

# Pascale Willemsen

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My research interests are in philosophy of mind and action, in moral philosophy and psychology, metaethics, as well as experimental philosophy. I worked on the attribution of moral responsibility, with a special focus on the role of causal judgments. I am currently working on thick ethical terms and concepts and their role in metaethical debates and normative ethics. More specifically, I empirically investigate the nature and the use of thick ethical concepts in ordinary moral judgments.

## AREAS OF SPECIALISATION

Moral Psychology, Philosophy of Action, Metaethics, Experimental Philosophy

## AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Normative Ethics, Metaphysics of Causation, Causal Cognition

## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

### **University of Zurich, since September 2019**

Postdoc at the SNSF Eccellenza Research Group of Kevin Reuter  
Habilitation Project (working title): Morality – Through Thick and Thin

### **Ruhr-University Bochum, April 2018 to August 2019**

Assistant Professor in Philosophy at the Chair for Philosophy of Mind,  
Managing Director and Student Consultant for the Master's Program Cognitive Science

### **University College London, October 2017 to March 2018**

Postdoctoral Researcher at the Department for Experimental Psychology

### **Ruhr-University Bochum, June 2017 to September 2017**

Postdoctoral Researcher at the Chair for Philosophy of Mind

## DISSERTATION AWARDS

GdF Dissertation Prize for outstanding interdisciplinary dissertations at Ruhr-University Bochum,  
Gesellschaft der Freunde der Ruhr-Universität Bochum (2018)

## EDUCATION & RESEARCH STAYS

**Ruhr-University Bochum**, January 2014 to June 2017

*PhD in Philosophy*

Dissertation Topic: “Investigating the Role of Causal Responsibility for the Attribution of Moral Responsibility”

Committee: Albert Newen (first supervisor), Edouard Machery (second supervisor), Corinna Mieth, Tobias Schlicht, James Wilberding

Grade: summa cum laude (highest possible distinction)

**Yale University**, August 2015 to November 2015

Visiting Fellow at the Department of Philosophy and the Program of Cognitive Science

Host: Joshua Knobe

**London School of Economics and Political Science**, September 2012 to August 2013

*M.Sc. in Philosophy of Science*

**RWTH Aachen**, October 2007 to September 2012

*M.A. and B.A. in Philosophy and Linguistics and Communication Studies*

## PUBLICATIONS

GoogleScholar page: <https://scholar.google.de/citations?hl=de&user=GKzVajQAAAAJ>

### Monographs

- (1) Willemsen, Pascale. “Investigating the Role of Causal Responsibility for the Attribution of Moral Responsibility”, forthcoming in May with **mentis**.

### Edited Volumes

- (1) Willemsen, Pascale; Wiegmann, Alex. “Advances in Experimental Philosophy of Causation”, **Bloomsbury Press**. To appear in spring 2020.

### Peer-Reviewed Research Articles

(\* indicate joint first-authorship)

- (1) Willemsen, Pascale. “The Relevance of Alternative Possibilities for the Attribution of Moral Responsibility”, forthcoming in **Oxford Series in Experimental Philosophy**, Oxford University Press.
- (2) Willemsen, Pascale; Kirfel, Lara (2019). “Recent empirical work on the relationship between causal judgments and norms”, **Philosophy Compass**. (invited)  
doi: 10.1111/phc3.12562
- (3) Sytsma, Justin; Bluhm, Roland; Willemsen, Pascale; Reuter, Kevin (2018). “Causal Attribution and Corpus Analysis”, forthcoming with **Methodological Advances in Experimental Philosophy**, Bloomsbury Publishing. Preprint: <http://philsci-archive.pitt.edu/14848/>. (invited)
- (4) Willemsen, Pascale; Kaspar, Kai; Newen, Albert (2018). “A new look at the attribution of moral responsibility: The underestimated relevance of social roles”, in **Philosophical Psychology**.  
doi: 10.1080/09515089.2018.1429592
- (5) Wiegmann, Alex; Rutschmann, Ronja; Willemsen, Pascale \* (2017). “Empirically Investigating the Concept of Lying”, in **Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research**. (invited)  
doi: 10.1007/s40961.017-0112-z.

- (6) Wiegmann, Alex; Willemsen, Pascale \* (2017): “How the truth can make a great lie: An empirical investigation of lying by falsely implicating”, in **Proceedings of the 35th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society 2017**, pp. 3516-3521.
- (7) Stephan, Simon; Willemsen, Pascale; Gerstenberg, Tobias (2017). Marbles in inaction: Counterfactual simulation and causation by omissions”, in **Proceedings of the 35th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society 2017**, pp. 1132-1137.
- (8) Willemsen, Pascale (2016). “Omissions Without Expectations – A New Approach to the Things We Failed to Do”, in **Synthese**.  
doi: 10.1007/s11229-016-1284-9.
- (9) Willemsen, Pascale; Reuter, Kevin \* (2016). “Is there really an omission effect?”, in **Philosophical Psychology**, 29(8).  
doi:10.1080/09515089.2016.1225194.

