
University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Department of Philosophy
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AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Ethics · Applied Ethics · Metaethics

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Metaphysics · Political Philosophy · Bioethics · Ethics of Technology · History of Ethics

EMPLOYMENT

Assistant Professor, University of Nebraska–Lincoln	2020 –
Postdoctoral Associate, Massachusetts Institute of Technology	2019 – 2020
Instructor, Yale Young Global Scholars	2013 – 2019

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Philosophy, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Dissertation: <i>Love First</i> Committee: Kieran Setiya (Chair), Caspar Hare, Tamar Schapiro	2014 – 2019
B.A. in Philosophy, Yale College <i>Magna Cum Laude</i> , With Distinction in Philosophy	2010 – 2014

PUBLICATIONS

“Honesty and Discretion.” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, forthcoming.

PRESENTATIONS AND COMMENTARIES

“Forgiveness: Personal and Political”

- Invited Talk, Yale, 2021
- Graduate-Faculty Colloquium, UNL, 2021

“Honesty and Discretion”

- Invited Talk, Oberlin College, 2020
- Trust and Truth: AHRC International Interdisciplinary Conference, Cambridge, 2019

- Work In Progress Seminar, MIT, 2018
- “Ethics in the Shadow of Love”
- Northeastern Normativity Workshop, 2020
 - Invited Talk, New York University, 2020
 - Invited Talk, UNC Wilmington, 2020
 - Invited Talk, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, 2020
 - Central APA, 2020
 - Work In Progress Seminar, MIT, 2019
 - Northern New England Philosophical Association, University of Vermont, 2018
- “Commentary on Dougherty’s ‘Communicating Consent’”
- MITing of the Minds, 2015

AWARDS

- MIT Presidential Fellowship, 2014 – 2015.
- Phi Beta Kappa, 2014.
- George. A. Schrader, Jr. Prize, 2014 (for highest achievement in the humanities, Branford College, Yale)
- E. Francis Riggs Prize, 2011 (for highest achievement in the Directed Studies Program, Yale)

TEACHING

INSTRUCTOR

- Why Be Moral? (graduate/undergraduate seminar), UNL Spring 2022
- Ethics of the Emerging Media Arts, UNL Spring 2022
- Personal Identity, Persistence, and Time, UNL Fall 2021
- Philosophy and Current Issues, UNL Fall 2021, S '21, F '20
- Love (graduate seminar), UNL Fall 2020
- Ethics of Technology, MIT Fall 2019
- Bioethics, MIT Fall 2019
- Thinking, Being, Doing, Ethics in Your Life, MIT Spring 2020
- Bioethics: Enhancement, Treatment and the Self, Yale Young Global Scholars (YYGS), Summer 2019, '17
- The Ethics of Consent: Medicine, Research, and Sexuality, YYGS, Summer 2019
- Legitimacy and Authority: The Political Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, YYGS, Summer 2018, '17, '16 and '15
- Is There a Place for Ethics in War?, YYGS, Summer 2018, '16
- Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism: Kant and Schmitt on the International Order, YYGS, Summer 2018,

- Killing, Saving, and Letting Die: The Ethics of Self Driving Cars, YYGS, Summer 2018
- Racism, Sexism, Race and Gender, YYGS, Summer 2017
- Climate Ethics, YYGS, Summer 2017
- Moral and Cultural Relativism, YYGS, Summer 2018, '17, '16
- Affluence, Aid, and Our Obligations to Others, YYGS, Summer 2017, '16 & '15
- Big Data, Surveillance, and the Philosophical and Legal Dimensions of Privacy ('17)
- Philosophy of Race, YYGS Summer 2016 & 2015
- Liberalism, Libertarianism: Rawls and Nozick on Justice, YYGS, Summer 2016 & '15
- Population Ethics, YYGS, Summer 2015
- Philosophical Foundations of Conservatism, YYGS, Summer 2015
- Philosophy of Race, YYGS, Summer 2015
- Population Ethics, YYGS, Summer 2015
- Jus ad Bellum, YYGS, Summer 2014
- Jus in Bello, YYGS, Summer 2014
- Debates about Harm, YYGS, Summer 2014, '13

