2015

Anger is a Gift: How Psychology and Ethics Illuminate Moral Responsibility - Peter White Scholar Grant

Zac Cogley
Northern Michigan University, zcogley@nmu.edu

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Peter White Scholar Award Cover Sheet

ANGER IS A GIFT: HOW PSYCHOLOGY AND ETHICS ILLUMINATE MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

A proposal submitted to:
NMU Faculty Grants Committee

By

ZAC COGLEY
Department of Philosophy
College of Arts and Sciences
Northern Michigan University

15 March 2015

Total Project Length: 1 Year, 0 Months (Jan 2015-December 2015)
Total Requested Funds: $17,447
Potential external funds: $40,000-60,000
Total Project Budget: $57,500-75,000

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ANGER IS A GIFT: HOW PSYCHOLOGY AND ETHICS ILLUMINATE MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

PETER WHITE SCHOLAR PROPOSAL

Project Abstract (232 Words)

This proposal details a project that builds on my current interdisciplinary research program to articulate and develop a novel theory of moral responsibility. Like many philosophers, I maintain that whether someone is morally responsible for an action depends on whether it is appropriate to adopt attitudes such as anger and resentment toward the person. What makes my view unique is how I understand these “reactive attitudes.” I show they serve three functions: to appraise the action of a person (e.g. that it is wrong), to communicate the appraisal of wrongdoing to others, and to sanction the perceived wrongdoer. My defense of this view is also distinctive. Rather than engaging in purely armchair philosophical speculation, I appeal to the latest developments in empirical psychology, evolutionary biology, and other relevant empirical sciences. One further virtue of my theory is its ability to help us solve theoretical problems in other areas of philosophy. For example, my theory clarifies whether people who are manipulated into performing actions are morally responsible for what they do and also explains what makes forgiveness possible and warranted. Additionally, it allows us to resolve serious practical problems in legal and medical ethics that concern the moral responsibility of people who engage in compulsive behavior, like addicts. The end result of my work will be a book-length monograph that will shape and deeply inform both current and future debates about moral responsibility.
ANGER IS A GIFT: HOW PSYCHOLOGY AND ETHICS ILLUMINATE MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

PETER WHITE SCHOLAR PROPOSAL

Project Narrative

Objective

An enormous amount of philosophical work on moral responsibility is inspired by P.F. Strawson’s famous paper, “Freedom and Resentment” (1962), which seeks to help us better understand our concept of moral responsibility and the norms that govern holding people morally responsible by appealing to what Strawson terms the “reactive attitudes.” These emotional responses include anger, resentment, and indignation. The idea is that a person’s moral responsibility should be understood in terms of the appropriateness of having these emotional responses towards her. So, for example, I would take my friend Courtney to be morally responsible for not watering my plants while I was away if I think it is appropriate for me to be angry with her for not caring for them as she had promised. Many philosophers follow Strawson in thinking that someone is morally responsible just in case she is an appropriate target for such an emotion (Bennett 1980; Watson 1993; Wallace 1994; Fischer and Ravizza 1998; McKenna 2012). To a significant extent, however, Strawsonian theories of moral responsibility are discussed without attention to work on the emotions in the empirical sciences.

The flourishing of such empirical work and its relevance to current philosophical debates is what drives my current research program, which aims to bring recent work in philosophy and psychology of emotion, sociology, and evolutionary biology to bear on ethical debates, particularly focusing on people’s moral responsibility for wrongdoing. With the Peter White Scholar Award, I will be able to extend the psychologically informed account of moral
responsible responsibility articulated in my previously published essays to new questions about moral responsibility, culminating in a draft book manuscript that will seek to answer some pressing questions in moral responsibility having to do with desert, manipulation, forgiveness, and compulsion. An initial manuscript will help me to pursue a publishing contract with an academic press, most likely Oxford University Press. I have an excellent relationship with Oxford University Press, which has published two of my essays and has a strong commitment to publishing work on moral responsibility and related philosophical issues. Further, I have submitted my prospectus to Peter Momtchiloff, one of the area editors for philosophy. He replied that when the manuscript is ready, “he would be glad to consider a draft manuscript for publication” (see Appendix). Below, I briefly sketch the proposed chapters before describing the significance of the project.