#### OUTREACH AND PUBLIC WRITING

Author for Praefaktisch, a German philosophy blog

Philosophical expert and interview partner for Quarks, a German popular scientific tv show:  
<https://www1.wdr.de/mediathek/video/sendungen/quarks-und-co/video-organspende--was-hilft-bei-der-entscheidung-100.html>

#### SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

##### **Let’s Lay it on Thick – On the relevance of thick ethical terms for metaethics and moral psychology**

Experimental Philosophy Conference, Bern, (September 2019)

##### **Don’t Chess with Me! – Why Moral Philosophy Needs Moral Psychology**

First Workshop of the Emmy-Noether Group EXTRA, Bochum, invited talk (May 2019)

##### **What the Hell Is Causal Responsibility?**

University of Bern (2019)

##### **The Relevance of Alternative Possibilities for Moral Responsibility**

American Philosophical Association, New York City (USA), invited talk (2019)

##### **Omission Impossible. Why We Cannot Omit to Perform Impossible Actions**

Experimental and Naturalistic Perspectives on the Philosophy of Law, Bochum (Germany), invited talk (2018)

##### **The Relevance of Alternative Possibilities for Moral Responsibility**

3rd Annual Bochum – Rutgers Workshop, New Brunswick (USA), keynote talk (2018)

##### **The Pragmatics of Lying**

Annual Conference of the European Society of Philosophy and Psychology, Hertfordshire (UK) (2017)

##### **Omissions and Causal Explanations**

The Experimental Philosophy of Morality and Causation – Perspectives from Philosophy, Psychology, and Law, Bochum (Germany)

**I must although I can't!?! A pragmatically grounded two-level theory of 'ought implies can'**  
Experimental Moral Psychology and Philosophy, Berlin (Germany) (2016)

**The philosophical trilemma of moral responsibility for omissions – and how to solve it**  
Georg-Elias-Müller-Institut for Psychology, University of Göttingen (Germany), invited talk (2016)

**Omissions and expectations. Two studies on how moral and causal judgments depend on expectations**

Department for Cognitive and Decision Sciences, Causal Cognition Lab, University College London (United Kingdom), invited talk (2016)

**Omissions without Expectations – A New Approach to the Metaphysics of Things We Failed to Do**

First Conference of the Experimental Philosophy Group Germany, Bochum (Germany) (2015)

**Is there really an omission bias?**

Buffalo Annual Experimental Philosophy Conference 2015, Buffalo (USA) (2015)

**Why Social Norms Matter for the Attribution of Moral Responsibility**

The Moral Domain: Conceptual Issues in Moral Psychology, Vilnius (Lithuania) (2014)

#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- (1) **Experimental Philosophy and Questions in Moral Philosophy and Psychology**  
BA Philosophy, MA Philosophy, MSc. Psychology, and MSc. Cognitive Science, taught in English, block seminar, Summer 2019
- (2) **Introduction to Moral Psychology**  
BA Philosophy, MA Philosophy, MSc. Psychology, and MSc. Cognitive Science, taught in English, Winter 2018/19
- (3) **Philosophical Thought Experiments and Experimental Philosophy**  
BA Philosophy, MA Philosophy, and MSc. Cognitive Science, taught in English, Winter 2018/19
- (4) **Handlungen, Ereignisse, und ihre Erklärungen** (Actions, Events, and Their Explanations)  
BA Philosophy, first year, taught in German, Winter 2018/19
- (5) **Experimental Philosophy of Responsibility – Perspectives from Ethics, Metaphysics, and the Law**  
BA Philosophy, MA Philosophy and MSc. Cognitive Science, and Law, taught in English, Summer 2018
- (6) **Happiness, Well-Being, and Morality**  
BA Philosophy, MA Philosophy, MSc Psychology and MSc. Cognitive Science, taught in English, Summer 2018
- (7) **Moderne Handlungstheorie** (Modern Philosophy of Action)  
BA Philosophy, taught in German, Summer 2018
- (8) **Experimental Philosophy of Morality**  
MA Philosophy and MSc. Cognitive Science, taught in English, Summer 2017
- (9) **Agency and Moral Responsibility**  
MA Philosophy and MSc. Cognitive Science, taught in English, Summer 2014

## SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE

I am currently supervising a master's dissertation on alternative possibilities and moral responsibility, using methods from experimental philosophy. More specifically, the project questions the relevance of metaphysical debates about the compatibility of moral responsibility and a lack of alternative possibilities. Instead, it is argued that we should rather focus on and investigate what real-life constraints people consider reducing an agent's moral responsibility.

