

Christian Coons

Department of Philosophy
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AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION Ethics
Political Philosophy

AREAS OF COMPETENCE Philosophy of Law
Epistemology
Philosophy of the Social Sciences

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Philosophy, University of California, Davis, (December 2006).

Senior Year Abroad, Glasgow University, 1996-1997.

B.A., Philosophy and Political Science, conferred with honors, University of California, Davis (1997).

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

Graduate

Charlotte Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship, Woodrow Wilson Foundation (2003-04).

Michael V. Wedin Teaching Award, Department of Philosophy, University of California, Davis (2003).

Finalist, *Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award*, University of California, Davis (2003).

Conference grant, *Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation*, conference entitled: "Intervening to Prevent Citizen and Domestic Abuse: Assaults on the Sovereignty of the State and Family," University of California, Davis (Spring 2001).

EMPLOYMENT

Bowling Green State University, Assistant Professor, Fall 2007-present

University of California, Davis, Lecturer, Winter 2006-Spring 2007

PUBLICATIONS

"Wellman's 'Reductive' Justifications for Redistributive Policies that Favor Compatriots," *Ethics* (111) (2001): 782-788.

PRESENTATIONS

"When and Why is there Reason to Promote Human Well-being?" Bowling Green State University, February 27, 2007.

"A Defense of the Dependence Thesis" Iowa State University, February 15, 2007.

- “A Defense of the Dependence Thesis” Washington State University, January 30, 2007.
 “Some Puzzles about the Value of Well-being and how to Address Them” Augustana College, January 23, 2007.
 “A Defense of the Dependence Thesis” University of Arizona, November 3, 2006.
 “What Makes a State of Affairs Good?” Berkeley-Stanford-Davis Graduate Student Conference in Philosophy, Stanford University, April 8, 2006.
 “The Sovereignty of the State and Family: Historical and Analytical Parallels,” Conference entitled “Intervening to Prevent Citizen and Domestic Abuse: Assaults on the Sovereignty of the State and Family,” University of California, Davis, Spring 2001.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- “Realism and Constructivism about the Value of Persons”
 “Content Neutrality and the Authority of Morality”
 “Animal Welfare: Between Pleasure and Perfection”
 “How to use Kant as a means to Parfit’s “Theory X””

DEPARTMENTAL/INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE

- Undergraduate Education Committee, Fall 2007 to present
 New Faculty Learning Community, Fall 2007 to present
 Colloquium Committee (2000-2003)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AND ASSOCIATIONS

- Oxford University Press, Occasional Reviewer (Textbooks)
 Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology (Referee)
 Philosophy Compass (Advisory)
 American Philosophical Association (Member)

DISSERTATION “The Value of Individuals and the Value of States”

Committee Members: Connie Rosati (Co-chair) G.J. Mattey
 Pekka Väyrynen (Co-chair) Michael Glanzberg
 Gerald Dworkin

Abstract:

We commonly believe that some states of affairs are good or better than others. We also commonly suppose that some individuals have value. More specifically, we judge that certain classes of individuals—persons, for example—merit our concern or respect. I argue that states can be good only if and because there are individuals who have value. I call this thesis “the Dependence Thesis” or “DT.” David Velleman and Elizabeth Anderson defend positions that are similar to DT. Something like DT is also implicit in Christine Korsgaard’s work on the nature of moral obligation, and lies at the foundation of Stephen Darwall’s recent theory of welfare. But DT is controversial. DT challenges the traditional consequentialist position that states can have non-derivative value. I explain that while DT is intuitively compelling, the existing arguments for it are both problematic and

incomplete. After clarifying exactly what the view comes to, I advance a novel defense of the Dependence Thesis.

First, I give a direct argument for DT. Specifically, I articulate and defend the claim that a state can be good only if and because it is worth realizing for the sake of some individual(s) who merit concern or respect. I also explain why DT's substantive implications make it compelling. For example, DT avoids population paradoxes that beset views according to which states are independently good. Of course, when we argue that a state is good, we almost never directly invoke the idea that individuals have value. I explain why arguments that purport to show that a state is non-derivatively valuable actually suggest just the opposite.

The final chapter is the most speculative. I suggest that the existence of normative reasons generally depends on the existence of individuals that merit concern or respect. Therefore, answering the question, *Who merits concern or respect?*, is of central importance. I argue that *beings for whom things can go better or worse* merit concern and *beings with a capacity for agency* merit respect. I explore some implications of this position and explain why it is particularly well-suited to address deeper questions about the foundations of normative facts.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor

Value Theory

Contemporary Moral Problems
Introduction to Ethics
Surveying Metaethics (Graduate Seminar)

Other Courses

Critical Reasoning

Teaching Assistant

Contemporary Moral & Social Issues
Political Philosophy
Bioethics
Philosophy of Law
Intro to Ethics & Political Philosophy
Foundations of Ethics (reader)
Ethics and Social Problems (reader)

Critical Reasoning
Philosophy of the Social Sciences
Introduction to Philosophy
Theory of Knowledge (reader)
20th Century Continental Phil. (reader)
Theory of Knowledge (reader)

GRADUATE COURSES

Mind, M & E

Topics in Metaphysics, Michael Jubien
Philosophy of Language, Jeff King
Theory of Knowledge, G.J. Matthey
Epistemology, G.J. Matthey
Philosophy of Mind, Rob Cummins

History of Philosophy

Aristotle, Michael Wedin
Plato, Michael Wedin
Plato, Victor Caston
Hume, G.J. Matthey
Locke and Berkeley, Troy Jollimore

Logic

Predicate Logic, G.J. Matthey
Modal Logic, G.J. Matthey

Value Theory

Ethics (Scanlon), Gerald Dworkin
Ethics (Internalism), Troy Jollimore
Ethics (Normativity), Connie Rosati
Ethics (Metaethics Survey), Connie Rosati
Ethics (Practical Reason, Value, and Morality), Pekka Väyrynen, audited
Ethics (Moral Epistemology), Pekka Väyrynen, audited
Ethics (Welfare), Connie Rosati, audited
Ethics (Personal Good), Connie Rosati, audited
Political Philosophy, Gerald Dworkin
Philosophy of Law, Connie Rosati, audited

REFERENCES

Connie Rosati, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721, csrosati@email.arizona.edu, 520-621-7101

Pekka Väyrynen, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of California, Davis, Davis, CA 95616-8673, pekkav@ucdavis.edu, (530) 752-5653.

Gerald Dworkin, Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of California, Davis, Davis, CA 95616-8673, gdworkin@ucdavis.edu, (530) 752-3708

Paul Teller, Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of California, Davis, Davis, CA 95616-8673, prteller@ucdavis.edu, (530) 752-5889