

Charles Phelps Taft Research Center
at the University of Cincinnati
Faculty Release Fellowship Application

Each section (I-V) should be placed at the start of a new page. All required materials must be included in a single document, uploaded to the electronic submissions system, no later than 5PM on the published day of the deadline. This program requires a letter of support from the department head and an evaluator external to UC. Applicants should submit their application with enough time for the letters to be uploaded to the submissions system prior to the close of the deadline. Taft does not accept an obligation to review applications that have not received the required documents by the close of the deadline.

I. General Information

- a. Name: **Vanessa Carbonell**
- b. M#: **03665155**
- c. Department: **Philosophy**
- d. Position: **Assistant Professor**
- e. Project title: **Non-Ideal Ethics**
- f. Title of Publication: **Non-Ideal Ethics (working title)**
- g. Brief Summary of Requested Support: **Spring 2016 release to extend a regular Fall 2015 sabbatical so that I can prepare a book manuscript.**
- h. Probable Results of a Grant (such as external funding, publications, and presentations): **Book manuscript.**
- i. Other Funding Applied For or Received for This Project (list source and amounts requested and awarded): **None.**

II. Project Proposal

I am applying for a Taft Faculty Release Fellowship for Spring 2016, to extend a Fall 2015 sabbatical for which I have also applied. This would enable me to devote a full year to drafting a book on *Non-Ideal Ethics*. This will be my first book. It is not a revision of my doctoral dissertation.

Project Summary: Non-Ideal Ethics

The proposed book will defend an approach to ethics that is “non-ideal”: realistic about psychological and social phenomena, skeptical of perfectionism, and built on case studies of real moral agents, moral controversies, and moral deliberation. The very idea of “non-ideal ethics” may seem like a contradiction in terms. After all, it might seem that the purpose of ethics is to tell us how we ought, *ideally*, to act. Yet theories that give clear answers about what to do in sanitized, controlled thought experiments are sometimes virtually useless in telling us what to do in the messy world.

Consider an example that was once hypothetical but is now very real: if you are healthy and in a good position to do so, should you donate one of your kidneys to an anonymous stranger dying on the transplant waiting list? On the one hand, such an extreme gesture would seem to be obviously beyond obligation. Until very recently, people willing to make this sort of sacrifice were either regarded with suspicion or singled out for adulation on the local news. On the other hand, improved techniques mean that for some people the sacrifice involved is rather small, and the stakes for the recipient could not be higher. It would seem to be an *easy rescue*, and therefore morally required. How to reconcile these two perspectives? I want to argue that a non-ideal approach can shed light on these kinds of dilemmas by showing how we might negotiate between general theoretical commitments and the varied and complex particular experiences of real moral agents.

In political philosophy and political theory, a vibrant methodological debate has arisen between “ideal theory” and “non-ideal theory”, especially with respect to theorizing about justice. Broadly speaking, the *ideal theorists* seek to understand what justice looks like in conditions of “full compliance”—where everyone complies with the demands of justice. Ideal theorists are “utopian” in the sense that they seek to describe an ideally just society regardless of the messy facts about our actual society, and they focus on an “end-state” rather than on the status quo. *Non-ideal theorists*, in contrast, can be said to approach the question of justice with “partial compliance” as a grounding assumption, as well as with a “realist” (non-utopian) focus on the facts, and an interest in “transitional” policies rather than end-states (Valentini 2012).

There is increasing interest in non-ideal theory in political philosophy, and some claim that non-ideal theory can proceed without doing ideal theory first (Anderson 2010). This approach is exciting, because it brings concrete injustices to the foreground and argues that we can tackle them without waiting for longstanding debates about ideal justice to be settled.

But unlike in political philosophy, the non-ideal approach is rarely mentioned in ethics. Might we want to take a non-ideal approach not only to broad questions of justice, but also to questions about individual moral conduct—questions about right and wrong, praise and blame, guilt and indignation, cowardice and heroism? The motivation here is not the familiar idea that an idealized approach is too hard for humans to live up to—that is, that we must not “let the perfect be the enemy of the good”. Setting moral expectations closer to how flawed humans actually behave so that they might be more likely to comply with them sounds more like a marketing strategy. My own concern is something else, namely that the *actual* demands of morality cannot be discovered without careful attention to the messy particulars of everyday life, and that social and psychological facts about humans set hard constraints on those demands. While neither of these claims is controversial, articulating them as part of a general non-ideal approach has not, to my knowledge, been done before.

The book will have six chapters, which are very briefly summarized below.