Chapter 1: The Three-Fold Significance of the Blaming Emotions:

In a recent paper in *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility* (Cogley 2013a), I appeal to empirical psychology to argue that the blaming emotions—anger, resentment, and indignation—are significant for our moral responsibility practices in three different ways. Such emotions are implicated in our appraisals of wrongdoing, in the ways we communicate the appraisal to perceived wrongdoers, and in the manner we sanction people who we appraise as wrongful. I argue that when we are angry with someone our anger does three things: it appraises that person’s action as wrong, communicates to her that we appraise her in that way, and sanctions her by placing a cost on her acting in that manner. I argue that these different psychological functions of the blaming emotions are naturally seen as inspiring rival philosophical accounts of our concept of moral responsibility and that each kind of account therefore implicitly emphasizes different conditions on emotional appropriateness. What I term
‘fittingness’ accounts of moral responsibility are linked to appraisal, ‘moral address’ accounts correspond to the communicative dimension of the blaming emotions, and ‘desert’ accounts of moral responsibility are inspired by the blaming emotions’ sanctioning role.

In this chapter, I extend the above analysis to better explain why there is little agreement about the nature of moral responsibility, even after so much attention to it. Accounts of moral responsibility that emphasize only one function of the blaming emotions can legitimately claim to capture important aspects of moral responsibility attributions. However, intuitive judgments about when people are morally responsible will then subtly be affected by which conception is on offer.

Chapter 2: Deserving the Blaming Emotions:

In Chapter 2, I further develop a thesis I explore in my recent paper in Philosophical Explorations (Cogley 2013b) to find common ground between rival conceptions of moral responsibility by articulating what is involved in deserving an emotion like anger, resentment, or indignation. My aim is to capture our sense that when someone wrongs us, that person deserves a negative emotional response from us even if we know that a negative emotional response could lead to problematic consequences. Suppose, for example, that you have a colleague who constantly tries to ensure that you are stuck teaching at inconvenient times. Many of us would say that the colleague deserves any resentment we feel in the situation, even if we knew that actually becoming angry or resentful with the colleague would just make the problem worse.

This desert sense of emotional appropriateness is often emphasized by incompatibilists, who believe that people cannot be morally responsible if their actions are produced by deterministic processes. Compatibilists, who believe that people can be morally responsible even
if their actions are produced by deterministic processes, have often invoked other senses of emotional appropriateness.

I believe that a careful articulation of the senses in which someone can deserve a blaming emotion leads to common ground between the two philosophical camps. To show this, I plan to argue that each of the psychological functions mentioned above—appraisal, communication, and sanction—has a related moral aim that I will articulate by comparison with other things that people can deserve: grades, retorts, and punishments. These exemplars of things that are deserved will help me pinpoint the following set of conditions on the deservingness of a blaming emotion: a person deserves a blaming emotion just in case she acts wrongfully because she is motivated by ill will (or fails to have sufficient moral concern). I will argue that both compatibilists and incompatibilists should accept these conditions on deserving a blaming emotion.

Chapter 3: the Manipulation Argument and Blaming the Victim:

Not all incompatibilists will accept that someone deserves a reactive emotion just in case she acts wrongfully because she is motivated by ill will or fails to have sufficient moral concern. One way that incompatibilists will respond is via an appeal to cases of manipulation (Pereboom 2001; Mele 2008; Todd 2009; Pereboom 2014). Suppose, for example, you find out that your colleague is trying to ruin your teaching schedule because she is being manipulated by a team of neuroscientists! Even if you still think she is demonstrating ill will toward you in her actions, you might think that since she is doing wrong only because the neuroscientists control her actions, then she does not deserve a blaming emotion.

In the next stage of my book project, I will argue that we can account for our reluctance to blame people who have been manipulated by outside interveners by invoking ethical and
psychological work on victim-blaming. The fact that blaming emotions would cause harm to victims does not mean that people who are victimized cannot be blameworthy for things they do (Houston 1992; Harvey 1999; Hay 2011). Further, psychological research suggests that our perceptions of the blameworthiness of victims is affected by factors that do not bear on whether the victim is blameworthy (De Judicibus and McCabe 2001; Diekmann et al. 2013). I argue that intuitions that manipulated people do not deserve blame can be accounted for by the natural (and laudable) motivation not to make people worse off who have already been significantly wronged. This provides a powerful new compatibilist response to such cases.

