

# Aaron Henry

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## ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

SSHRC, Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Philosophy  
University of British Columbia 2020-2022

## EDUCATION

Ph.D, University of Toronto 2019  
Thesis: *An Agent of Attention: An Inquiry into the Source of Our Control*  
(passed with no corrections)  
Committee: Imogen Dickie (supervisor) Mohan Matthen, Christopher Mole,  
Diana Raffman, and William Seager

B.Phil, University of Oxford 2012  
Thesis: *Intentionalism and the Phenomenology of Attention*  
(awarded Distinction)  
Supervisor: Martin Davies

Honours B.A., University of Toronto 2010

## AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Philosophy of Mind and Philosophy of Cognitive Science

## AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Philosophy of Action (including Free Will), Metaphysics, Epistemology,  
Philosophy of Science, Environmental Ethics

## PUBLICATIONS

### CHAPTERS IN EDITED VOLUMES

Henry, A. and E. Thompson (2011). Witnessing from Here: Self-awareness from a Bodily vs. Embodied Perspective. In S. Gallagher (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Self* (pp. 228–249). New York: Oxford University Press.

### REVIEWS

Henry, A. and T. Bayne (2013). Review of ‘Attention is Cognitive Unison: An Essay in Philosophical Psychology’, by Christopher Mole. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 91 (1), 199–202.

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## PRESENTATIONS

### INVITED

“From the Agent’s Point of View: Why the ‘Disappearing Agent Problem’ is about the Experience of Acting” (keynote)  
The Society for the Philosophy of Agency  
American Philosophical Association, Central Division February 2019

### REFEREED

“Is There a Disappearing Agent Problem for Reductive-Causal Theories of Action?”  
Canadian Philosophical Association, London Ontario June 2020

“Consciousness, Agency, and Subjective Ownership”  
Workshop on ‘Consciousness, Agency, and First-Person Representation’  
University of Barcelona (*cancelled*) March 2020

“Understanding the Sense of Ownership of Action”  
Society for Philosophy and Psychology, Ann Arbor Michigan July 2018  
Canadian Philosophical Association, Montreal, QC. June 2018

“Agentialism and the Objection from Attention Capture”  
Canadian Philosophical Association, Ryerson University May 2017  
Southern Society of Philosophy and Psychology, Savannah Georgia. March 2017

“Attention, Action, and Selection for Action”  
Graduate Conference in Philosophy of Mind, Language, and Cognitive Science, University of Western Ontario May 2016

“Attention as Selection for Action: A Challenge”  
Minds Online Conference September 2016  
Canadian Philosophical Association, Calgary Alberta May 2016  
American Philosophical Association, Central Division March 2016

“Introspecting the Temporal Structure of Perceptual Experience” February 2015  
American Philosophical Association, Central Division

“Two Ways to Understand the Subjective Character of Consciousness” June 2014  
Workshop on the Subjective Structure of Consciousness, University of Manchester

## COMMENTS

- “Is a Self a Pattern? Comments on Shaun Gallagher’s ‘Pattern Theory of Self’”  
University of Toronto, Graduate Conference May 2018
- “The Case for Phenomenal Consciousness Beyond Attention: Commentary on Jennings”  
American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division, Vancouver B.C. April 2015

**AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS**

- SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship* (CAD \$45,000 per annum) 2020-2022
- Honourable Mention for Martha Lile Love Teaching Award*, the Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto 2019
- Doctoral Completion Award*, awarded by the Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto 2017-2018
- Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship*, awarded by The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (CAD \$35,000 per annum) 2013-16
- Ontario Graduate Scholarship*, awarded by the Government of Ontario (\$15,000) 2012, 2016
- Hans Maag Scholarship*, awarded by the Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto 2016
- George Paxton Young Memorial Prize in Philosophy*, awarded by the Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto 2015
- Gordon Cheesbrough Graduate Fellowship Fund in Philosophy*, awarded by the Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto 2014
- The Avie Bennett Scholarship*, awarded by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Toronto (\$10,000) 2012
- University of Toronto Fellowship*, awarded by the department of Philosophy, University of Toronto 2012

