BENJAMIN IAN WINOKUR

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AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION   Epistemology, Mind

AREAS OF COMPETENCE   Language, Logic, Metaethics

EDUCATION

2014-present   **York University**: Ph.D, Philosophy; defense scheduled for February 4th, 2021
THESIS: *Knowing and Expressing Ourselves*
COMMITTEE: Claudine Verheggen (chair), Henry Jackman, Christopher Campbell, Victoria McGeer (external: Princeton)

Abstract: An enduring philosophical tradition contends that we are *first-person authoritative* about our own minds: that what we say and think about our current mental states is typically owed (and receives) deference from others. A nearby tradition contends that we have *privileged self-knowledge* of our minds, in that we have uniquely secure higher-order awareness of our first-order mental states. Parties to both traditions often argue that first-person authority is a consequence of privileged self-knowledge. Against this, I argue that first-person authority results from our capacity to directly express our first-order mental states by self-ascribing them. Nevertheless, I argue that we do have privileged self-knowledge. This raises anew the question of how first-person authority and privileged self-knowledge relate. I argue that, for a range of mental states, our ability to directly express them to others, and to know them with privilege when we do so, constitute jointly necessary conditions on certain forms of social agency.

2013-2014   **Wilfrid Laurier University**: M.A., Philosophy
THESIS: *Revisiting Parfit's Impersonal Beings Hypothesis*
SUPERVISOR: Kathy Behrendt

2009-2013   **University of Waterloo**: B.A., Philosophy, Peace and Conflict Studies

PUBLICATIONS

Refereed Journal Articles
Forthcoming   "Critical Reasoning and the Inferential Transparency Method", *Res Philosophica*, 8900 words
Forthcoming   "Inference and Self-Knowledge", *Logos & Episteme*, 9600 words.
2017   "Ontological Entanglement in the Normative Web", *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review*, vol. 56, issue 3, pp. 483-501.

WORKS UNDER REVIEW, INVITED, AND IN PROGRESS

Edited Collections
Expression and Self-Knowledge (co-edited with Dorit Bar-On), special issue of *Philosophies* (in preparation)

Papers
"Defending First-Person Authority" (*revisions for resubmission in progress*)
"Evaluating Expressivisms" (for *Philosophies* special issue)
"Davidson, First-Person Authority, and Direct Self-Knowledge" (*under review*)
"Bots, Testimony, and Epistemic Injustices Online: A Case Study" (*in progress*)

AWARDS

2019	Graduate Fellowship of Distinction in Philosophy, $9800
2017	Ontario Graduate Scholarship, $15000
2015-2020	Graduate Student Travel Grants, ~$4400
2014	Kitty and Lou Newman Memorial Graduate Scholarship, $5000
2013	University of Waterloo PACS Certificate Program Bursary, $1200

REFEREED PRESENTATIONS

Forthcoming	"There Is Something to the Authority Thesis"
	-Pacific Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, San Francisco
2020	"Inference and Self-Knowledge"
	-The Tenth European Congress of Analytic Philosophy, Utrecht University
	"Critical Reasoning and the Transparency Method"
	-Eastern Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, Philadelphia
2019	"There is Something to the Authority Thesis"
	-Expression, Communication, and the Origins of Meaning Research Group Inaugural Graduate Conference, University of Connecticut
	"Metaphysically Robust Constitutivism and the Provenance of Privileged Self-Knowledge"
	-Eastern Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, New York City
2018	-8th Annual Edinburgh Graduate Conference in Epistemology, University of Edinburgh
	"Davidson, Authoritative Speech, and Privileged Self-Knowledge"
	-Meeting of the Canadian Philosophical Association, Université de Montréal
2017	"Davidson, Ontological Profundity, and Profound Ontological Difference"
	-Meeting of the Canadian Philosophical Association, Ryerson University
2016	"Arguments from Indispensability and Companions in Guilt"
	-Meeting of the Canadian Philosophical Association, University of Calgary
	-Louisiana State University Graduate Philosophy Conference

