

Oded Na'aman

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Areas of Specialization:

Ethics, Political Philosophy

Areas of Competence:

Applied Ethics, Philosophy and Literature, Existentialism

Education:

Ph.D. in Philosophy, Harvard University (expected 2015)

Dissertation: "Loving, Valuing, Regretting, and Being Oneself"

My dissertation examines issues about the rationality of attachment, including the rationality of love, valuation, regret, and loss. In the first part, I explain how one might be rationally attached to a particular as such. In the second, I give an account of rational regret, according to which regret reflects recognition of unrealized attachments: attachments that one has not pursued or can no longer pursue. The two accounts dissolve a range of puzzles that result, I argue, from conflation of distinct kinds of attachment-related reasons.

Committee: T. M. Scanlon, Christine M. Korsgaard, Richard Moran, Selim Berker

Qualifying Paper: "Justice and the End of Society" (2011)

Advisor: T. M. Scanlon

A.B. in Philosophy, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007

Academic Publications:

"Reasons of Love: A Case against Universalism about Practical Reason," forthcoming in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, CX, No. 3, October 2015.

"Social Justice," in *Israeli Social Protest: Political Lexicon 2011-*, ed. Ariel Hendel (Hakibutz HaMe'uhad, 2013), pp. 309-319 (Hebrew).

"The Rise and Fall of the Bleeding Hearts: a Reading in *Soldiers' Talk* and *Breaking the Silence* [two collections of Israeli soldiers' testimonials]," *Theory and Criticism*, 33: 225-238, 2008 (Hebrew).

Selected Non-Academic Publications:

"Mortal Risks: The Possibility of Self-Sacrifice," *The Boston Review*, March/April 2014, pp. 45-53.

Our Harsh Logic: Israeli Soldiers' Testimonies from the Occupied Territories 2000-2010, Breaking the Silence, ed. Mikhael Manekin, Avichai Sharon, Yanay Israeli, Oded Na'aman, Levi Spectre (Metropolitan Press, September 2012) (also published in Hebrew, German, French, Dutch, and Swedish).

"Is Gaza Outside Israel?" *Tomdispatch.com*, November 2012 (republished in *The Nation*, *Mother Jones*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *Guernica*, *The Huffington Post*).

“The Checkpoint: Terror, Power, Cruelty,” *The Boston Review*, July/August 2012, pp. 38-45 (most read BR article in 2012). German translation in *Zenith*, November/December 2012, pp. 14-27; Italian translation in *Internazionale*, February 2013, pp. 96-101.

“How Central Is Land for Peace?” co-authored with Mikhael Manekin, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2011.

“Israel Needs the Truth about Cast Lead,” *The Guardian*, July 2009.

Awards, Honors, Fellowships

Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Harvard University, 2014-2015

Edmond J. Safra Graduate Fellowship in Ethics, Harvard University, 2013-2014

Research Fellowship from Harvard University Philosophy Department, Spring 2013

George Santayana Grant from Harvard University Philosophy Department (language studies), summer 2011

Graduate Prize Fellowship, Harvard University, 2008-2013

Gates Cambridge Scholarship, 2008-2009/2009-2010 (declined)

Shmaryahu Rivyver Award for Excellence in the Study of Philosophy, Hebrew University, 2007

Presentations and Conferences

“Reasons of Love: A Case against Universalism about Practical Reason,” The 88th Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association, PostGraduate Session, July 11, 2014.

“Ways of Regret: Rawls on Goodness, Regret, and Self-Reproach,” Harvard workshop in moral and political philosophy, January 27, 2014

“The Reemergence of Specific Value: Aiming, Valuing, Conserving, and Loving,” Harvard workshop in moral and political philosophy, December 4, 2013

“Conflict and Loss,” Harvard workshop in moral and political philosophy, March 25, 2013

“Comments on Howard Nye’s ‘The Value of Neutral Experience,’” Eastern APA, December 2012

“Optional Choices and Existential Reasons,” Harvard workshop in moral and political philosophy, November 2012

“Optional Choices, Personal Attachments, and Practical Reason,” Harvard workshop in moral and political philosophy, March 2013

“Why Not Be Moral?” Harvard workshop in moral and political philosophy, December 2011

“Why Not Be Moral?” Harvard-MIT M&E reading group, October 2011

“Stand and Fall Together: Soldiers and Political Freedom,” Harvard Humanities Center Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference, April 2011

Co-organizer of “Soldiering: the Afterlife of a Modern Experience,” Harvard Humanities Center Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference, April 2011

“Justice and the End of Society,” Harvard workshop in moral and political philosophy, February 2011

“Soldier,” The Sixth Lexical Conference for Critical Political Thought, Tel-Aviv University, Israel. January 2011

“The Checkpoint,” Annual Conference of the Association for Israel Studies, University of Toronto, Canada. May 2010

Teaching and Research Positions

Teaching Fellow, “Responsibilities of Public Action,” Christopher Robichaud, Harvard Kennedy School, Fall 2012