Chapter 1: Is Non-Ideal Ethics Possible?

This chapter lays the groundwork for a non-ideal approach to ethics, considers analogies and disanalogies between methodology in ethics and political philosophy, and addresses skeptical worries. It argues for six commitments of the non-ideal approach: attention to compliance levels; psychological realism; social realism; flexibility and malleability of standards; the epistemic value of real-life case studies; and moral diversity without moral relativism.

Chapter 2: Saints, Exemplars, Black Sheep, and Cautionary Tales

This chapter argues that idealizations and anti-idealizations can play an important role even in non-ideal ethics. We ought to look at examples of the morally best and morally worst agents when trying to understand where actual moral agents go wrong. However, our “saints” and “amoralists” should be drawn from real-life case studies, not imaginary thought experiments. This chapter builds on, but does not simply recycle, work in my prior articles “What Moral Saints Look Like” and “The Ratcheting-Up Effect.”

Chapter 3: The Moral Community as a Social Community

This chapter argues that we should pay as much attention to the social background conditions in which moral norms operate as we do to the psychological features of moral agents. Social facts act as constraints on what morality can reasonably demand of agents. This chapter builds on, but does not simply recycle, my manuscript “Social Constraints on Moral Agency” (currently under review).

Chapter 4: Sacrifice and Shifting Demands

This chapter argues that the demands of morality are dynamic, contextual, individualized, and dependent on judgments about sacrifice. In order to know how much of a sacrifice one must make for the sake of morality, we need both a theory of sacrifice and a lot of detailed knowledge about the particulars of people’s circumstances. To chart the boundaries of what morality demands of us, we should begin not with generalizations about what would be one’s “fair

share,” but rather with examinations of particular conflicts and attention to the lived experience of real moral agents. This chapter builds on, but does not recycle, my earlier articles “The Ratcheting-Up Effect,” “What We Know and What We Owe,” “Sacrifices of Self,” and “Differential Demands.”

Chapter 5: A Case Study: Nondirected Kidney Donation

This chapter tests the non-ideal approach on a real case study: what, if anything, do healthy, privileged individuals owe to fellow citizens dying on the kidney transplant list? I approach the question not from the standpoint of justice but from the standpoint of individual moral agents negotiating the limits of what morality can demand of them. Attention to changing transplant practices in the last decade and new data on health risks reveals that what was once considered an obviously unreasonable sacrifice can no longer be considered *obviously* so, at least for some potential donors. I presented the seeds of this chapter this month at the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities.

Chapter 6: Puzzles and Paradoxes about Moral Goodness

This chapter shows that a non-ideal approach can shed light on certain skeptical puzzles and paradoxes about morality and its role in our lives. Full-fledged moral skepticism involves doubting the existence of moral facts or moral knowledge. The weaker type of skepticism (or cynicism) I’m interested in involves accepting the possibility of moral facts but raising the following worries: Is it possible to be too morally good? Should we ever resent rather than admire the moral overachievers? What is the right balance of moral and non-moral pursuits in the well-lived life? This chapter builds on, but does not recycle, work in my prior article “*De Dicto* Desires and Morality as Fetish”.

Final Product and Relevance to Professional Development

The final product will be a book manuscript ready for submission to academic presses. Desirable venues in my field include Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Harvard University Press, Princeton University Press, and Routledge. As my first book, this project is crucial to my professional development. It will allow me to tie together threads in the articles I have already published, lay the groundwork for my future work, and raise my scholarly profile in the philosophical community. This project will also help to lay the groundwork for increased engagement with the public about issues of moral concern.

Proposed Project Schedule

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|----------------|-------------------|
| June-July 2015 | Draft Ch. 2 |
| Aug-Sept 2015 | Draft Ch. 3 |
| Oct-Dec 2015 | Draft Ch. 4 and 5 |
| Jan-March 2016 | Draft Ch. 6 |
| April-May | Draft Ch. 1 |

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| June-July 2016 | Revisions |
| Aug 2016 | Send book manuscript to presses |
| Fall term 2016 | Grad seminar or reading group on manuscript |