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Forthcoming   "Evaluating Expressivisms"
                -Ryerson Reason, Action, and Mind Speaker Series, Ryerson University
2019   "Winget on Compassion and Procedural Liberalism"
                -York University Philosophy Graduate Student Association Annual
                Conference: Philosophy of Emotion, York University
2018   "Davidson, Authoritative Speech, and Privileged Self-Knowledge"
                -Wilfrid Laurier University Speaker Series, Wilfrid Laurier University
2017   "Should Davidson's Theory of Mind be Normative? A Response to Curry "
                -York University Philosophy Graduate Student Association Annual
                Conference: The Legacy of Donald Davidson, York University
2015   "On Dishaw's 'A Conjecture in Assessing Reductionism about Moral Values'"
                -York University Philosophy Graduate Student Association Annual
                Conference: Reductionist and Antireductionist Perspectives on
                Normativity, York University

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

As Course Director, York University
2018   Seminar in Contemporary Philosophy – Varieties of Skepticism

As Invited Lecturer
MAR 2020   Dorit Bar-On's *Speaking My Mind* (Core Theoretical Philosophy)
OCT 2019   Introduction to Derivations in Sentential Logic (Intro to Formal Logic)
JAN 2018   Sentential Logic: Symbolization and Syntax (Intro to Formal Logic)
OCT 2016   Donald Davidson's *Epistemology Externalized* (Perception, Knowledge, and
        Causality)
OCT 2015   Descartes' Second Meditation (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz)

As Teaching Assistant, York University (*Tutorial Leader)
2020   Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz (Matthew Leisinger)
2019   Introduction to Formal Logic (Judy Pelham)*
        Modes of Reasoning – Reasoning About Social Issues (Hilary Davis)*
        Perception, Knowledge, and Causality (Ian Jarvie)
2018   Introduction to Formal Logic (Judy Pelham)*
2017   Introduction to Formal Logic (Judy Pelham)*
        The Meaning of Life (David Stamos)*
        Introduction to Formal Logic (Judy Pelham)*
2016   Perception, Knowledge, and Causality (Olaf Ellefson)
        Perception, Knowledge, and Causality (Jagdish Hattiangadi)
        Locke, Berkeley, Hume (Anton Petrenko)
2015   Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz (David Jopling)
        Critical Reasoning (Linda Carozza)*
        The Meaning of Life (Muhammad Ali Khalidi)*
2014   The Meaning of Life (Henry Jackman)*

As Teaching Assistant, Wilfrid Laurier University (*Tutorial Leader)

2014	Values and Society (A. Mihali)*
2013	Values and Society (A. Peetush)*

Teaching Certifications

2016	Senior Record of Completion in Pedagogical Research, York University Teaching Commons

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

2020	Vice President, Philosophy Graduate Student Association (York)
2020	Moderator, Ontario High School Ethics Bowl (UT-Mississauga)
2019-2020	President, Philosophy Graduate Student Association (York)
2017-2020	Colloquium Organizer, Philosophy Graduate Student Association (York)
2017	Conference Organizer, Philosophy Graduate Student Association (York)
2015-2020	Referee, Philosophy Graduate Student Association Conference (York)
2015-2019	Vice President, Philosophy Graduate Student Association (York)
Reviewer:	The Canadian Journal of Philosophy

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

2020-present	Expression, Communication, and the Origins of Meaning Research Group (University of Connecticut)
2017-present	American Philosophical Association
2014-present	Canadian Philosophical Association

GRADUATE COURSES TAKEN

At York University (*Audit)

2020	Objectivity (Claudine Verheggen and Robert Myers)*
2020	Social Epistemology (Regina Rini)*
2019	The Objectivity of Meaning (Claudine Verheggen)*
2018	Philosophical Logic (Christopher Campbell)*
2016	The Metaphysics of Science (Muhammad Ali Khalidi)*
	Hegel's Phenomenology (Jim Vernon)
	Philosophy of Action (Robert Myers)
	Wittgenstein and Davidson on Language and Thought (Claudine Verheggen)
2015	Philosophy of Science (Jagdish Hattiangadi)
	Directed Study in Metaethics (Robert Myers)
	Feminist Philosophy and the Politics of Negative Affect (Alice MacLachlan)*
2014	Davidson's Triangulation Argument and its Consequences (Claudine Verheggen and Robert Myers)
	American Pragmatism (Henry Jackman)