Chapter 4: Uncompromising, but Warranted, Forgiveness:

Philosophical discussions of forgiveness have long recognized that one puzzle about forgiveness is why we should forgive a wrongdoer when forgiveness seems to require no longer feeling resentment toward the wrongdoer. If a wrongdoer really is responsible for the wrong, it seems she still deserves to be the target of a blaming emotion. It is thus difficult to articulate why—even if she apologizes and repents—she does not continue to deserve resentment. Recent attempts to finesse this puzzle seem to fail. For example, Pamela Hieronymi (2001) suggests that forgiveness amounts to seeing the past action as no longer presenting a continuing threat, while Lucy Allais (2008) argues that when we forgive someone, our overall evaluation of the wrongdoer no longer includes that particular act. However, both attempts implicitly deny that the act of wrongdoing deserves resentment for the wrong in the first place and so deny one of the claims that generates the puzzle.

In this next chapter I plan to complete with the help of the Peter White Scholar Award, I aim to develop a more promising account of forgiveness by appealing to the communicative dimension of the blaming emotions. I will argue that a blaming emotion remains accurate even if
the target acknowledges fault because it represents the person as having done wrong. However, if a wrongdoer sincerely acknowledges fault, then resentment’s communicative aim is fulfilled. Because the communicative goal of resentment is satisfied, you can reasonably give up feeling the resentment deserved by a blameworthy, but repentant, wrongdoer.

Chapter 5: Responsibility for Compulsive Action:

Many philosophers hold that people are not responsible for actions that are compelled, such as actions take by someone addicted to a drug (Kane 1996; Kane 2007; Ginet 2002; Hume 2003). However, there is reason to think that addictive behavior is mediated by neural mechanisms—specifically, the operation of the reward system—that also underlie non-addictive behavior (Kandel, Schwartz, and Jessell 2000; Kuhn and Wilson 2005; Berridge and Kringelbach 2008) and some philosophers have opposed the idea that compelled behavior is literally irresistible (Watson 2004). As the final component of the manuscript I will complete using the Peter White Scholar Award, I plan to build on empirical work on human action as well as my theory of moral responsibility to argue that we should excuse people who act under compulsion because their choices consistently make them worse off, not because their agency is compromised. This shows that the fundamental moral objection to punishing addicts is not that they are undeserving of punishment. Indeed, they may be deserving of punishment because morally responsible for their conduct, but I will argue that punishing them is unfair. I will then draw out the legal implications of this claim.

Scholarly Significance

The book manuscript I will complete with the Peter White Scholar Award will have immediate and helpful application in philosophy, political theory, and law, while also
illuminating debates about people’s moral responsibility in medicine and retributive justice, as shown in the application to the moral responsibility of addicts. The nature of moral responsibility, when people are morally responsible for their conduct, and the relationship of moral responsibility to political, legal, and medical practice are all the focus of considerable current scholarly attention. My project will advance these debates while significantly raising the status of NMU’s philosophy department, as well as the University as a whole.

Relation of the Proposed Work to Current Research in the Discipline

While there is much current attention to philosophical issues concerning moral responsibility, much of the work on moral responsibility is embarrassingly ignorant of the state of contemporary empirical research on the emotions and is also not sufficiently attentive to relevant work in ethical theory. My interdisciplinary approach is thus essential to advancing current debates, and has the potential to shift the structure of much future work on moral responsibility. Difficult questions about people’s moral responsibility are among the most important in philosophy as they have immediate relevance to significant ethical and legal issues. Work on moral responsibility becomes increasingly important with practically every new development in psychology. For example, should increased psychological knowledge of the nature and causes of psychopathy recommend decreased, similar, or even increased punishment for psychopaths who commit crimes? Should knowledge that human behavior is influenced by subconscious factors lead us to excuse people who have been swayed by such effects? My interdisciplinary account of moral responsibility will help us answer these questions.
Project Methods

