

## ALLISON SARA KUKLOK

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Saint Michael's College  
Department of Philosophy  
One Winooski Park, Box 232  
Colchester, VT 05439

Office: (802) 654-2208  
Cell: (617) 850-2028  
Email: akuklok@smcvt.edu

### EMPLOYMENT

- Assistant Professor, Saint Michael's College (August 2013 – Present)

### EDUCATION

- Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts  
PhD in Philosophy, June 2013
- Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts  
Bachelor of Arts, *summa cum laude*  
Grade Point Average: 3.9; Major: Philosophy  
*Phi Beta Kappa*

**AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION:** Early Modern Philosophy

**AREAS OF COMPETENCE:** Kant, Metaphysics, Ethics

### DISSERTATION

- **TITLE:** Conceptualism and Objectivity in Locke's Account of Natural Kinds
- **COMMITTEE:** Alison Simmons (Chair), Jeffrey McDonough, Ned Hall, Bernhard Nickel
- **ABSTRACT:** Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is considered by many to be the *locus classicus* of a number of influential arguments for conventionalism, according to which there are no objective, privileged ways of classifying things in the natural world. I argue that Locke never meant to reject natural kinds. Still, the challenge is to explain how, within a metaphysics that explicitly denies the reality of universals, we can make sense of a privileged, objective sorting of substances. I argue that we do so by looking to Locke's conception of God as divine architect of created substances.

### COURSES

- "Self and World" (Fall 2013, Spring 2014)
- "Early Modern Philosophy" (Spring 2014)

### AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- Hume Society Young Scholar Award, 2013
- Graduate Society Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Harvard University, 2012 – 2013
- Richard M. Martin Prize Fellowship, Department of Philosophy, Harvard University, 2011 – 2012
- Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship in Humanistic Studies, 2002 – 2003
- First Prize, Three Generations Writing Competition, Wellesley College, 2/2000

### REFEREED PRESENTATIONS

- "A Puzzle about Nominal and Real Essences in Locke's *Essay*", Intermountain West Student Philosophy Conference, March 2010

- “*Strings, Physies, and Hogs’ Bristles: Objective Kinds in Locke*”, Bucharest Graduate Conference in Early Modern Philosophy, March 22-23, 2012, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest.
- “*Strings, Physies, and Hogs’ Bristles: Objective Kinds in Locke*”, Mid-Atlantic Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, April 21-22, 2012, Princeton University
- “*Strings, Physies, and Hogs’ Bristles: Objective Kinds in Locke*”, Margaret Wilson Conference, June 22-24, 2012, Dartmouth College.
- “*Strings, Physies, and Hogs’ Bristles: Objective Kinds in Locke*”, Atlantic Canada Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, June 25-28, 2012, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- “*Strings, Physies, and Hogs’ Bristles: Objective Kinds in Locke*”, American Philosophical Association, Eastern Conference Division Meeting, December 28, 2012
- “More than a Feeling”, 40<sup>th</sup> Annual International Hume Society Conference, July 21-28<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

#### **INVITED PRESENTATIONS**

- Commentator on 'How Locke didn't argue for the primary/secondary quality distinction' by Edwin McCann, at the Locke Workshop, June 28-29, 2012, University of St. Andrews, Scotland.
- “*Strings, Physies, and Hogs’ Bristles: Objective Kinds in Locke*”, Friends and Eminees Harvard/MIT Reading Group, May 3, 2012.

#### **TEACHING AWARDS, HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

- Nominee for Joseph R. Levenson Memorial Teaching Prize, May 2007. Awarded once a year to one senior faculty member, one junior faculty member, and one teaching fellow for dedication and skill in teaching. The prize is based on student nominations.
- Bok Center Teaching Certificate of Excellence and Distinction in Teaching, Harvard University, Fall 2009. The certificate is awarded to instructors who achieve an overall rating of 4.5 or above on a five-point scale, with five or more responses on student C.U.E evaluations.
- Bok Center Teaching Certificate of Excellence and Distinction in Teaching, Harvard University, Fall 2008.

#### **TEACHING EXPERIENCE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY:**

- Teaching Fellow for *Kant and Hegel*, Professor Matthew Boyle, Harvard University, Spring 2010.
- Teaching Fellow for *The Rationalists*, Professor Jeffrey McDonough, Harvard University, Fall 2009.
- Head Teaching Fellow for Ethical Reasoning 11 (ER 11), *A Philosophical Introduction to Human Rights*, Professor Mathias Risse, Harvard Kennedy School, Fall 2009. ER11 is a large ethical reasoning course offered through the Harvard General Education curriculum, with a course enrollment of approximately eighty students. In addition to teaching fellow duties outlined above, duties for Head Teaching Fellow position include additional administrative and organizational tasks.
- Teaching Fellow for *Introduction to Ancient Philosophy*, Professor Mi-Kyoung (Mitzi) Lee, visiting Professor from University of Colorado, Boulder, Harvard University, Spring 2009.
- Teaching Fellow for *Metaphysics*, Professor Ned Hall, Harvard University, Fall 2008.
- Tutorial Leader for *History of the Mind-Body Problem*, Harvard University, Fall 2008.
- Teaching Fellow for *Intro to Early Modern Philosophy*, Professor Alison Simmons, Harvard University, Spring 2007.
- Teaching Fellow for *The British Empiricists*, Professor Jeffrey McDonough, Harvard University, Fall 2006.

