

## Nethanel Lipshitz

Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, Tel Aviv University  
[lipshitz1@mail.tau.ac.il](mailto:lipshitz1@mail.tau.ac.il)

### EMPLOYMENT

**Postdoctoral Fellow**, Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, Tel-Aviv University, October 2019 – September 2020.

**Law and Philosophy Fellow**, University of Chicago Law School, July 2018 - June 2019

### EDUCATION

**Ph.D. University of Chicago**, Department of Philosophy, August 2018

**B.A. Hebrew University**, Psychology and *Amirim* Honors Program in the Humanities, *magna cum laude*, June 2006

### AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION:

Normative Ethics, Political Philosophy, Medical Ethics

### AREAS OF COMPETENCE:

Philosophy of Law, Philosophy of Action, Formal Logic

### DISSERTATION

Dissertation Title: “A Defense of Basic Equality”

Committee: Brian Leiter (co-chair), Martha C. Nussbaum (co-chair), Daniel Brudney.

ABSTRACT: I defend “basic equality”, the thesis that all human beings should be treated as equals, that is, that their comparable interests matter equally from the moral point of view. Basic equality is a fundamental assumption of modern moral and political philosophy, but it is threatened by a simple yet powerful skeptical argument: If human beings deserve to be treated as equals, there must be some property that they have to an equal degree and that grounds their equal entitlements; but human beings are very different from one another; so human beings do not deserve to be treated as equals. Against this skeptical line of reasoning, I develop what I call “the Respect View” for the defense of basic equality. I argue that if two individuals deserve a certain kind of respect (similar to what Stephen Darwall calls “recognition respect”), then to treat one’s interests as less important than the other’s is disrespectful to the one whose interests are treated as less important. Furthermore, I argue, individuals do not need to be equal in any sense to deserve this kind of respect. Last, there are good reasons to believe that all human beings deserve this kind of respect. My conclusion in the dissertation is that, building on these claims, we can ground basic equality in the more fundamental ethical requirement of respect, and that when we do so, the apparent inconsistency of basic equality and human differences disappears.

## **PAPERS UNDER REVIEW**

“Skepticism about Basic Equality” – argues against the assumption that individuals can be equal in moral status only if there is some other property in which they are equal.

“Moral Agency as a Basis of Equality” – argues that moral agency, defined the capacity to do actions for which one is morally responsible, is a property that all able adult human beings have to an equal degree. If one insists on descriptive equality, one should look to moral agency.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### **Refereed**

"The Moral Status of Individuals in Permanent Vegetative States," APA Central Division Meeting, February 2020.

“Unconditional Welcome and Moral Status,” Monash University, Conference: What Thinking about Disability Can Teach us about Different Parts of Philosophy, December 2018.

“Evil and Equality,” Hebrew University, Philosophy Department Colloquium, December 2018.

“Evil and Equality,” Bar-Ilan University, Philosophy Department Colloquium, December 2018.

“Sufficientarianism about Respect,” Center for Cognition and Neuroethics, Michigan, Ethics and Political, Social and Legal Annual Conference. November 2018.

“On the Moral Equality of Stalin and Martin Luther King,” APA Central Division Meeting, February 2018.

“On the Moral Equality of Stalin and Martin Luther King,” Illinois Philosophical Association Meeting, October 2017.

“Formal Equality and Skepticism about Basic Equality,” British Postgraduate Philosophy Association Conference (BPPA), University of Reading, September 2016.

“If Human Beings should be Treated Equally, it is not because Equal Cases should be Treated Equally,” Poster Presentation, Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress, August 2016.

“Moral Agency as a Foundation of Moral Equality,” The Centre for Moral and Political Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, June 2016.

### **Comments**

on Mylan Engel’s “Demystifying Animal Rights,” Illinois Philosophical Association Conference, October 2017

on Jesse Summers’s “How Poverty Diminishes Moral Agency,” Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress, August 2016

on Dan Korman's and Dustin Locke's "Debunking Arguments Needn't Make Us Insecure," Illinois Philosophical Association Conference, November 2015

on Saul Smilansky's "Free Will, Time and Illusion," Skepticism about Freedom and Responsibility Conference at The University of Chicago, April 2014

on Amanda Greene's "Consent and Political Legitimacy," The University of Chicago Practical Philosophy Workshop, November 2014

### **Workshop presentations**

"The Moral Status of Individuals in Permanent Vegetative States," University of Chicago Law School Faculty Work-in-Progress Workshop, June 2020.

"A Defense of Basic Equality," The University of Chicago Practical Philosophy Workshop, February 2016.