My interdisciplinary methodology—I call it Psychological and Philosophical Realism—assumes that the correct philosophical accounts of moral responsibility and other distinctively human concepts must be based on what human beings are actually like. As human nature is investigated in many overlapping fields from many diverse perspectives, I must stay current in the literature in biology, psychology, sociology, and philosophy, among others. This requires an enormous amount of attention to developments in these disciplines, especially empirical psychology, where new work on the emotions and morality is generated almost daily. Without the Peter White Scholar award I will not be able to continue to stay abreast of all the relevant literature. The Peter White Scholar Award will ensure that I have time to continue my interdisciplinary inquiries by allowing me time to read new articles in all these fields, write summaries of them, and incorporate their insights into this book project.

As my methods bring philosophical scrutiny to bear on relevant sociological, psychological, and biological research, I will not need any special equipment other than my current NMU resources: my office, computer, and library access.

Timetable

I will utilize the Peter White Scholar Award from the Fall term of 2015 through the Winter term of 2016 (the 2015-2016 academic year). I will complete two new chapter drafts during the Fall term of 2015 and will complete the final chapter during the Winter term of 2016.
Budget

My budget request is $17,447. I have allocated $16,314 (including salary and benefits) for adjunct coverage of 3 classes (two in Fall of 2015, one in the Winter of 2016) and $1,133 for conference travel (inclusive of airfare, meals, and lodging).

Budget Justification

I have earned three Reassigned Time Awards at NMU. Each one has allowed me to complete a paper; every one of those papers is now published. Two papers were published in collections from *Oxford University Press* and the other in the journal *Philosophical Explorations*. My track record is to finish a book chapter or paper with every course release and to place my work in excellent venues. I will therefore have no problem producing three new chapters while supported for three course releases by the Peter White Scholar Award. Since I currently have material completed that will comprise the majority of Chapters 1 and 2, I should be able to complete drafts of five chapters using the award. I also request conference funding to attend the 2015 *New Orleans Workshop on Agency and Responsibility (NOWAR)* organized by David Shoemaker of Tulane University. NOWAR is a biennial workshop featuring the presentation of sophisticated original research on issues captured under the label “agency and responsibility.” I was a presenter at the first such workshop, and the next is scheduled for November 2015. NOWAR brings together the highest caliber work on moral responsibility; confirmed keynote speakers for 2013 include Julia Driver, (Professor of Philosophy, Washington University, St. Louis) and Derk Pereboom (Susan Linn Sage Professor in Philosophy and Ethics; Stanford H. Taylor ’50 Chair of the Sage School, Cornell University)
Projected Project Outcome

The project outcome will be a five chapter draft of my monograph *Anger is a Gift: How Psychology and Ethics Illuminate Moral Responsibility*. Following completion of the project, I will submit the draft to Peter Momtchiloff of Oxford University Press with the aim of securing a contract for publication.

Plans for Seeking External Funding

Building on the completed draft, I will submit applications for at least three faculty fellowships. I will apply to Tulane University’s faculty fellowships in the Murphy Institute’s Center for Ethics and Public Affairs. I will also apply to the Laurance S. Rockefeller Visiting Fellowships at Princeton University’s Center for Human Values. Finally, I will apply for a Visiting Research Fellowship at the University of Utah’s Tanner Humanities Center.

Each of these fellowships will allow give me time to circulate the manuscript to colleagues at other institutions, receive critical feedback, and polish the manuscript into publishable form. If I am granted one of these fellowships I anticipate a final contract for the book by mid-2018.

Please see attached appendix for CV, list of citations, and detailed budget. Thank you for your consideration,

Zac Cogley

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy
### SALARIES AND WAGES

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**Senior Personnel total**

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**Total**

- **Year 1**
  - Total Project: $13,135

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**Total Other Personnel Fringe**

