

JEAN-PAUL VESSEL

Curriculum Vitae 8/1/17

Department of Philosophy
New Mexico State University
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Education

Ph.D., Philosophy	University of Massachusetts-Amherst (February 2003)
B.A., Philosophy	New Mexico State University (June 1993) San Jose State University (1989-1991)

Employment

2010-present	Associate Professor, New Mexico State University
2004-2010	Assistant Professor, New Mexico State University
2002-2004	Lecturer, Commonwealth (Honors) College at UMass-Amherst
1996-2002	Teaching Associate and Teaching Assistant, UMass-Amherst

Area of Specialization

Ethics (Normative Ethics, Metaethics, Axiology, Deontic Logic, Ethics of Sports)

Areas of Teaching Competence

Plato, Philosophy of Language, Metaphysics, Early 20th Century Analytic Philosophy, Introductory and Modal Logic, Philosophy of Sports, Social-Political Philosophy

Refereed Publications

1. "Counterfactuals for Consequentialists" *Philosophical Studies* 112 (2003): 103-125.
2. "Consequentialist Reactions to Cain's Objection from the Individual" *Southwest Philosophy Review* 21 (2005): 139-144.
3. "The Probabilistic Nature of Objective Consequentialism" *Theoria* LXXIII (2007): 46-67.
4. "Defending a Possibilist Insight in Consequentialist Thought" *Philosophical Studies* 142 (2009): 183-195.
5. "Supererogation for Utilitarianism" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (2010): 299-319.
6. "Against Securitism, the New Breed of Actualism in Consequentialist Thought" *Utilitas* 78 (2015): 164-178.

Book Review

“Review of Douglas Portmore’s *Commonsense Consequentialism*” *Utilitas* 24 (2012): 551-554.

Awards

- Glenn Joy Award for outstanding philosophical work (Second Prize) for my essay “Desert-Adjusted Utilitarianism, People, and Animals,” presented at the 2017 Annual Meetings of the New Mexico-Texas Philosophical Society
- *The Patricia Christmore Teaching Award* presented by New Mexico State University in recognition of excellence in teaching, 2008.
- *The Hooker Prize*, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Spring 2001
- Winner of a \$500 prize for the best paper presented by a graduate student at the International Society for Utilitarian Studies 2000 Conference, March 2000 (at Wake Forest University)
- Certificate of Appreciation for Demonstrating Excellence in Teaching awarded by the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Division of Continuing Education for *Philosophy 161: Problems in Social Thought*, Summer 2001
- Certificate of Appreciation for Demonstrating Excellence in Teaching awarded by the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Division of Continuing Education for *Philosophy 164: Medical Ethics*, Summer 2000
- Certificate of Appreciation for Demonstrating Excellence in Teaching awarded by the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Division of Continuing Education for *Philosophy 161: Problems in Social Thought*, Summer 1999

Papers Presented

- “Desert-Adjusted Utilitarianism, People, and Animals,” Annual Meetings of the New Mexico-Texas Philosophical Society, March 2017
- “The X-Men on ‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can’,” Annual Meetings of the New Mexico-Texas Philosophical Society, March 2017 (Co-Authored with Tim Cleveland and Mark Walker.)
- “Desert-Adjusted Utilitarianism, People, and Animals,” American Philosophical Association Colloquium, Easter Division Meeting, January 2017
- “Feldmaniacal Implications for the Moral Standing of People and Animals,” 13th Biennial UMass Philosophy Homecoming Conference, October 2015
- “Commentary on Marc Moffet’s ‘The Unity of Understanding’,” NMSU Philosophy Family Conference, February 2015
- “Moore’s Open Question Phenomenon Explained—Naturalistically,” Annual Meetings of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, April 2014
- “Commentary on Mary Gwin’s ‘Personal Worth and Sport’,” Annual Meetings of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, April 2014
- “Against Securitism, the New Breed of Actualism in Consequentialist Thought,” American Philosophical Association Colloquium, Easter Division Meeting, December 2013
- “Against Securitism, the New Breed of Actualism in Consequentialist Thought,” Annual Meetings of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, March 2013
- “Commentary on Bob Fischer’s ‘A Different Route to the Necessity Model’,” Annual Meetings of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, March 2013
- “David Lewis and Analyses of Causation,” Seminar on David Lewis, University of Texas-El Paso, December 2012