Selected Bibliography

- Anderson, E. 2010. *The Imperative of Integration*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Baron, Marcia. 1986. "On Admirable Immorality." *Ethics* 96(3): 557-566.
- Lawrence Blum. 1988. "Moral Exemplars." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 13:1, 196-221.
- Brandt, Richard. 1989. "Morality and its Critics." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 26(2): 89-100.
- Sarah Buss. 2007. "Needs (Someone Else's), Projects (My Own), and Reasons." *Journal of Philosophy*. 103(8): 373-402.
- Darwall, Stephen. 1987. "Abolishing Morality." *Synthese* 72: 71-89.
- Darwall, Stephen. 2002. *Welfare and Rational Care*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press.)
- Darwall, Stephen. 2006. *The Second-Person Standpoint*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press.)
- Fairbanks, Sandra Jane. 1999. "A Critique of Admirable Imperfection." *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 33: 507-517.
- Hooker, B and Little, M. 2000. *Moral Particularism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rawls, J. 1971. *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Flanagan, Owen. 1991. *Varieties of Moral Personality*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press.)
- Louden, Robert. 1988. "Can We Be Too Moral?" *Ethics* 98(2): 361-378.
- Murphy, Liam B. 2000. *Moral Demands in Nonideal Theory*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press.)
- Schapiro, Tamar. 2003. "Compliance, Complicity, and the Nature of Nonideal Conditions." *The Journal of Philosophy*, 100:7, 329-355.
- Urmson, J.O. 1958. "Saints and Heroes." In A. I. Melden, Ed. *Essays in Moral Philosophy*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 198-216.
- Valentini, L. 2012. "Ideal vs Non-Ideal Theory: A Conceptual Map" *Philosophy Compass* 7(9): 654-664.
- Wilson, Catherine. 1993. "On Some Alleged Limitations to Moral Endeavor." *The Journal of Philosophy* 90(6): 275-289.

Wilson, Catherine. 2004. *Moral Animals: Ideals and Constraints in Moral Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Wolf, Susan. 1982. "Moral Saints." *The Journal of Philosophy*, 79:8, 419-439.

Wolf, Susan. 1986. "Above and Below the Line of Duty." *Philosophical Topics*, 14:2, 131-148.

III. Budget

- a. Requested Research Supplement: **None.**

IV. Taft Grant History:

Please list your grant history with Taft for the last 5 years, in reverse chronological order. Please list project title, the name, date, and amount of award, as well as development of the project subsequent to the grant, e.g. publication.

2012-2013 Center Fellowship for "Knowledge and Moral Obligation"

Resulted in

- "What We Know and What We Owe" *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics* Vol. III, 2013
- "Sacrifices of Self" *Journal of Ethics*, published online 2014
- "How to Put Prescription Drug Ads on Your Syllabus" *Teaching Philosophy* 2014
- "Social Constraints on Moral Agency" (under review)

2011 Taft Domestic Travel \$322.20 for "Sacrifice and Moral Obligation"

- Presented at APA Central, Minneapolis MN
- Published as "The Ratcheting-Up Effect" *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 2012

2010 Taft Summer Research Fellowship \$8000 for "Moral Recommendations"

Resulted in

- "De Dicto Desires and Morality as Fetish" *Philosophical Studies* 2013
- "The Ratcheting-Up Effect" *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 2012

V. Curriculum Vitae

Please include here a current (updated within the last month) curriculum vitae of no more than two pages.

Vanessa Carbonell
Short CV

Professional Appointments

2009 – Present, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Obed J. Wilson Professor of Ethics
University of Cincinnati

Education

2009 Ph.D., Philosophy, University of Michigan
Dissertation: “Moral Saints Reconsidered”, Co-Chairs S. Darwall and E. Anderson
2003 B.A., with High Honors in Philosophy, Wesleyan University

Areas of Specialization and Competence

AOS: Ethical Theory; Moral Psychology
AOC: Metaethics; Bioethics; Applied Ethics

Publications

- (2015) “Differential Demands” *The Limits of Moral Obligation: Moral Demandingness and Ought Implies Can*, M. Kuhler and M. van Ackeren, eds. Routledge. (forthcoming April 2015, pending final revisions) <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9781138824232/> (~8000 words)
- (2014) “Sacrifices of Self” *The Journal of Ethics* xx(x), pp. 1-20.
DOI 10.1007/s10892-014-9186-x. Published online Sept 2014. (~11,000 words)
- (2014) “How to Put Prescription Drug Ads on Your Syllabus” *Teaching Philosophy* 37(3): 295-319.
DOI 10.5840/teachphil201461917. Published online June 2014. (~11,000 words)
- (2014) “Amnesia, Anesthesia, and Warranted Fear” *Bioethics* 28(5): 245-254.
DOI 10.1111/j.1467-8519.2012.01995.x. Published online July, 2012. (~9000 words)
- (2014) “If Healthcare Advertising is a Problem, FDA-Style Regulation is Not the Solution”
American Journal of Bioethics 14(3): 46-47. DOI:10.1080/15265161.2013.879947. (1500 words)
- (2013) “What We Know and What We Owe” *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics* III, 235-259. (11,000)
ISBN: 9780199685912
- (2013) “Interactive Capacity, Decisional Capacity, and a Dilemma for Surrogates”
AJOB Neuroscience 4(4), 2013, 36-37. DOI 10.1080/21507740.2013.827276. (1500 words)
- (2013) “De Dicto Desires and Morality as Fetish” *Philosophical Studies* 163(2), 2013, 459-477.
DOI 10.1007/s11098-011-9825-z Published online October, 2011. (~11,000 words)
- (2012) “The Ratcheting-Up Effect” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 93(2), 2012, 228-254.
DOI 10.1111/j.1468-0114.2012.01425.x (~13,000 words)
- (2009) “What Moral Saints Look Like” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 39(3), 2009, 371-398.
DOI 10.1353/cjp.0.0057 (~13,000 words)