- Teaching Fellow for *Introduction to Philosophy*, Professor Matthew Boyle, Harvard University, Fall 2006.
- Teaching Fellow for *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Professor Daniel Sutherland, Visiting Professor from University of Illinois, Harvard University, Spring 2006.
- Teaching Fellow for *Justice*, Professor Michael Sandel, Harvard University, Fall 2005.

#### **GRADUATE COURSEWORK**

- The Rationalists (Donald Rutherford)
- Belief, Trust and Testimony (Richard Moran)
- Partiality in Ethical Theory (Niko Kolodny)
- Philosophy of Science (Peter Godfrey-Smith)
- Leibniz Seminar (Donald Rutherford)
- Socrates (Raphael Woolf)
- History of Political Philosophy (Niko Kolodny)
- Kant's Ethical Theory (Christine Korsgaard)
- Philosophy of Mind (Peter Godfrey-Smith)
- Recent Ethical Theory (Christine Korsgaard)

#### **AUDITED COURSES**

- British Empiricism (Alison Simmons)
- Causation in Early Modern Philosophy (Alison Simmons)
- Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (Farid Masrour)
- Meaning, Quantification and Number (Paul Pietroski)
- Philosophy of Language (Mark Richard)
- Leibniz Seminar (Alison Simmons and Jeffrey McDonough)
- Space, Time and Substance (Matthew Boyle)
- Mathematics and Metaphysics in Leibniz (Samuel Levey)
- Perspective and Objectivity (Mark Richard)
- Speech Act Theory and Free Speech: Seminar (Mary Kate McGowan)
- Nonconsequentialist Ethical Theory: Seminar (Frances Kamm)

#### **LANGUAGES**

- French (three years), German (two years), Latin (one year).

#### **ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION AND STUDENT LIFE**

##### **RESIDENT TUTOR AT DUDLEY CO-OPERATIVE HOUSE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

- January 2004 – June 2013: Live-in position at Harvard residence hall for 32 undergraduate students, providing an initial and often sole student point of contact with the University. Duties include academic, personal and pre-professional advising, community leadership and development, liaising with House Master and Resident Dean. Officer of the University responsible for enforcing all college residential policies and rules and for ensuring compliance with city fire code. Responsible for 24-hour student crisis response and management. Student-University liaison to Facilities Manager for ensuring building upkeep and maintenance. Responsible for the coordination of student move-ins and the vacating of rooms.

##### **ASSISTANT TO THE HEAD TUTOR, UNDERGRADUATE CONCENTRATION IN PHILOSOPHY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

- September 2010 – May 2011: Advising in the concentration, organizing senior thesis workshop and curriculum development.

#### ASSISTANT DEAN, HARVARD SUMMER SCHOOL

- June 2010 – August 2010: Resident Dean for Harvard Summer School students at Winthrop House. Supervised fourteen undergraduate proctors in a house of approximately 280 students. Served on Dean’s Council.

#### REFERENCES

- **Alison Simmons**, Samuel H. Wolcott Professor of Philosophy, Harvard College Professor, Harvard University: [asimmons@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:asimmons@fas.harvard.edu)
- **Jeffrey McDonough**, John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Humanities, Harvard University: [jkmcdon@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:jkmcdon@fas.harvard.edu)
- **Edward Hall**, Professor of Philosophy, Harvard University: [ehall@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:ehall@fas.harvard.edu)
- **Bernhard Nickel**, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Harvard University: [bnickel@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:bnickel@fas.harvard.edu)
- **Matthew Boyle**, Professor of Philosophy, Harvard University: [boyle2@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:boyle2@fas.harvard.edu)
- **Mi-Kyoung (Mitzi) Lee**, Professor of Philosophy, UC Boulder: [mitzi@colorado.edu](mailto:mitzi@colorado.edu)

**DISSERTATION ABSTRACT:** Locke is held by many to be a proponent of a bold and widely influential *metaphysical* thesis regarding kinds and classification. According to a standard reading, Locke holds that all that exists are particulars, these particulars more or less objectively resemble one another, but the sorting of them into kinds is determined solely by criteria freely chosen by individual speakers. On this story, things have no essential natures *per se*, a property is necessary to a thing only on some description of it, and classification is subject only to pragmatic constraints. It is no wonder, then, that Locke is thought of as a distinguished spokesperson for an anti-essentialist, conceptualist approach to natural kinds that enjoys broad appeal to this day.