At Wilfrid Laurier University

2014   Metaphysics of Mind (Neil Campbell)
                        Studies in Moral Psychology (Gary Foster)
2013   Narrative Views of the Self (Kathy Behrendt)
                        Epistemic Responsibility (Jill Rusin)

REFERENCES

Dr. Claudine Verheggen
York University
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Dr. Christopher Campbell
York University
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Dr. Henry Jackman
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Dr. Judy Pelham
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(Pelham@yorku.ca)

Dr. Dorit Bar-On
University of Connecticut
(dorit.bar-on@uconn.edu)

Dr. Kathy Behrendt
Wilfrid Laurier University
(kbehrendt@wlu.ca)

Extended Dissertation Abstract

My dissertation concerns two phenomena that have long been of interest to epistemologists. The first phenomenon is first-person authority. Roughly, having first-person authority amounts to being owed (and tending to receive) deference for one's present-tensed mental self-ascriptions. The second phenomenon is privileged self-knowledge. Roughly, privileged self-knowledge is the seemingly effortless, direct, and distinctively secure knowledge one often has of one's current mental states.

In Chapter One I consider several possible first-person authority theses. Some emphasize the relative indubitability of present-tensed mental self-ascriptions, while others focus on their presumptive truth. I refine and defend theses of both sorts against Wolfgang Barz (2018), who argues that no first-person authority thesis is both plausible and philosophically interesting.

In Chapter Two I consider whether first-person authority ought to be explained by the seemingly privileged knowledge we have of our minds. I argue that there are reasons to consider an alternative, non-epistemic explanation. Thus, on an expressivist view (Jacobsen 1996, 1997; Falvey 2000; Bar-On 2004), self-ascriptions are first-person authoritative insofar as they express (and are taken to express) the very first-order mental states they self-ascribe, whether or not the expressed mental states are known with privilege by their possessors. I do not dispute that we do have privileged self-knowledge of many of our mental states, however. This raises the question of what such knowledge can explain, if not first-person authority.

In Chapter Three I examine several possible answers to this question. On one view, privileged self-knowledge is indispensable to our capacity to "critically reason" about our own mental states (Burge 1996; Sorgiovanni 2018). On another view, our capacity to reason in general (i.e., not merely critically) depends on our ability to self-knowingly consider what follows from our beliefs (Boghossian 2014, 2019; Kietzmann 2018). I argue that both arguments fail to secure an important explanatory role for privileged self-knowledge.

In Chapter Four I offer an alternative account of the explanatory indispensability of privileged self-knowledge. Focusing on privileged self-knowledge of intentional mental states like the propositional attitudes, I argue that such knowledge enables at least three forms of social agency: interpersonal argumentation, certain forms of collaborative action, and linguistic interpretation. Each of these forms of social agency requires an ability, as I put it, to track our mental states in social-epistemic space relative to the mental states of (possible) interlocutors and collaborators. Next, I address the question of how our privileged self-knowledge relates to our first-person authority. I argue that appreciating the first-order expressive character of self-ascriptions is also crucial to many aspects of group-coordination. Thus, I show why first-person authority and privileged self-knowledge of our propositional attitudes come together in ubiquitous cognitive contexts, even though I do not see the latter as explaining the former.

In Chapter Five I consider possible sources of our privileged self-knowledge of our propositional attitudes. I argue for a limited version of constitutivism, which is the view that self-knowledge is (given certain background conditions) metaphysically built into the attitudes self-known, at least for agents who are sufficiently rational and conceptually equipped. I defend constitutivism against what I call a "rational fundamentalist" alternative, according to which self-knowledge is not metaphysically built into our judgement-sensitive propositional attitudes but is, instead, the product of a disposition, enjoyed by rational agents, to form higher-order beliefs about these first-order states in normal cognitive conditions (Parrott 2017).