



Jessica Isserow

University of Notre Dame

will present a talk titled



“We Contain Multitudes:

On the moral worth of multiply motivated actions”

When we do the right thing for the right reasons, our actions are said to have moral worth; to reflect morally well upon us, or to merit praise and esteem. Most discussions of moral worth direct our attention to these reasons—to the laudable motives that confer moral credit. But not all of our motives are so laudable; we’re often steered by some blend of the good, the neutral, and the bad. Multiply motivated actions are not so much the exception as the rule. And yet, existing schemas have little to say about them.

This paper takes up this relatively neglected subject; it seeks to uncover when and why multiply motivated actions can have moral worth. I argue that we can be led to an answer by construing moral worth as a species of achievement, and an agent’s motives as part of the competence needed to succeed. Some motivational configurations betray a lack of competence, whereas others don’t. This framework also sheds light upon the kind of accidentality that is relevant to moral worth.

Friday Oct 9th 3:30pm

Helen C. White 6191



Department of Philosophy
COLLEGE OF LETTERS & SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

