

JEAN-PAUL VESSEL

Curriculum Vitae 9/1/09

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

2004-present	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, Medical Ethics)

Areas of Teaching Competence

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

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" Forthcoming in *American Philosophical Quarterly*.

Awards

- *The Patricia Christmore Teaching Award* presented by New Mexico State University in recognition of excellence in teaching.

- *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

- “Moore’s Open Question Maneuvering,” American Philosophical Association Colloquium, Pacific Division Meeting, March 2008
- “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,” 2005 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 (Fall 2004, Spring 2005, Fall 2005, Spring 2006, Summer 2006, Summer 2007, Fall 2007)

PHIL 201: Introduction to Philosophy (Spring 2007, Spring 2008, Fall 2008, Spring 2009)

PHIL 220: Individual Conduct and Society (Fall 2004, Fall 2006)

PHIL 223: Ethics (Spring 2005, Spring 2006, Fall 2006, Spring 2007, Spring 2009)

PHIL 322: Environmental Ethics (Spring 2005, Spring 2006, Spring 2008)

PHIL 323: Engineering Ethics (Fall 2005, Fall 2006, Fall 2007, Spring 2008, Spring 2009)

PHIL 327: Ethics and Sports (Fall 2007)

PHIL 373: Ethical Theory (Fall 2004, Fall 2005, Spring 2007, Fall 2008)

At the University of Massachusetts-Amherst

PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy (Spring 1997)

PHIL 100H: Introduction to Philosophy: Honors (Spring 2003, Fall 2003, Spring 2004)

PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy (teaching assistant for Fred Feldman; led sections and graded; Fall 1996)
 PHIL 160: Introduction to Ethics (Fall 1999, Spring 2000, Fall 2000, Spring 2001, Fall 2001)
 PHIL 160H: Introduction to Ethics: Honors (Fall 2002, Spring 2003, Fall 2003, Spring 2004)
 PHIL 160: Introduction to Ethics (teaching assistant for Fred Feldman; led sections and graded; Spring 1998)
 PHIL 161: Problems in Social Thought (Summer 1999, Summer 2001)
 PHIL 161H: Problems in Social Thought: Honors (Spring 2003, Spring 2004)
 PHIL 163H: Business Ethics: Honors (Fall 2002)
 PHIL 164: Medical Ethics (Summer 1998, Fall 1998, Spring 1999, Summer 2000)
 PHIL 164H: Medical Ethics: Honors (Fall 2002, Fall 2003)
 PHIL 164: Medical Ethics (teaching assistant for Gareth Matthews; led sections and graded; Fall 1997)
 Honors 391D: Dean's Book (Fall 2002, Spring 2003, Fall 2003, Spring 2004)

Service to Philosophy

- Assistant to Gareth Matthews for the 1998 NEH Summer Seminar on the Philosophy of Children
- Referee for the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society
- Reviewer of the manuscript *The Dream Weaver* for the Pearson Longman press

Service to New Mexico State University and the Philosophy Department

- Member of the College Curriculum and Educational Policies Committee (2007-present)
- 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)

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

References

Fred Feldman	Department of Philosophy
Phil Bricker	352 Bartlett Hall
Gary Matthews	University of Massachusetts-Amherst
Ed Gettier	130 Hicks Way
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