality of opportunity and inequality, guide market design, that they should do so, and that economists should draw on these other commitments more systematically.
PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS IN PROGRESS	<p>“A Unificationist Defense of Revealed Preferences” (forthcoming, <i>Economics and Philosophy</i>)</p> <p><i>under review</i></p> <p>“Embedded EthiCS: Integrating Ethics Broadly Across Computer Science Education,” with B. Grosz, D. Gray Grant, J. Behrends, and J. Waldo (revise and resubmit, <i>Communications of the ACM</i>)</p> <p><i>in preparation</i></p> <p>“A Right to Explanation of Automated Decisions”</p> <p>“An Interventionist Defense of Revealed Preferences”</p> <p>“Beyond Unenviable Matches: Preferences, Priorities, and Reasons”</p>
SELECTED PRESENTATIONS	<p>“The Ethics of Market Design”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guest Lecture, Economics 2099: Market Design <span style="float: right;">Nov. 2018</span> Harvard (<i>invited</i>)</li> </ul> <p>“The Right to Explanation”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence, Monday Seminar <span style="float: right;">Nov. 2018</span> Cambridge (<i>invited</i>)</li> <li>• Philosophy of Machine Learning: Knowledge and Causality <span style="float: right;">Mar. 2018</span> UC Irvine (<i>refereed</i>)</li> </ul> <p>“An Interventionist Account of Revealed Preference Explanations”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revealed Preferences Workshop <span style="float: right;">Nov. 2018</span> LSE (<i>workshop co-organizer</i>)</li> <li>• Causes, Norms, and Decisions <span style="float: right;">Aug. 2018</span> Leibniz Universität Hannover (<i>refereed</i>)</li> </ul>

	“Discrimination and Causal versus Statistical Fairness Criteria”	
	• Lighting Talk, Fairness in Machine Learning Workshop Google Boston ( <i>refereed</i> )	Sep. 2018
	“Fair Matching via Algorithms”	
	• Fourth International Conference “Economic Philosophy” ENS de Lyon ( <i>refereed</i> )	June 2018
	“Explanatory Challenges to Revealed Preference Approaches: A Unificationist Response”	
	• Workshop on Reasons, Rationality and Intentional Agency The London School of Economics ( <i>invited</i> )	Sep. 2017
	• Lake Como Summer School on the Evolution of the Economic Theory of Decision Making ( <i>refereed</i> )	Aug. 2017
	• European Congress of Analytic Philosophy Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich ( <i>refereed</i> )	Aug. 2017
	• EIPE 20th Anniversary Conference Erasmus University, Rotterdam ( <i>refereed</i> )	Mar. 2017
	“Explanatory Challenges to Classical Rational Choice Theory”	
	• European Network for the Philosophy of Social Science University of Helsinki ( <i>refereed</i> )	Aug. 2016
	“Idealization, Explanation, and Scientific Realism”	
	• Society for the Metaphysics of Science University of Geneva ( <i>refereed</i> )	Sep. 2016
	• Infinite Idealizations in Science Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich ( <i>refereed</i> )	June 2016
SELECTED COMMENTS	On “Digital Demos and Algorithmic Citizenship” Panel Emerging Technologies and the Future of Citizenship Conference ( <i>invited</i> )	June 2018
	On “Elgin and Kvanvig on Idealizations and the Factivity of Scientific Understanding,” Sorin Bangu	Sep. 2017

Society for the Metaphysics of Science  
(*invited*)