OTHER LECTURES

- Three Views on Forgiveness, Drisha Institute, Fall 2021
- What is racism?, YYGS, Summer 2020, '21

TEACHING ASSISTANT

- Classics of Western Philosophy (Haslanger), MIT, Fall 2017
- Bioethics (Prescott-Couch), MIT, Spring 2017
- Moral Problems and the Good Life (Setiya), MIT, Fall 2016
- Problems of Philosophy (Hare), MIT, Fall 2015

PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING

- Kaufman Teaching Certificate Program, MIT, Spring 2018
- Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning Seminar Design Workshop, Yale, Spring 2019, '18, '17, '16 & '15

SERVICE

- Faculty Lead, Embedded Ethics Program, University of Nebraska–Lincoln
- Graduate Advisor, Spring 2021
- Referee for: *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*; *Ergo*; *Ethics, Policy, and Environment*; *Philosophical Quarterly*
- Editorial work for *Routledge Handbook of Social & Political Philosophy of Language* (edited by Khoo and Sterken, under contract with Routledge)
- Co-organizer of the MIT Ethics Reading Group, Fall 2015 – Spring 2017

- Co-organizer of the MITing of the Minds Conference, Spring 2015.

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

(* = audit)

ETHICS AND METAETHICS

- *Reasons for Action (Setiya, MIT), Fall 2018
- *Realm of Rights (Thompson, MIT), Spring 2018
- *Noncognitivism (Fitelson, Spencer; MIT), Fall 2016.
- Topics in Moral Philosophy (Hare, MIT), Spring 2016
- Normative and Meta-Normative Questions (Parfit and Berker, Harvard), Spring 2015
- Moral Psychology (Setiya, MIT), Spring 2015
- Ought and ‘Ought’ (Spencer and Khoo, MIT), Fall 2014
- Metaethics (Berker, Harvard), Fall 2014
- Political Theory: Berlin, Oakeshott, & Strauss (Smith, Yale), Fall 2013
- Recent Ethical Theory: Derek Parfit’s *On What Matters* (Darwall & Kagan, Yale), Fall 2012

METAPHYSICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY

- *Problems in Metaphysics: Color and its Place in Nature (Spencer, Byrne and Pautz, MIT), Fall 2017
- Independent Study on Explanation, Fundamentality and Time (Skow, MIT), Spring 2016
- Proseminar II (Haslanger, Rayo, MIT), Spring 2015.
- Proseminar I (Spencer, Yablo, MIT), Fall 2014.
- Formal Tools for Philosophers (Skow, MIT), Fall 2014.
- Mathematical Logic (Shin, Yale), Fall 2013
- Persistence, Action and Relations (Della Rocca, Yale), Fall 2013
- Personal Identity (Winkler, Yale), Spring 2013

HISTORY

- Kant’s Ethical Theory (Korsgaard, Harvard), Spring 2016
- The British Moralists (Schapiro, MIT), Fall 2016
- Hume (Winkler, Yale), Fall 2013
- Aristotle’s Ethics (Kronman, Yale) Fall 2012
- Kant’s Ethical Theory (Elizondo, Yale), Spring 2012
- Political Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes (Smith, Yale), Fall 2012
- Modern Political Philosophy (Garsten & Smith, Yale), Spring 2012
- Ancient Political Philosophy (Garsten & Smith, Yale), Fall 2011

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT: *LOVE FIRST*

How should we respond to the humanity of others? My dissertation argues that fundamentally, the answer is with love. The first chapter defends a love-first approach to ethics, claiming that an ideal of love for all serves as a unifying and illuminating foundation for deontological ethics. The second and third chapters begin to carry out the love-first program, offering novel theories of partiality and of the reasons we have to tell (and withhold) the truth, each grounded in an ideal of love.