- **Year 1**
  - Total: $3,179

### TOTAL SALARIES AND BENEFITS

- **Year 1**
  - Total: $16,314

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**Total Domestic Travel**

- **Year 1**
  - Total: $1,133

### TOTAL TRAVEL

- **Year 1**
  - Total: $1,133

### TOTAL OTHER DIRECT COSTS (Exempt from F&A)

- **Year 1**
  - Total: $17,447

### TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (A + C)

- **Year 1**
  - Total: $17,447

### TOTAL SPONSOR REQUEST (B + D)

- **Year 1**
  - Total: $17,447
ZAC COGLEY

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zcogley@nmu.edu

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS
Associate Professor, Northern Michigan University, 2014-present
Honors Faculty, 2012-present
Assistant Professor, Northern Michigan University, 2010-2014
Visiting Lecturer, University of California, Los Angeles, 2006-2008

EDUCATION
The Ohio State University, Ph.D., Philosophy, 2010
University of Cincinnati, M.A., Philosophy, 2001
St. Louis University, B.A., Philosophy, Summa Cum Laude, 1998

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION
Ethics, Agency Theory, Philosophy and Psychology of Emotion, Moral Psychology, Social and Political Philosophy

AREAS OF COMPETENCE
Philosophy of Law, Applied Ethics (including Medical, Business, and Computer Ethics, and Ethical Issues in Law), Feminist Philosophy, Metaethics, Philosophy of Mind

RESEARCH OVERVIEW
My current research aims to articulate a comprehensive theory of moral responsibility: an account of the nature and norms of holding people morally responsible. I approach these issues with a distinctive, interdisciplinary methodology. I maintain that any adequate theory of moral responsibility must attend to philosophical argument as well as results from the empirical sciences. In my published work I solve a vexing problem for extant accounts of trust, invoke psychological work on the blaming emotions to show that we have several different conceptions of moral responsibility, pull from a variety of empirical and philosophical sources to develop a nuanced account of angry virtue and vice, and articulate the grounds on which emotions like resentment and indignation are deserved by their targets. I am currently extending the view to address other philosophical questions about (1) punishment, (2) blaming victims, (3) manipulation, (4) compulsion, and (5) forgiveness.

PUBLICATIONS


BOOK REVIEWS

PAPERS IN PROGRESS
“A New Challenge to Retributivism” (with Matt Taylor)
“Blaming the Victim”
“Grading and Manipulation”
“Moral Responsibility for Compelled Behavior”
“Forgivenes and the Multiple Functions of Resentment” (with Antony Aumann)

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND AWARDS
Faculty Reassigned Time Award, Northern Michigan University, 2012
Course reduction grant for the project “Basic Desert of Reactive Emotions”

Experiment Month Grant Winner (with Austin Duggan)—“Experimental Philosophy Study of Hypothetical Manipulation Scenarios,” 2012
Grant provides material support for experiment dissemination and analysis of data.
Sponsored by the American Philosophical Association and coordinated by Yale University.

Faculty Reassigned Time Award, Northern Michigan University, 2011
Course reduction grant for the project “The Three-Fold Significance of the Blaming Emotions”

Faculty Reassigned Time Award, Northern Michigan University, 2010
Course reduction grant for the project “Virtuous and Vicious Anger”

Graduate Student Outstanding Paper Prize, Eastern Division Meeting of the APA, 2009

Travel Grant, Edward F. Hayes Graduate Research Forum, The Ohio State University, 2006

Graduate School Leadership Award Nominee, 2004

Fellow of The Ohio State University Graduate School, 2001-02

Charles Phelps Taft Fellow at University of Cincinnati, 1998-99

PRESENTATIONS
“Rolling Back the Luck Problem for Libertarianism”
Free Will Conference, Center for Cognition and Neuroethics (refereed), 2014

“Fortifying the Self-Defense Justification of Punishment”
Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress (refereed), 2014

“A New Challenge to Retributivism” (with Matt Taylor)
Pacific Division American Philosophical Association Meeting (refereed), 2014
“Blaming the Victim”
Society for Analytic Feminism, Central American Philosophical Association Meeting (refereed), 2014
Workshop on the Duty to Resist Oppression, University of Connecticut, 2013
Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress (refereed poster), 2013

“Basic Desert of Reactive Emotions”
Loyola University, New Orleans, 2013
Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress (refereed poster), 2012

“The Three-Fold Significance of the Blaming Emotions”
New Orleans Workshop on Agency and Responsibility (refereed), 2011