"Formal Equality and Fundamental Equality," The University of Chicago Practical Philosophy Workshop, February 2014.

### **AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS**

Graduate Student Prize for Excellence in Teaching, University of Chicago, 2018

APA Graduate Student Travel Grant, Central APA Meeting, 2018

Pozen Family Center for Human Rights, Graduate Lectureship in Human Rights Prize for a course of my own design entitled "Cognitive Disabilities and Human Rights".

Mellon Foundation Dissertation-Completion Fellowship, University of Chicago, 2016-2017

Franke Institute for the Humanities, Affiliate Fellow, 2016-2017

Stuart Tave Teaching Fellowship for a course of my own design, entitled "Moral Status: Who Deserves Moral Consideration?" (competitive Division of the Humanities fellowship based on course design), University of Chicago, 2016-7. (Declined for a Mellon Foundation Dissertation Completion Fellowship).

PhD Summer Workshop on The Value of Equality, The Centre for Moral and Political Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Summer 2016, Stipend

Department of Philosophy, University of Chicago Doctoral Fellowship, 2011-2016  
Tuition and stipend

*The Pepita Haetzrachi Award*, The Hebrew University, 2010  
Awarded for an outstanding paper on "Wholeheartedness and Autonomy"

The *Amirim* Honors Program Fellowship, The Hebrew University, 2004-2006  
Tuition and stipend

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### University of Chicago Law School (Chicago, IL)

*As Primary Instructor — sole responsibility for design, instruction, and evaluation*

- Discrimination: Legal and Philosophical Perspectives

*As Co-Instructor — shared responsibility for design, instruction, and evaluation*

- Law and Philosophy Workshop: Enlightenment Ethics and its Critics

### University of Chicago, Philosophy Department (Chicago, IL)

*As Primary Instructor — sole responsibility for design, instruction, and evaluation*

- Cognitive Disabilities and Human Rights (Spring 2018)
- Equality and its Value (Winter 2018)
- Philosophical Perspectives (Fall 2017)

*As Teaching Assistant — responsible for leading discussion sections and marking assignments*

- The Nature of Practical Reason (Spring 2018)
- Philosophy of History: Narrative and Explanation (Winter 2016)
- Human Rights (Spring, 2015)
- Introduction to Political Philosophy (Winter, 2015)
- Elementary Logic (Autumn, 2015)
- Moral Theory (Winter, 2014)

*As Writing Intern — responsible for leading writing seminars to first-year students*

- Philosophical Perspectives–2 (Winter, 2016)

### The Hebrew University (Jerusalem, Israel)

*As Teaching Assistant — responsible for leading discussion sections and marking assignments*

*AMIRIM Honors program:*

- Philosophy of Science (Spring, 2011 and Autumn, 2010)
- Logic and Analytic Philosophy (Autumn, 2011 and Autumn, 2010)
- Guided Reading in Philosophy (Autumn and Spring, 2011)
- Capitalism and Emotions (Autumn, 2010)
- Introduction to Christianity (Spring, 2009)
- Introduction to Talmud (Spring, 2009)

*The Law School:*

- Jurisprudence (Spring, 2011)

*The Philosophy Department:*

- Language-Between Man and World (Spring, 2011).

## **PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING**

*Department of Philosophy Pedagogy Program Certificate*, included workshops on student learning, syllabus design, and leading a classroom discussion, as well as feedback from professors and peers on teaching sessions.

*Midcourse Review*, included videotaping a session I teach, reviewing the video with a professional teaching consultant, and identifying areas for improvement.

*Workshop on Teaching in the College*, two-day intensive training for serving as a lecturer in undergraduate classes, Center for Teaching & Learning, University of Chicago, Summer 2016.

*Seminar and Workshop on Course Design*, Center for Teaching & Learning, University of Chicago, Summer 2016.

*Creative Assignments Workshop*, Center for Teaching & Learning, University of Chicago, Fall 2015.

*Pedagogies of Writing* course, Writing Center, University of Chicago, Quarter-long course on teaching effective writing in humanities core classes, Summer 2013.