Grants, Awards, and Fellowships

Charles Phelps Taft Research Center Fellowship, 2012-2013 (competitive across 12 departments)
Taft Summer Research Grant, 2010 (\$8000, competitive across 12 departments)
Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship, 2008-2009 (\$25,000, university-wide)
Rackham Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award, 2008 (\$1000, university-wide)
Charlotte Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, 2007-2008 (\$19,000, national competition)
Junior Fellowship, Sweetland Fellows Seminar, 2007 (\$2500, competitive, to study writing pedagogy)
Charles L. Stevenson Prize, 2006 (\$3000 for best philosophy candidacy dossier submitted in 2005)

Selected Presentations

“Nondirected Kidney Donation: Still Supererogatory?” American Society for Bioethics and Humanities, San Diego, CA, Oct. 2014, main program; “Social Constraints on Moral Agency” University of Kentucky Philosophy Department, Lexington KY, February 2014; “Comments on Houser’s ‘Unjust Situations’” American Philosophical Association Central Division, Main Program, New Orleans, LA, February 2013; “What We Know and What We Owe” 3rd Annual Workshop on Normative Ethics, Tucson AZ, January 2012; “Comments on Markovits’ ‘Saints, Heroes, Sages, and Villains’” Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress IV, Boulder CO, August 2011; “Sacrifice and Moral Obligation” American Philosophical Association Central Division, Main Program, Minneapolis MN, April 2011; “Simple Tools to Support a Diverse Classroom” (with Angela Potochnik) 6th Annual Diversity Conference, University of Cincinnati, April 2014; “Second-Class Moral Citizenship” University of Cincinnati Graduate Recruitment Weekend, February 2014; “Knowledge and Moral Obligation: Three Puzzles” Annual Research Symposium, Charles Phelps Taft Research Center, Cincinnati, OH, April 2013; “Ethics for RN’s” Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Registered Nurse Residency program, May 2012, November 2012; “The Burden of Expertise” University of Cincinnati Graduate Recruitment Weekend, March 2012.

Teaching at UC

Graduate: Ethical Theory (Agency & Responsibility); Ethical Theory (20th Century Metaethics); Contemporary Ethics (Demandingness); Moral Psychology (Nonstandard Agents). *Undergraduate:* Ethics (x2); Normative Ethics (x3); Ethics & The Family (x3); Morality in Medicine (x3); Ethics of Punishment (Honors); Intro to Philosophy: Ethics (x2); Contemporary Moral Issues (x2); Metaphysical Foundations of Technology; Senior Capstone; Metaethics. *Independent Studies Directed:* Non-ideal Moral Theory (PhD); Contemporary Moral Psychology (PhD); Personal Identity and Bioethics (MA); Value Theory and Environmental Ethics (BA); Empathy and Ethics (MA); Design Ethics (BA). *Dissertation Committees:* Iris Spoor, Realism in Meta-Aesthetics, 2012-Present; Daniel Hartner, “Toward a Genuinely Natural Ethical Naturalism” 2009-2012

Selected Departmental and University Service

Taft Research Center, Center Fellows Selection Committee; Taft Research Center, Research Support Committee; Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Bioethics Committee; A&S Outstanding Masters & Doctoral Student Awards Committee; Philosophy: Grad Studies Committee, Grad Admissions Committee, RPT Revisions Committee, TT Search Committee, VAP Search Committee, Climate Survey Committee, Diversity Task Force.

Refereeing

Philosophical Studies, Philosophical Quarterly, Erkenntnis, Theoria, Bioethics, Journal of Ethics and Information Technology, Southern Journal of Philosophy