- “Against Securitism, the New Breed of Actualism in Consequentialist Thought,” New Mexico State University Philosophy Colloquium, October 2012
- “Defending Open Question Arguments from ‘Invalidity’ Critics,” Annual Meetings of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, March 2012
- “Commentary on John Harris’ ‘Posner’s Problem with Utility’,” Annual Meetings of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, March 2012
- “Commentary on Don Fallis’ ‘Davidson Was Almost Right about Lying’,” Annual Meetings of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, March 2012
- “Commentary on Sean Walsh’s ‘Indeterminacy of Compatibilist Counterfactuals in Consequentialist Theories of Right’,” American Philosophical Association Symposium, Pacific Division Meeting, April 2011
- “Utilitarianism, the ‘Nearest and Dearest’ Objection, and Some Supererogation,” Annual Meetings of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, March 2010
- “Moore’s Open Question Maneuvering,” American Philosophical Association Colloquium, Pacific Division Meeting, March 2009
- “Supererogation for Utilitarianism,” Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress, University of Colorado-Boulder, August 2008
- “Moore’s Maneuvering,” 59th Annual Meeting of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, April 2008
- “Commentary on Colaner’s ‘How to Be an Anti-Anti Realist’,” 59th Annual Meeting of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, April 2008
- “Supererogation for Utilitarianism,” American Philosophical Association Symposium, Pacific Division Meeting, March 2008
- “Supererogation for Utilitarianism,” 58th Annual Meeting of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, March 2007
- “Defending a Possibilist Insight in Consequentialist Thought,” 57th Annual Meeting of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, April 2006
- “Commentary on John Symon’s ‘Intuitive Content: Kripke and Common Sense’,” 57th Annual Meeting of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, April 2006
- “Defending a Possibilist Insight in Consequentialist Thought,” American Philosophical Association Symposium, Pacific Division Meeting, March 2006
- “Defending a Possibilist Insight in Consequentialist Thought,” Tri-City Philosophical Society, New Mexico State University, February 2006
- “What Objective Consequentialism Must Be Like,” Conference of the International Society for Utilitarian Studies, Dartmouth College, August 2005
- “What Objective Consequentialism Must Be Like,” 56th Annual Meeting of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society, April 2005
- “What Objective Consequentialism Must Be Like,” American Philosophical Association Colloquium, Pacific Division Meeting, March 2005
- “What Objective Consequentialism Must Be Like,” Tri-City Philosophical Society, University of Texas-El Paso, September 2004
- “Consequentialist Reactions to Cain’s Objection from the Individual,” Southwest Philosophy Conference, November 2004
- “Moore’s Open Question Maneuvering,” Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, February 2004
- “Moore’s Open Question Maneuvering,” New Mexico State University, January 2004
- “Plato and the Matrix Take on Hedonism,” Pizza and Prof. Lecture Series, The Commonwealth College at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, November 2003

- “Defending the Possibilist Program in Consequentialist Thought,” University of Massachusetts-Amherst, May 2003
- “Counterfactuals for Consequentialists,” American Philosophical Association Colloquium, Pacific Division Meeting, March 2001
- “Counterfactuals for Consequentialists,” 5th Annual CUNY Graduate Student Conference, November 2000
- “How Agent Ability and Underspecified Antecedents Undermine Utilitarianism,” Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Colloquium Series, April 2000
- “How Agent Ability and Underspecified Antecedents Undermine Utilitarianism,” International Society for Utilitarian Studies Conference, March 2000
- “How Agent Ability and Underspecified Antecedents Undermine Utilitarianism,” University of Massachusetts-Amherst, April 1999
- “The Morally Irrelevant Distinction between Requests and Refusals: A Response to Bernard Gert’s ‘An Alternative to Physician Assisted Suicide’,” University of Massachusetts Conference on Medical Ethics, April 2000
- “Comments on Irwin Goldstein’s ‘Pleasure, Pain, and Moral Theory’,” University of Massachusetts-Amherst, April 1997

Papers in Progress

“Moore’s Open Question Maneuvering”

G. E. Moore is widely regarded as one of the most important moral philosophers of the Twentieth Century. His *Principia Ethica* is viewed by many as the origin of the contemporary dialogue concerning a number of the most fundamental topics in moral philosophy. Moore's formulation of ideal utilitarianism in *Principia Ethica* grafts a sleek consequentialist normative framework onto a novel quasi-hedonistic axiology, marking seminal contributions in both normative ethics and axiology. But what many believe to be Moore's most important contribution to philosophical ethics lies in his pioneering work in metaethics, particularly his Open Question efforts.

Within §13 of *Principia Ethica* is contained Moore’s most famous Open Question Arguments (OQAs), which have provoked puzzlement and controversy among philosophers ever since their inception. Several of Moore’s contemporaries defended various forms of metaethical nonnaturalism—a doctrine Moore himself endorsed—by appeal to OQAs. To this day, some contemporary cognitivists embrace the force of Moore’s OQAs against metaethical naturalism. And noncognitivists—as well as those who defend various hybrid accounts of moral terminology—have traditionally used OQAs to fuel their own emotivist, prescriptivist, and expressivist metaethical programs.

Despite Moore’s influence upon contemporary metaethics, his OQAs have been ridiculed in recent years. Their deployment has been labeled “accident prone,” “simple to dismiss,” and just plain invalid. Regardless of the flaws in Moore’s argumentation, these recent allegations are completely unfounded. In fact, they seem to be based upon failures to provide acceptable interpretations of the Moorean texts.