“Virtuous and Vicious Anger”
UAB Conference: The Normative Implications of Moral Psychology (refereed), 2011
Northern Michigan University, 2011
Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress (refereed poster), 2011

“Moral Responsibility, Manipulation, and Two Concepts of Desert”
Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress (refereed), 2010

“Trust and the Trickster Problem”
Eastern American Philosophical Association Meeting (refereed), 2009
Feminist Ethics and Social Theory Conference (refereed), 2009
Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress (refereed poster), 2009

“Plum-Confused about Blame and Responsibility”
Southern California Philosophy Conference, 2007

“Strawson on What to Feel, and Why” (with Daniel Farrell)
Contemporary Analytic Philosophy Conference on Regulating Attitudes with Reasons, 2006

“Mitigation and Responsibility”
32nd Conference on Value Inquiry (refereed), 2005

“Responsibility and Integrity”
North American Society for Social Philosophy (refereed), 2004

“Kantian Dirty Hands”
North American Society for Social Philosophy (refereed), 2003

“Whose Evaluative Practice, Which Self-Understanding?”
Ohio Philosophical Association Meeting (refereed), 2002

“Feyerabend’s Incommensurability Thesis in Against Method”
Ohio Philosophical Association Meeting (refereed), 2000
Kentucky State Annual Conference on Science and Culture (refereed), 2000

COMMENTS ON ERIN TAYLOR’S ‘SOCIAL CONVENTIONS AND ASSOCIATIVE DUTIES’
Central Division American Philosophical Association Meeting, 2014

“A Different Kind of Selective Hard Compatibilism: Response to Paul Russell”
Central European University Workshop on the Manipulation Argument, 2012

“Modifying the Reactive Attitudes: Reply to David Goldman”
Central States Philosophical Association, 2010

“Does Morality Demand Our Very Best? Reply to Michael Ferry”
Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress, 2009

“Free Will and Reasonable Doubt: Reply to Benjamin Vihlauer”
Pacific Division APA Meeting, 2008

“Protecting Intentions from Mental Birth Control: Reply to Andrei Buckareff”
Inland Northwest Philosophy Conference on Action, Ethics, and Responsibility, 2006
SERVICE
UNIVERSITY
President's Committee on Diversity, 2015-present
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), 2010-present
  Vice-Chair, 2013-present
Academic Senate, 2011-present
  Executive Committee, 2013-2014
Faculty Review Committee 2014-present
Honors Board, 2013-present
Mortar Board Advisor, 2013-2014

DEPARTMENTAL
  Departmental Evaluation Committee and Committee of the Whole, 2010-present

PROFESSIONAL
  Referee: Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Philosophical Studies,
  Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review, Ratio,
  Oxford University Press, Res Philosophica, American Political Science Review

COMMUNITY
  Marquette General Hospital Ethics Committee, 2011-present
  Marquette General Hospital Institutional Review Board, 2012-2014

REFERENCES
RESEARCH
  Justin D'Arms
  Professor of Philosophy, The Ohio State University

  John Martin Fischer
  Professor of Philosophy, The University of California, Riverside

  Pamela Hieronymi
  Professor of Philosophy, The University of California, Los Angeles

  Michael McKenna
  Professor of Philosophy, The University of Arizona

TEACHING
  Antony Aumann
  Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Northern Michigan University

  Sean Kelsey
  Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame

  Sheldon Smith
  Associate Professor of Philosophy, The University of California, Los Angeles
Dear Zac

Thank you for showing me the outline prospectus for your planned book on ‘How Psychology and Ethics Illuminate Moral Responsibility’. This looks like a very interesting project and I am keen to pursue it with you on behalf of OUP. I would be glad to consider a draft manuscript for publication when it is ready.

With best wishes
Peter Momtchiloff

Editor, Philosophy
Academic Division
Oxford University Press
Great Clarendon Street
Oxford OX2 6DP
England
http://www.oup.co.uk/academic/humanities/philosophy

phone (44) 1865 354766
Here is the 2014 OUP Philosophy Catalogue online: www.oup.com/uk/academic/philosophy/philcat14

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PETER WHITE SCHOLAR PROPOSAL

Project Citation List