## **SERVICE**

Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies, University of Chicago, Philosophy Department, July 2017-June 2018

PRISM (“Planning Resources and Involvement for Students in Majors”) Coordinator for the Philosophy Department, University of Chicago, July 2017-June 2018

Research Assistant to Martha Nussbaum, 2013-December 2017

Research Assistant to Eric Posner, 2013

## **GRADUATE WORK** (\* audited)

*Ethics*

- \* Medical Ethics: Central Topics, UChicago, 2017
- \* Recognition in Ethics, Matthias Haase, UChicago, 2017
- \* Human Dignity, Adam Etinson, UChicago, 2015
- \* Utilitarian Ethics, Martha Nussbaum, UChicago, 2014
- \* Autonomy: Kant’s Conception of the Essence of Morality, Anselm Mueller, UChicago, 2013
- The Problem of Evil, Michael Kremer, UChicago 2012

- \* Between Metaethics and Political Philosophy, David Enoch, Hebrew U, 2010
- *A Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Daniel Attas, Hebrew U, 2008

*Political Philosophy*

- \* Aristotle's *Politics*, Gabriel Lear, UChicago, 2014
- \* Rawls, Martha Nussbaum, UChicago, 2014
- Kant's *Doctrine of Right*, Ben Laurence and Anton Ford, UChicago, 2013
- Global Inequality, Martha Nussbaum, UChicago, 2013
- Global Justice: Distributive Justice/Humanitarian Concerns, Dan Brudney, UChicago, 2012
- \* Libertarianism, Ben Laurence, UChicago, 2012
- Equality and (a Bit) of Fraternity, Dan Brudney, UChicago, 2012
- Justice After Rawls, David Heyd, Hebrew U, 2009

*Philosophy of Action*

- Workshop: Law and Philosophy (on freedom and responsibility), Brian Leiter, UChicago, 2012
- Anscombe on Action and Ethics, Anton Ford, UChicago, 2012
- Deliberation and Self-Knowledge, Jason Bridges and David Finkelstein, UChicago, 2011
- Autonomy, Moshe Halbertal, Hebrew U, 2010

*Logic, Metaphysics and Epistemology*

- \* Introduction to Bayesian Epistemology, Anubav Vasudevan, UChicago, 2016
- \* Logic for Philosophy, Malte Willer, UChicago, 2015
- \* Algebraic Logic & Its Critics, Marko Malink, UChicago, 2014
- \* Ontological Dependence, Marko Malink and Anat Schechtman, UChicago, 2013
- Aristotle on Substance and Essence: *Metaphysics Zeta*, Marko Malink, UChicago, 2012
- Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, James Conant, UChicago, 2013
- \* Advanced Logic, Kevin Davey, UChicago, 2012
- Intermediate Logic, Michael Kremer, UChicago, 2012
- \* Conditionals, Malte Willer, UChicago, 2012
- \* Foundations of Probability: A Historical Approach, Anubav Vasudevan, UChicago, 2011
- \* Philosophy of Mathematics, Kevin Davey, UChicago, 2011
- Philosophy of Science, Kevin Davey, UChicago, 2011

**EMPLOYMENT PRIOR TO GRADUATE SCHOOL**

**NITE - National Institute for Tests and Evaluation** (Jerusalem, Israel)

*Test development and teaching*, 2007- 2011

- Wrote the verbal section of the Psychometric Exam (the Israeli equivalent of the SAT)
- Developed non-cognitive measurements for applicants to medical schools
- Delivered test-writing workshops in medical and nursing schools

## COMUUNITY SERVICE

**Ethics Committee Member, The Israeli Fertility Association (IFA).** The committee meets bi-monthly to discuss ethical issues related to reproductive ethics, broadly construed, and produces opinion papers.

**The Jerusalem Open House** (a non-profit org. working with the LGBTQ communities in Jerusalem.)  
2004-2005, 2010

- Established and coordinated a social group for orthodox gay men (2004-2005)
- served on board (2010)

## LANGUAGES :

Hebrew (Native Speaker), English (Native-Speaker Proficiency), German (Reading)

## REFERENCES

### **Daniel Brudney**

Professor of Philosophy  
Department of Philosophy  
University of Chicago  
1115 E. 58<sup>th</sup> St., Chicago, IL 60637  
[dbrudney@uchicago.edu](mailto:dbrudney@uchicago.edu)

For a recommendation letter, please use the following email address:  
[send.Brudney.809FB773A6@interfolio.com](mailto:send.Brudney.809FB773A6@interfolio.com)

### **Brian Leiter (co-chair)**

Karl N. Llewellyn Professor of Jurisprudence  
and Director, Center for Law, Philosophy, and Human Values  
University of Chicago  
1111 E. 60<sup>th</sup> St. Chicago, IL 60637  
[bleiter@uchicago.edu](mailto:bleiter@uchicago.edu)

For a recommendation letter, please use the following email address:  
[send.Leiter.6F62634CF4@interfolio.com](mailto:send.Leiter.6F62634CF4@interfolio.com)