I supervised a bachelor's dissertation in Experimental Philosophy at University College London, focusing on moral and causal responsibility attribution for omissions in medical care.

As an instructor in experimental philosophy, I have supervised over ten experimental studies ran by students as part of their course work.

## UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

### **Committee Work**

Co-founder and member of the scientific board of the Experimental Philosophy Group Germany, together with Albert Newen and Kevin Reuter,  
<https://sites.google.com/site/xphigroupgermany/home>

Student Consultant for the master's program in Cognitive Science (since 2018)

Member of the Board of the Institute for Philosophy II (2014-16)

Member of the Dissertation Committee of the department (2014-16)

### **Workshop and Conference Organisation**

Support of *Experimental Philosophy Conference* as a member of the Experimental Philosophy Group Germany, 19 – 21 September 2019, University of Bern

Local Organiser of the *EuroCogSci 2019*, 02 – 04 September 2019, Ruhr-University Bochum

Organisation of the *9th workshop of the Experimental Philosophy Group UK*, 14 – 16 June 2018, University College London

Organisation of a book symposium on Edouard Machery's book "Philosophy within its proper bounds", 18 December at Ruhr-University Bochum

Organisation of 1-day workshop on *Experimental Philosophy of Morality and Causation—Perspectives from Philosophy, Psychology, and Law*, 13 June, Ruhr-University Bochum

Organisation of 1.5-day workshop on *Experimental Philosophy: Methods & New Directions & 1-day conference on Empirical Moral Psychology*, 18 – 20 November 2016, Humboldt-University Berlin

Organisation of the *First Conference on Experimental Philosophy in Germany, Investigating the Nature and our Understanding of Causality, Morality, Language, Mind, and Aesthetics*, 26 – 28 November 2015, Ruhr-University Bochum

### **Reviewer**

American Philosophical Quarterly, Cognition, Erkenntnis, Ethical Theory and Moral Practice, Journal of Applied Philosophy, Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology

## GRANTS, AWARDS, AND EXTERNAL FUNDING

£2,000 for organising the 9th Annual Workshop of the Experimental Philosophy Group UK (together with Lara Kirfel), Mind Association (2018)

£4,000 for organising the 9th Annual Workshop of the Experimental Philosophy Group UK (together with David Shanks and Lara Kirfel), Experimental Psychology Society (2018)

£375 for graduate student travel stipends for the 9th Annual Workshop of the Experimental Philosophy Group UK (together with Lara Kirfel), Analysis Trust (2018)

€19,200 postdoctoral research fellowship for a six-month stay at the University College London (Host: David Lagnado, Causal Cognition Lab), Research School Plus at Ruhr-University Bochum, supported by the Excellence Initiative of the German Research Council (DFG) (2017)

€2,810 granted for organising an interdisciplinary workshop on experimental philosophy of morality and causation, Research School Plus at Ruhr-University Bochum, supported by the Excellence Initiative of the German Research Council (DFG) (2017)

€4,000 granted for a research stay of Karolina Prochownik (PhD student from Krakow University, Poland) at Ruhr-University Bochum, Research School Plus at Ruhr University Bochum, supported by the Excellence Initiative of the German Research Council (DFG) (2016)

€3,260 granted for a research stay Prof. Justin Sytsma (University of Wellington, New Zealand) to Bochum, Research School Plus at Ruhr University Bochum, supported by the Excellence Initiative of the German Research Council (DFG) (2016)

Full PhD Fellowship, Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation (2015 – 2017)

€7,800 granted for organizing the first conference of the Experimental Philosophy Group Germany, Research School Plus at Ruhr-University Bochum, supported by the Excellence Initiative of the German Research Council (DFG) (2015)

€10,000 International Realization Budget for international activities, Research School Plus at Ruhr University Bochum, supported by the Excellence Initiative of the German Research Council (DFG) (2014)

## LANGUAGES

**German:** Native Speaker

**English:** Fluent

**French:** Basic Knowledge

ACADEMIC REFERENCES

**Prof. Joshua Knobe**

Yale University  
Department of Psychology  
Department of Philosophy  
Joshua.Knobe@yale.edu

**Prof. Edouard Machery**

University of Pittsburgh  
Center for Philosophy of Science  
machery@pitt.edu

**Prof. Albert Newen**

Ruhr University Bochum  
Institute for Philosophy II  
Center of Mind, Brain and Cognitive Evolution  
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**Prof. Kevin Reuter**

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Philosophisches Seminar  
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