AWARDS & HONORS	Cross-Disciplinary Research Fellowship for research on choice at LSE Mind, Brain, and Behavior Group, Harvard University	Spring 2018
	Richard M. Martin Prize Fellowship Department of Philosophy, Harvard University	AY 2016 – 2017
	Certificate of Distinction for Teaching of Undergraduates, Harvard University for <i>Saints, Heretics, and Atheists</i> for <i>Philosophy of Science</i> for <i>Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics</i> for <i>Metaphysics</i>	Spring 2017 Spring 2016 Spring 2015 Fall 2014
	Pre-Dissertation Fellowship Harvard University	Summer 2013
	Phi Beta Kappa, Gettysburg College Chapter	2008
	Chan L. Coulter Philosophy Award Gettysburg College (awarded annually to the best Philosophy thesis)	Spring 2009
	Graeff English Prize Gettysburg College (awarded annually to the best English Literature thesis)	Spring 2009
	Presidential Scholarship (Academic Merit) Gettysburg College	AY 2005 – 2009
SPECIALIZED SEMINARS	Causal pluralism: a multi-disciplinary investigation of causality in philosophy and the sciences Radcliffe Institute Seminar, Harvard University ( <i>invited</i> )	January 2018
	Lake Como Summer School on the Evolution of the Economic Theory of Decision Making Lake Como School of Advanced Studies ( <i>refereed</i> )	August 2017
	Moral Intuitionism: Epistemological and Ethical Aspects Central European University, Budapest ( <i>refereed</i> )	July 2013

GRADUATE  
COURSEWORK

(\*not taken for credit)

**Philosophy of Science and Social Science**

<i>*Behavioral Economics</i>	Spring 2018
<i>Utility</i> , Amartya Sen, Eric Maskin, Barry Mazur	Fall 2017
<i>Intermediate Microeconomics</i>	Fall 2017
<i>*Intermediate Macroeconomics</i>	Spring 2017
<i>*Explanation</i> , Ned Hall and Brad Skow	Spring 2017
<i>*Confirmation</i> , Michael Strevens, NYU	Fall 2016
<i>*Philosophy of Probability</i> , Susanna Rinard	Spring 2015

**Political Philosophy and Ethics**

<i>*Seminar on Social Welfare</i> , Matthew Adler, LSE	Summer 2018
<i>*Topics in Political Philosophy</i> , Lucas Stanczyk	Spring 2018
<i>*Topics in Political Philosophy</i> , Tim Scanlon	Spring 2016
<i>*Normative and Meta-Normative Questions</i> , Selim Berker and Derek Parfit	Spring 2015
<i>*Metaethics</i> , Selim Berker	Fall 2014
<i>Philosophy and Law: Seminar</i> , Richard Fallon and Tim Scanlon	Fall 2013
<i>Equality and Liberty</i> , Tim Scanlon	Fall 2013
<i>Kant's Ethics</i> , Christine Korsgaard	Spring 2013
<i>First Year Colloquium</i> , Selim Berker	Spring 2013

**Metaphysics and Epistemology**

<i>Metaphysical Grounding</i> , Selim Berker	Spring 2013
<i>First Year Colloquium</i> , Ned Hall and Sean Kelly	Fall 2012
<i>*Epistemology</i> , Selim Berker	Fall 2012
<i>Aristotle</i> , Rusty Jones	Fall 2012
<i>Metaphysics and Epistemology</i> , Scott Sturgeon, Oxford Supervision	Spring 2010
<i>Hume</i> , Peter Millican, Oxford Supervision	Fall 2009

**Logic and Philosophy of Language**

<i>Advanced Semantics</i> , Irene Heim	Spring 2014
<i>Logic and Philosophy</i> , Warren Goldfarb	Spring 2014
<i>Philosophy and Semantics</i> , Mark Richard	Spring 2013
<i>Conditionals</i> , Bob Stalnaker	Fall 2012
<i>Logic and Philosophy of Language</i> , John Hawthorne, Oxford Supervision	Spring 2010

**Philosophical Pedagogy**

<i>Instructional Styles in Philosophy</i> , Bernhard Nickel	AY 2014-2015
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**Language Courses**

<i>*Philosophy in Translation: German</i> , Bernhard Nickel	
<i>German: Advanced Grammar and Reading</i> , Peter Burgard	

