

BENJAMIN IAN WINOKUR

Department of Philosophy, York University
4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON, M3J 1P3

E-mail: ben.i.winokur@gmail.com
Phone: +1-(647)-609-7378
Website: benwinokur.com

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 and peculiar self-knowledge* of our minds, in that we have a special way of acquiring highly secure self-knowledge of our mental states. Philosophers often argue our privileged and peculiar self-knowledge explains first-person authority. Against this, I argue that first-person authority results from our capacity to directly express our first-order mental states by self-ascribing them. This raises anew the question of how first-person authority relates to our privileged and peculiar self-knowledge, and of what such knowledge does explain. I argue that, for a range of mental states, our ability to directly express them to others, and to know them with privilege and peculiarity, jointly enable certain forms of social-epistemic 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 “Inference and Self-Knowledge”, *Logos & Episteme*, 9600 words.

2021 “Critical Reasoning and the Inferential Transparency Method”, *Res Philosophica*, vol. 98, issue 1, pp. 23-42.

2017 “Ontological Entanglement in the Normative Web”, *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review*, vol. 56, issue 3, pp. 483-501.

INVITED, UNDER REVIEW, AND IN PROGRESS

Edited Collections

Expression and Self-Knowledge (with Dorit Bar-On), special issue of *Philosophies*
(in progress): mdpi.com/journal/philosophies/special_issues/expression_self_knowledge

Papers (*some titles modified for blind review*)

“Defending First-Person Authority” (revised and resubmitted)
“Evaluating Expressivisms” (for *Philosophies* special issue)
“Davidson, First-Person Authority, and Direct Self-Knowledge” (under review)
“Bots, Testimony, and Epistemic Injustice Online” (in progress)
“How to Commit to Commitments” (in progress)

Books

The Functions of Self-Knowledge (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 “Constitutivism and the Provenance of Privileged Self-Knowledge” -Eastern Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, New York City
2018	-8 th 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)*

2014 **As Teaching Assistant, Wilfrid Laurier University (*Tutorial Leader)**
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- President, Philosophy Graduate Student Association (York)
2017- Colloquium Organizer, Philosophy Graduate Student Association (York)
2017 Conference Organizer, Philosophy Graduate Student Association (York)
2015- Referee, Philosophy Graduate Student Association Conference (York)
2015- Vice President, Philosophy Graduate Student Association (York)
Reviewer: The Canadian Journal of Philosophy
R.A: Assisting Dorit Bar-On and Crispin Wright with preparing a book manuscript

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
(cverheg@yorku.ca)

Dr. Christopher Campbell
York University
(ccampbell@glendon.yorku.ca)

Dr. Henry Jackman
York University
(hjackman@me.com)

Dr. Judy Pelham
York University
(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 from one's hearer when issuing a present-tense self-ascription of a mental state. The second phenomenon is our so-called privileged and peculiar self-knowledge. Our self-knowledge is privileged, roughly, insofar as it is especially secure relative to our knowledge of other minds and the wider empirical world, and it is peculiar insofar as it is known in a way that is available to no one by the agent herself.

In Chapter One I consider several, more careful specifications of first-person authority. Some emphasize the relative indubitability of present-tense mental state self-ascriptions, while others focus on their presumptive truth. I refine and defend theses of both sorts against a recently articulated dilemma, which states that no first-person authority thesis is both (1) plausible, and (2) philosophically puzzling.

In Chapter Two I consider whether first-person authority ought to be explained in terms of our privileged and peculiar self-knowledge, and I argue that we should favour an alternative explanation. Thus, on the "Neo-Expressivist" view that I defend, self-ascriptions are first-person authoritative insofar as they are actions that express (and are taken to express) the very first-order mental states they semantically represent, whether or not the expressed mental states are known with privilege and peculiarity by their possessors. However, I do not dispute that we do have privileged and peculiar self-knowledge of many of our mental states. This raises the question of what such knowledge does explain, if not first-person authority.

In Chapter Three, focusing on privileged and peculiar self-knowledge of propositional attitudes specifically, I examine several possible answers to this question. Some tie our privileged and peculiar self-knowledge to our reasoning capacities, while others tie such knowledge to our rationality more generally, and still others to further psychological functions such as our capacity to control when and to whom we disseminate knowledge of our minds.

In Chapter Four I offer an alternative "Social Agentalist" account of the explanatory indispensability of privileged and peculiar self-knowledge (focusing, as before, on propositional attitudes). Social Agentalism is the view that such knowledge enables at least three forms of social agency: interpersonal reasoning, certain forms of collaborative action, and linguistic interpretation. Next, I address the question of how our privileged and peculiar self-knowledge relates to our first-person authority. I argue that appreciating the first-order expressive character of self-ascriptions is also crucial to certain social-cognitive functions. Thus, I show why authority comes together with privileged and peculiar self-knowledge of our propositional attitudes in ubiquitous cognitive contexts, even though the latter does not explain the former.

In Chapter Five I consider possible sources of our privileged and peculiar self-knowledge of our propositional attitudes. I argue for a limited version of "Constitutivism", which is the view that self-knowledge is metaphysically built into the attitudes self-known, at least for agents who are sufficiently rational, lucid, and who possess the concepts required to self-ascribe their attitudes. I defend Constitutivism against what I call a "Rational Fundamentalist" alternative, according to which such self-knowledge is not metaphysically built into our propositional attitudes but is, instead, the product of a disposition, enjoyed by rational agents, to automatically form higher-order beliefs about their first-order attitudes in normal cognitive conditions.