Thus, I commit myself here to criticizing two popular and influential interpretations of Moore’s OQAs—one provided by a sympathetic Moore scholar, the other by one of Moore’s most severe critics—before providing what I consider to be the most plausible and charitable version of Moore’s strongest OQA. Then we’ll be in position to provide some evaluative commentary upon Moore’s Open Question Strategies.

“Moore’s Open Question Phenomenon Explained—Naturalistically!”

Two semantic concepts—character and role—are introduced (i) to provide a novel justification for Moore’s Open Question premises and (ii) to set a standard for future naturalistic analyses of ethical terminology. In providing this semantic explanation of the Open Question phenomenon, I generate an augmented Moorean Open Question Argument that I take to be both philosophically interesting and a vehicle that aptly addresses the problems with metaethical naturalism that Moore probably meant to target. Because the justification provided for the premises of this augmented Open Question Argument is perfectly compatible with a naturalistic philosophy, advocates of the argument aren’t committed to the mysterious metaethical positions frequently associated with Moore’s original Open Question Arguments.

“Did Moore Swipe his Open Question Arguments from Plato’s *Philebus*?”

Moore’s Open Question passages in §13 of *Principia Ethica* are surprisingly similar to portions of Plato’s *Philebus*. (See, especially, 13ab.) Furthermore, the nonnaturalist conclusions drawn from Moorean Open Question Arguments are in many ways similar to some of the claims that Plato develops regarding the Form of the Good. And, interestingly enough, Moore even presents his own translation of a substantial portion of the *Philebus* in Chapter III of *Principia Ethica*.

In this essay, I highlight the similarities between Moore’s Open Question passages and some of Plato’s commentary in the *Philebus*. I suggest that the long history of Open Question Arguments might reach back all the way to Plato. I argue that while Plato *may* have provided the kernel for Open Question Arguments, Moore, in the least, provides a clear, theoretically much more robust Open Question Argument than anything that can be extracted from the *Philebus*. I end by indicating some ways in which Open Question Arguments can be defended without committing oneself to either the nonnaturalist or Platonic conclusions that perhaps the most famous Open Question theorists drew from them.

Courses Taught

At New Mexico State University

PHIL 101: Art of Wondering
 PHIL 201: Introduction to Philosophy
 PHIL 220: Individual Conduct and Society
 PHIL 223: Ethics
 PHIL 322: Environmental Ethics
 PHIL 323: Engineering Ethics
 PHIL 327: Ethics and Sports
 PHIL 373: Ethical Theory
 PHIL 380: Metaphysics
 Honors 227G: Plato and the Discovery of Philosophy

At the University of Massachusetts-Amherst

PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy
 PHIL 100H: Introduction to Philosophy, Honors
 PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy (teaching assistant for Fred Feldman, led sections and graded)
 PHIL 160: Introduction to Ethics
 PHIL 160H: Introduction to Ethics, Honors
 PHIL 160: Introduction to Ethics (teaching assistant for Fred Feldman, led sections and graded)

PHIL 161: Problems in Social Thought
 PHIL 161H: Problems in Social Thought, Honors
 PHIL 163H: Business Ethics: Honors
 PHIL 164: Medical Ethics
 PHIL 164H: Medical Ethics, Honors
 PHIL 164: Medical Ethics (teaching assistant for Gareth Matthews, led sections and graded)
 Honors 391D: Dean's Book

Service to Philosophy

- Referee for *Mind*
- Referee for *American Philosophical Quarterly*
- Referee for *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*
- Referee for *Ethical Perspectives*
- Referee for *Res Philosophica*
- Referee for *Synthese*
- Referee for the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society
- Reviewer of the manuscript *The Dream Weaver* for the Pearson Longman press
- Assistant to Gareth Matthews for the 1998 NEH Summer Seminar on the Philosophy of Children

Service to New Mexico State University and the Philosophy Department

- Member of the College Faculty Affairs Committee (2015-present)
- Member of the College Scholarship Committee (2015-present)
- Organizer of the NMSU Philosophy Family Conference, February 2015
- Member of the College Curriculum and Educational Policies Committee (2007-2010)
- Library Liaison for the Philosophy Department (2004-present)
- Faculty Advisor for Sophia: The NMSU Philosophy Club (2006-present)
- Member of Search Committees (06-07, 07-08)
- Dean's Representative for Master's Theses Defenses and Doctoral Proposal Defenses (2007-present)
- Outcomes Assessment for the Philosophy Department (2007-present)
- Member of Departmental Peer Teaching Evaluation Committee (2011-2014)

Honors and Organizations

Member of the American Philosophical Association, 2000-present
 Member of the International Society for Utilitarian Studies, 2000-2001
 Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society, 2000
 Puryear Fellowship, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, 1995-1996
 Dean's Scholar, New Mexico State University, 1992 –1993
 Alpha Chi Honorary Fraternity, New Mexico State University Chapter, 1992
 NCAA Scholar-Athlete, San Jose State University, 1991