TEACHING

**Primary Instructor**

<i>Big Data, Ethics, and Moral Machines</i> Pre-College Summer Program Course Harvard University	Summer 2018
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Designed and taught ethics modules in computer science courses	AY 2017–2018, 2018–2019
AM106: <i>Applied Algebra</i>	
CS134: <i>Networks</i>	
CS181: <i>Machine Learning</i>	
CS189: <i>Autonomous Robot Systems</i>	
CS236R: <i>Topics at the Interface of Computer Science and Economics</i>	
CS265: <i>Big Data Systems</i>	
CS136: <i>Economics and Computing</i>	
CS165: <i>Data Science</i>	
CS182: <i>AI</i>	
Harvard University	
<i>Ethics: Theory and Practice</i>	Summer 2017, 2016
Pre-College Summer Program Course	
Harvard University	
Phil 97: <i>The Philosophy of Social Science</i>	Spring 2017
Sophomore Tutorial	
Harvard University	
<i>Complexity Approaches to Modeling the Financial System</i>	January 2016
Invited Guest Lecturer, Winter Seminar	
Bayreuth University, Germany	

**Teaching Assistant**, Harvard University

Phil 24: <i>The Ethics of Climate Change</i>	Spring 2018
CB 31: <i>Saints, Heretics, and Atheists</i>	Spring 2017
Phil 149: <i>Philosophy of Science</i>	Spring 2016
ER 38: <i>The Meaning of Life</i>	Fall 2015
Phil 151z: <i>The Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics</i>	Spring 2015
Phil 164: <i>Metaphysics</i>	Fall 2014

PROFESSIONAL  
SERVICE &  
PUBLIC  
OUTREACH

Referee, <i>Noûs</i> , <i>Economics and Philosophy</i> , and FAT/ML	ongoing
Ethics advising to tech companies, Principia Advisory	ongoing
Co-organizer, Revealed Preferences Workshop, LSE	Nov. 2018
Committee Member, Harvard embedded ethiCS	2017 – 2019
Co-presenter, “Machine Learning and the Social Good” Women Engineers Code Conference	Mar. 2018
Co-presenter, “The Ethics of Big Data” MIT Day of Outreach	Apr. 2017
Instructor, ThinkerAnalytix (a non-profit that aims to bring philosophy to local high schools)	2016-2017
Co-organizer, Talk Shop (informal presentation venue), Harvard	2014–2016
Committee Member, Joint MIT-Harvard Minorities and Philosophy	2013 – 2019

Co-organizer, prospective student academic visit, Harvard University 2013, 2016

LANGUAGES English (native speaker), German (fluent), Spanish (conversational)

REFERENCES

Ned Hall 1 (617) 495 2468  
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Professor, Department of Philosophy  
Harvard University

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New York University

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Department of Philosophy, Logic, and Scientific Method, LSE

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LONG  
DISSERTATION  
ABSTRACT

Preferences play a key explanatory role in the social sciences. They explain patterns of segregation, stock market crashes, and election outcomes. They also justify the fairness of certain procedures and distributions, or explain why a policy is socially optimal.

And yet, both the meaning of the concept of “preference” and its normative significance are highly contested by both social scientists and philosophers. My dissertation contributes to these longstanding disagreements by examining how epistemic, practical, and ethical commitments influence preference-based modeling in the social sciences. It does so using two case studies: revealed preference approaches and market design.

I defend a revealed preference interpretation of preferences where “preference” is defined in entirely behavioral terms. Here I oppose a widespread consensus that revealed preferences cannot explain an agent’s choices. So-called actualist revealed preferences, which summarize agents’ actual choices, do explain those choices, on an unificationist

account of explanation. So-called hypothetical revealed preferences, which represent agents' behavioral dispositions, explain agents' choices, according to an interventionist account of explanation. The key claim driving both arguments concerns the value of abstraction in the social sciences. Sometimes, abstracting away from the particular psychological processes in individuals provides a more powerful model of the outcomes at the social level.

I also examine the notion of "preference" in welfare economics, using the case study of matching mechanisms, which is a subfield of market design. Welfare economists are often painted as pure preference utilitarians, but this picture is at odds with economic practice. I argue that economists are right to design matching mechanisms according to normative goals, such as the promotion of individuals' justified claims to their preferred outcome (so-called justified envy-freeness), affirmative action, or employment outcomes. Furthermore, I argue that they should do so more systematically, by incorporating reasons into their models.