However, according to another, also familiar story, Locke’s project in the *Essay* was not primarily a *metaphysical* one but rather that of providing an account of what ideas we have, how we acquire them from sensation and reflection, and what knowledge claims we may justifiably assert on their basis. Locke not only charts the reach of “humane understanding” within fairly narrow limits, Locke himself abstains from metaphysical pronouncements—positive *or* negative—beyond those limits. On this story, Locke is held to champion a *modest* approach to metaphysical enquiry.

Table-thumping Metaphysician or Modest Under-Labourer to the Sciences? I argue that Locke has more subtle positions that do not fall neatly under these common portrayals. In fact, Locke never meant to argue against natural kinds and indeed the evidence suggests that, like many philosophers and theologians of his time, Locke *assumed* their existence. His polemic against the Aristotelian, most often read as an outright rejection of natural kinds, had the more modest aim of demonstrating that *our* ideas of species are not made by apprehension of the *real essences* of mind-independent kinds. And while many will be quick to point out that a number of Locke’s theses make it impossible to see what could ground an objective sorting of so-called natural substances, I suggest that we find a plausible answer by looking to Locke’s theological views. I develop this view over four chapters.

In the first chapter I argue that my interpretation of Locke’s views on natural kinds fits well with the general tenor of his approach to metaphysical topics in the *Essay*. In some instances Locke dismisses a metaphysical view for its sheer unintelligibility, in others he recommends agnosticism, and in others yet he endorses a position as our best going *hypothesis*. In fact, I argue that the best model for understanding Locke’s approach to natural kinds is to be found in his treatment of morality. Though Locke *assumed* the existence of a divinely decreed moral law, Locke’s own stated task in the *Essay* was not to argue for its truth but rather to give an account of how *we* form our ideas of ethical kinds whether or not we do so by apprehending the moral law. I argue that, in similar fashion, Locke aimed to provide an account of how *we* form our ideas of substantial kinds; nevertheless, that account is best understood as anchored in Locke’s belief in their objectivity.

In the second chapter I take on one powerful motivation for thinking that Locke meant to reject natural kinds. Paul Guyer influentially argues that Locke’s theory of meaning entails conventionalism about kinds. On Guyer’s reading, (i) classification proceeds in accordance with general *ideas*, (ii) we

make general ideas by attending to similarities and differences, and (iii) nothing in things themselves determines *which* similarities we must sort by. Guyer concludes that classification is therefore metaphysically arbitrary. I argue that even if we accept these premises, Guyer's conclusion doesn't follow. Further, Locke believes that there are objective constraints on classification to be understood in terms of real essences and the properties that flow from them, and that should strike us as puzzling on the reading just proposed. I argue that an objective sorting is grounded, for Locke, in the ideas in terms of which God creates natural substances. We thereby preserve Guyer's insight that generality is the province only of the mind—in this case, God's mind—but we also explain what grounds Locke's realist claim that we represent species more or less "accurately".

In the third chapter I take on another powerful motivation for thinking that Locke meant to reject natural kinds. Many have thought that corpuscularianism entails conventionalism about kinds. Michael Ayers, for instance, makes the following tacit assumption on Locke's behalf: objective kinds exist only if it is possible for us to arrive at a non-arbitrary sorting of substances. According to Ayers' reading of a widely discussed passage, Locke argues that just as there is no non-arbitrary sorting of natural substances in terms of their observable qualities, there is no non-arbitrary sorting in terms of their inner corpuscularian constitutions or real essences, and so there are no objective kinds. According to Ayers, Locke's argument turns on corpuscularianism alone: there is no end to the inner, mechanical differences between bodies, hence there are no naturally lowest species. I argue that Locke's aim in the passage is orthogonal to whether there are naturally lowest species. In fact, Locke claims that we could secure inter-subjective agreement about the meanings of our kind terms *were* we to have insight into real essences, suggesting that sorting by them would be anything but arbitrary.

In the fourth and final chapter I develop the consequences of my interpretation for Locke's notion of a "real essence". On the standard reading, Locke's notion is equivocal. A real essence is either the inner, material constitution of a particular that gives rise to its *total* collection of observable qualities, or it is that *aspect* of its material constitution that gives rise to just those observable qualities a speaker arbitrarily selects as criteria for membership in a given sort. I argue for a univocal, but realist notion: the real essences of natural substances are indeed *aspects* of material constitutions, but they are individuated much as the real essences of artifacts are, in terms of the internal, mechanical properties that causally underwrite "behavior"—the active and passive powers—characteristic of bodies of a given sort.