The ideal of love for all has religious origins, both Judeo-Christian and Buddhist. My first chapter shows that it can be detached from its religious context and still serve as a foundation for ethics. I argue that the ordinary love we have for friends and family, is subject to “outward pressure.” Love is better the closer it is to being unconditional; and unconditional love has its basis in the beloved’s humanity, something shared with every human being. So I argue that the normative standards of love for one push us towards recognizing that we have reason to love every person. Second, I argue that our lives are made better by more expansive love. There is good reason to love everyone, if we can. But it seems both conceptually and practically impossible to love all. I explain how we can make sense of such love, even love for those we have not met, in terms of the neglected phenomenon of “plural love,” as when I love the members of my family, even distant relatives. The problem with agape is not that it is impossible but that it conflicts with the selective love we have for friends and family. In light of that conflict, I argue that we should treat agape as an ideal to be *approximated*. Many have seen a tension between loving and respecting another. I instead argue that respect just is the minimum required approximation of love and derive the basic features of deontological ethics—commitment to equality, respect for autonomy, non-aggregative concern for well-being, imperfect duties of beneficence—from my account of love for all. This novel foundation for deontological ethics is both more unified than alternatives and better speaks to the felt impossibility of living a moral life: living well is a matter of striving towards the ideal of fully responding to the humanity of all and (inevitably) falling short.

Where the first chapter is an investigation into how we should act towards others in general, the second turns to special relationships and partiality, taking our selective love for friends and family as a point of departure. A theory of partiality must answer two questions: what *motivates* (virtuous) partiality and what *justifies* it. Suppose my friend Kevin is sick and I cancel my plans to volunteer at a soup kitchen in order to bring him soup. It seems obvious that I am justified in being partial to him because we are friends—our special relationship permits (and sometimes requires) partiality. Yet when I act out of love for him, I am not motivated by the fact that we are friends, but instead by non-relational facts, e.g., that Kevin is sick. Where the relationship seems like a necessary *normative* reason it seems not to be a *motivating* reason; this introduces a tension to a theory of partiality, with normative and motivational explananda pulling in opposite directions. The solution to this tension lies in recognizing the (largely ignored) diachronic nature of partiality. To act out of love is not to be moved by the fact of one’s relationship; it is to have a *history* of so relating to someone. And it is in virtue of that history that non-relational facts (e.g., that Kevin needs help) have greater rational weight. I defend a (defeasible) rational requirement to be constant with respect to the

way we relate to others. Having shown that it offers a unified account of the ethics and moral psychology of partiality, I argue this requirement can be generalized to other cases of reasoning in the face of parity.

My third chapter asks when and why we should tell the truth. Philosophers have traditionally answered this question with an exclusive focus on lying and deception, i.e., dishonesty. But where dishonesty involves withholding the truth, indiscretion is sharing or eliciting a truth that should be left unsaid. I argue that these vices and their correlative virtues must be theorized together as they constitute two halves of an answer to the question, “About what should we be truthful and why?” Philosophers have traditionally explained our obligations to be honest in virtue of our status as agents or communicators in the abstract, treating relationships as exceptions to a general rule. I argue, however, that a unified account of honesty and discretion must start with the concrete relationships that a speaker is in with her interlocutors. Our relationships set the boundaries of what information is and is not “in bounds.” These communicative norms are constitutive of our relationships—that my friend can ask about my private life where my colleague cannot is part of what makes it the intimate friendship that it is. I argue that our reasons to tell the truth are explained by the relationships we are in; we have reason to follow their communicative norms insofar as we have reason to be in the relationship. We moreover have reasons to share or withhold the truth in order to *shape* our relationships; relationships and their constitutive norms just are a product of our behavior, so by telling or withholding the truth, we can put certain topics in or out of bounds, molding our relationships into something new. We should make our relationships more loving, or barring that, better approximations an ideal of love.

REFERENCES

Kieran Setiya (Dissertation Supervisor)

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Stephen Darwall

Andrew Downey Orrick Professor of Philosophy, Yale
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Office of International Affairs and Executive Director, Yale
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