### **Martha C. Nussbaum (co-chair)**

Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics  
University of Chicago  
1111 E. 60<sup>th</sup> St., Chicago, IL 60637  
[martha\\_nussbaum@law.uchicago.edu](mailto:martha_nussbaum@law.uchicago.edu)

For a recommendation letter, please use the following email address:  
[send.Nussbaum.F24AE055AC@interfolio.com](mailto:send.Nussbaum.F24AE055AC@interfolio.com)

### **Larry Temkin**

Distinguished Professor and Chair  
Department of Philosophy  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
106 Somerset St. 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
College Avenue Campus  
New Brunswick, NJ, 08901  
[ltemkin@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:ltemkin@rci.rutgers.edu)

For a recommendation letter, please use the following email address:  
[send.Temkin.5860C2FF59@interfolio.com](mailto:send.Temkin.5860C2FF59@interfolio.com)

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT | A DEFENSE OF BASIC EQUALITY

Nethanel Lipshitz

What is the moral significance of being human? According to a popular humanistic doctrine known as *basic equality*, all human beings have a special moral status, and have it equally. In other words, the interests of human beings matter significantly from the moral point of view, and matter equally. A growing number of philosophers (“the skeptics”) believe that basic equality is false, because human beings are too different from one another to have equal moral status. The goal of this dissertation is to attack the central motivation for this skeptical argument, and to develop a new account of basic equality that can answer it.

Basic equality is foundational to modern moral philosophy. For example, basic equality has been evoked to defend the test of universalizability in Kantian ethics as well a strong principle of impartiality in Utilitarian ethics. Basic equality has important implications for political philosophy as well: it has been used to defend democracy and universal human rights and to explain what is wrong with wrongful discrimination. If basic equality is false, these notions will lose a fundamental unifying principle that can justify them.

The skeptics argue that basic equality is not plausible, as it violates a widely held assumption, which I dub “Correlationism.” According to Correlationism, the moral status of individuals is *correlated* with the extent to which they possess some significant non-normative property, such as rationality, autonomy or subjectivity. Correlationists believe that if basic equality is true, it is because human beings possess some such property equally, that is, that “descriptive equality” of some kind is true of them. Some Correlationists, such as Elizabeth Anderson, John Rawls, George Sher and Jeremy Waldron believe this is not a problem for basic equality, since descriptive equality is in fact true. But many philosophers have observed that it is quite difficult to specify any sense in which descriptive equality can be said to be true. For this reason, other Correlationists, such as Louis Pojman, John Kekes, Jan Narveson and Uwe Steinhoff argue that basic equality is false.

I begin my defense of basic equality by undermining Correlationism. Correlationists typically argue that basic equality is an instance of the more general moral principle of *formal equality*, according to which equal cases should be treated equally and unequal cases unequally. Only if human beings are “equal cases” — that is, only if there is some descriptive sense in which they are equal — is it true that they deserve equal treatment. In response, I argue that basic equality is not an instance of formal equality, for the following reason. Formal equality is what I call a “normatively symmetric” principle: it is just as wrong to treat equal cases unequally as it is to treat unequal cases equally. Basic equality, by contrast, is not normatively symmetric: *it* implies that unequal treatment of those who deserve equal treatment is worse than equal treatment of those who do not deserve it. Basic equality, therefore, has a different “normative structure” compared with formal equality, and so cannot be an instance of it. If basic equality is not an instance of

formal equality, then Correlationism loses its central motivation, and so does the skeptical argument against basic equality.

Then, I turn to develop a positive account of basic equality, one that does not rely on descriptive equality. While Correlationists believe that the ethical principle governing basic equality is the principle of treating equal cases equally, I argue that basic equality is grounded in a different ethical principle: the obligation to respect certain individuals, and that we can have such obligation even if descriptive equality is false of the individuals in question. I call this account “the Respect View”.

A central thesis of the Respect View is that a certain kind of respect— one that is similar to what Stephen Darwall calls “recognition respect” — is comparative and egalitarian: if two individuals deserve this kind of respect, then treating one’s interests as less important than the other’s is disrespectful to the one whose interests are treated as less important. The burden of justifying basic equality, then, shifts from trying to identify a property that all human beings have equally to identifying reasons to treat all human beings with this kind of respect. I propose one way of showing that all human beings indeed deserve such respect despite being descriptively unequal, and from this I conclude that all human beings deserve that their interests be given equal consideration. I end by discussing the implications of the Respect View for nonhuman animals.