Teaching Fellow, “Equality and Liberty,” T. M. Scanlon, Harvard College, Spring 2012

Teaching Fellow, “Self, Freedom, and Existence,” Richard Moran, Harvard College, Fall 2011

Teaching Fellow, “Human Rights: a Philosophical Introduction,” Mathias Risse, Harvard College, Spring 2011

Teaching Fellow, “Responsibilities of Public Action,” Christopher Robichaud, Harvard Kennedy School, Fall 2010
Teaching Assistant, Moshe Halbertal, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Department of Philosophy, 2007
Research Assistant, Alon Harel, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Faculty of Law, 2006
Research Assistant, Igal Kwart, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Department of Philosophy, 2006
Philosophy teacher for the 11th and 12th grade, “HAREL” High-School, Mevaseret-Zion, Israel, 2005-2008

Graduate Level Courses and Reading Groups

Speech and Intersubjectivity: Seminar, Richard Moran, Fall 2012 (Audited)
Philosophy and Literature: Proust, Richard Moran, Spring 2012 (Audited)
The Moral Sentiments: Seminar, David Sussman, Spring 2012 (Audited)
Punishment and Social Justice, T. M. Scanlon and Tommie Shelby, Fall 2011 (Audited)
The History of Modern Moral Philosophy, Christine Korsgaard, Fall 2010 (Audited)
Hegel and Kant, Matthew Boyle, Spring 2010
The Later Philosophy of Wittgenstein, Warren Goldfarb, Spring 2010 (Audited)
The Rationalists, Jeffrey McDonough, Fall 2009
Quine: Seminar, Warren Goldfarb, Fall 2009
Kant’s Ethical Theory, Christine Korsgaard, Fall 2009 (Audited)
The Pragmatists, Peter Godfrey-Smith, Spring 2009
Topics in Intersubjectivity: Seminar, Richard Moran and Douglas Lavin, Spring 2009
Philosophy of Action: Seminar, Christine Korsgaard, Spring 2009 (Audited)
First Year Colloquium: Practical Philosophy, Douglas Lavin, Spring 2009
First Year Colloquium: Contemporary and Historical Debates on Causality, Ned Hall and Alison Simmons, Fall 2008
Philosophy of Biology, Peter Godfrey-Smith, Fall 2008
Metaethics, Selim Berker, Fall 2008
Aristotle on Justice: Seminar, Gisela Striker, Fall 2008
Philosophy and Literature Reading Group, led by Richard Moran, Elaine Scarry, and Philip Fisher, 2009-2014

References:

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One-Page Dissertation Summary

My dissertation examines issues about the rationality of attachment, including the rationality of love, valuation, regret, and loss. In the first part of the dissertation, I explain how one might be rationally attached to a particular as such. In the second, I give an account of rational regret, according to which regret reflects recognition of unrealized attachments: attachments that one has not pursued or can no longer pursue. The two accounts dissolve a range of puzzles that arise, I argue, from conflation of distinct kinds of attachment-related reasons.

Attachments play a central role in our lives. We typically love our spouses, parents, children, siblings, and friends, and value our projects, activities, causes, and ideals. If our attachment to a particular object is justified by the object's relevant properties, why are we attached to the particular object as such rather than to any object that bears the relevant properties? Once we distinguish between the reasons that make sense of our attachments (reasons *to* be attached), and the reasons we take ourselves to have insofar as we are attached to a particular person or thing (reasons *of* attachment), the apparent puzzle dissipates: reasons *to* be attached make sense of our reasons *of* attachment to particulars as such. I employ this distinction in order to resolve other puzzles about the rationality of attachment.

In the second part of the dissertation, I take up a problem about rational regret and its relation to attachment. Some bad or unjustified choices may lead to the relationships and activities that give meaning to one's life. Does one have reason to regret these choices? I examine two accounts, one offered by John Rawls and the other by R. Jay Wallace. I argue that Rawls's account renders our attachments too susceptible to regret, while Wallace's account renders our attachments too resistant to regret. I offer a third account, which avoids the pitfalls of the first two. I claim that even if we have had most reason to form other attachments than the ones we actually formed, we need not have reason to regret our attachments. Nevertheless, we may fail or be unable to pursue the attachments we actually have. When we do, we have *unrealized attachments*, which are partly constituted by reasons *of* attachment that we have not pursued, or can no longer pursue. For instance, I quit the upright bass years ago in order to study philosophy. When I go back to my parents' home and pick up my old bass, the fact that I can hardly play a simple tune pains me, and when I listen to musicians perform I feel a sense of loss. I no longer play the bass, but I recognize my reasons of attachment to it. Thus, *reasons of unrealized attachments* may warrant a sense of loss and, at times, warrant robust regret over the fact that events unfolded as they did, or over the choices we made. Finally, I claim that a person understands who she is by her unrealized attachments as well as her realized ones.