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## TEACHING

The University of Toronto

### COURSE INSTRUCTOR

Seminar in Cognitive Science (COG401)	Winter 2020
Introduction to Philosophy: Knowledge and Reality (PHL103)	Fall 2019
Environmental Ethics (PHL273)	Fall 2019
Issues in Philosophy of Mind (PHL340)	Summer 2018, Winter 2019
Knowledge and Reality (PHL232)	Summer 2016

### LEAD ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING TEACHING ASSISTANT

Philosophy for Scientists (PHL233)	Fall 2016, Fall 2017
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(Collaborated with course instructor to improve the design of writing assignments; trained graduate student TAs on offering effective written feedback on undergraduate philosophy papers; led tutorials and writing clinics for undergraduate students aimed at improving facility with discipline-specific writing; created language-related teaching resources for the university.)

### PHILOSOPHY ESSAY CLINICIAN

Winter 2018

(ran workshops for undergraduate students on how to write a philosophy paper, assuming no prior experience; met one-on-one with 15-20 undergraduate students weekly to help with philosophical writing.)

### TUTORIAL LEADER

Knowledge and Reality (PHL232)	2015
Persons, Minds, and Bodies (PHL240)	Summer 2015, Winter 2017
Reason and Truth (PHLA10)	Fall 2009
Introduction to the History of Western Philosophy (PHL101)	2007-2008

### GRADER

Freedom and Determinism (PHL241)	Fall 2017
Topics in Philosophy of Mind (PHLC95H3)	Winter 2014
Minds and Machines (PHL240)	Fall 2014
Belief, Knowledge and Truth (PHLB20)	Fall 2013

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

<b>Contributing Editor</b> for the 'Brains Blog'	2016-present
<b>Organizer</b> for University of Toronto Graduate Conference: <i>The Philosophical Significance of the First-Person Point of View</i>	May 2015
<b>Referee</b> for <i>Philosophical Psychology</i> , <i>American Philosophical Quarterly</i> , <i>The Review of Philosophy and Psychology</i> , <i>International Journal of Philosophical Studies</i> .	
<b>Graduate Associate</b> for the Network for Sensory Research	2012-2014
<b>Conference Reporter</b> for the Network for Sensory Research: <i>Workshop on Multisensory Integration</i> , University of Toronto,	May 2014

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## REFERENCES

Imogen Dickie

Shelby Cullom Davis Professor of Philosophy

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School of Philosophical & Anthropological Studies, Logic & Metaphysics

St. Andrews, United Kingdom

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Christopher Mole

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Marleen Rozemond (Teaching Reference)

Professor of Philosophy

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William Seager

Professor and Acting Chair of UTSC Department of Philosophy

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**DISSERTATION ABSTRACT**

When performing a skilled action—whether something impressive like a double somersault or something mundane like reaching for a glass of water—you guide the course of your behaviour. In what does that control consist? I argue that it consists in attending perceptually to what you are doing. In attending perceptually, agents deploy their perceptual states directly and practically in service of their motives and, in doing so, settle the fine-grained way their bodies will move. When all goes well, the agent prioritizes what is motivationally relevant to the exclusion of what would otherwise distract them from achieving their goals. However, sometimes agents attend distractedly. And when this occurs, the agent’s guidance is impaired (as when a skilled practitioner ‘chokes under pressure’). Since the role of attention is to avoid interference from distraction, this entails the possibility of defective attention. My account of attention is distinctive among recent philosophical theories in accommodating these cases. Further, my view offers a new solution to the ‘Disappearing Agent Problem’ confronting theories that claim to reduce an action to the causation of behaviour by the agent’s mental events (e.g. an intention). Specifically, I show that attending consciously in action grounds a form of subjective perspective which, when active in guiding bodily movement, constitutes the agent as exercising control of her conduct. The upshot is a form of interdependence between perceptual consciousness and agency.