MATTHEW PARROTT

Curriculum Vitae
October, 2011

Department of Philosophy
University of Puget Sound
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ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

University of Puget Sound, Visiting Assistant Professor, August 2011-Present

EDUCATION

University of California, Berkeley, Department of Philosophy, Ph.D. May 2011
University of Michigan, Department of Philosophy, B.A. (honors) May 1998

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Philosophy of Mind, Epistemology, Hume

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Early Modern Philosophy, Ancient Philosophy, Metaphysics

DISSERTATION

Title: Agency and First-Person Authority
I argue that others are justified in deferring to what we say about our own psychological states because of the distinctive authority we have as cognitive agents. This authority is derived from a person's unique capacity to directly change or maintain her own psychological states on the basis of what she takes to be good reasons. (Please see attached abstract)

Committee: Barry Stroud, Daniel Warren and Alison Gopnik (Psychology)

AWARDS AND HONORS

University of California President's Dissertation Fellowship
        Fall 2010-Spring 2011
Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor
        University of California, Berkeley, 2008
Graduate Division Summer Grant
        University of California, Berkeley, Summer 2008
Dean's Normative Time Fellowship
        University of California, Berkeley, Fall 2004-Spring 2005

PRESENTATIONS

"Self-Blindness and Rationality" (*upcoming*)
        APA, Pacific Division Meeting, April 2012
"Schizophrenia and Self-Knowledge"
        Townsend Center Working Group in Philosophy of Mind, UC Berkeley, April 2011

"Senses of First-Person Authority"
    Reed College, May 2011
    University of Puget Sound, May 2011
    UCLA/USC Graduate Student Conference in Philosophy, February 2011
    13th Annual CUNY Graduate Student Philosophy Conference, April 2010
    University of California Berkeley, Departmental Colloquium, December 2009
Comments on Alexander Steinberg, "Might there be No Ambiguity"
    Berkeley-London Philosophy Conference, May 2008
Comments on Nate Smith, "Ramsey was No Deflationist"
    Berkeley-Stanford-Davis Graduate Philosophy Conference, April 2008
Comments on Austin Somers, "Finding 'I'"
    Berkeley-Stanford-Davis Graduate Philosophy Conference, April 2008
"How to Love"
    Richard Wollheim Society, UC Berkeley, December 2007
Comments on Nadine Elzein, "Counterfactual Intervention and Flickers of Freedom"
    Berkeley-London Philosophy Conference, May 2007
"Transparency and First-Person Authority"
    Berkeley-Stanford-Davis Graduate Philosophy Conference, April, 2007
"Knowing What You Believe: Learning from Moore's Paradox"
    Richard Wollheim Society, UC Berkeley, February 2007
"Neurosis, Self-Blindness, and the Limits of Transparency"
    Richard Wollheim Society, UC Berkeley, November 2006
Comments on Brian Prosser, "Levinas: Critique as Duty"
    Berkeley-Stanford Graduate Philosophy Conference, April 2004

COURSES TAUGHT

As Primary Instructor
    Epistemology, University of Puget Sound, Spring 2012
    Ancient Philosophy, University of Puget Sound, Fall 2011
    Introduction to Philosophy, University of Puget Sound, Fall 2011, Spring 2012
    Early Modern Philosophy, UC Berkeley, Summer 2009
    The Nature of Mind, UC Berkeley, Summer 2008

As Teaching Assistant at the University of California, Berkeley
    Introduction to Logic (Justin Bledin, Summer 2011)
    Kant (Hannah Ginsborg, Summer 2010)
    The Nature of Mind (John Campbell, Spring 2010)
    Kant (Daniel Warren, Fall 2009)
    Ancient Philosophy (David Ebrey, Fall 2008)
    Wittgenstein (Barry Stroud, Spring 2008)
    Philosophical Methods (Andreas Anagnostopoulos, Fall 2007)
    Hume (Barry Stroud, Spring 2007)
    Philosophical Methods (Barry Stroud, Fall 2006)
    Philosophy of Mind (Paul Skokowski, Summer 2004)
    Ancient Philosophy (Andreas Anagnostopoulos, Summer 2004)
    Nietzsche (Hans Sluga, Spring 2004)
    Philosophical Methods (Ami Kronfeld, Fall 2003)
    Existentialism in Film and Literature (Hubert Dreyfus, Fall 2002)

Individual Morality and Social Justice (Niko Kolodny, Summer 2002)
Philosophy and Literature (Marcia Cavell, Spring 2002)
Knowledge and its Limits (Barry Stroud, Fall 2001)
Early Modern Philosophy (Peter Hanks, Summer 2001)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE
Head Graduate Student Instructor
>UC Berkeley, Department of Philosophy, Fall 2008-Spring 2009

Faculty Liaison
>UC Berkeley, Department of Philosophy, Fall 2007-Spring 2008

Committee on Restructuring Ph.D. Program
>UC Berkeley, Department of Philosophy, Spring 2007-Spring 2009

Co-Organizer Berkeley-London Philosophy Conference
>UC Berkeley, Department of Philosophy, Fall 2006-Spring 2007

Chair, *Allais-Like Preference Reversals Are Everywhere*
>APA Pacific Division, April 2007

Co-Chair Colloquium Committee
>UC Berkeley, Department of Philosophy, Fall 2002-Spring 2003

LANGUAGES
French (Reading Knowledge)
German (Reading Knowledge)

GRADUATE COURSEWORK (*audited)
Appearance and Expression (Mike Martin)*
Causation in Psychology (John Campbell)*
Content and Consciousness (Mike Martin)*
Consciousness (Geoff Lee)*
Consciousness, and Self-Consciousness in Some Early Modern Philosophers (Daniel Warren)*
Descartes (Janet Broughton)
Experience and Judgment (Hannah Ginsborg)
Hume's *Treatise* (Don Garrett)*
Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (Hannah Ginsborg)*
Kant on Causality (Daniel Warren)*
Metaphysics (Alan Code)
Metaphysics, Modality, and Value (Barry Stroud)*
Plato (Christopher Bobonich)
Plato's *Meno* (David Ebrey)*
Practical Knowledge (R. Jay Wallace)*
Practical Reasoning (R. Jay Wallace)
Reasons and Rationality (Niko Kolodny)*
Russell (Hans Sluga)
Self-Consciousness (Christopher Peacocke)*
Self-Knowledge (Akeel Bilgrami)*
The Concept of the Political (Hans Sluga)
Theory of Meaning (John MacFarlane)
Unity of the Self in 17th and 18th Century Philosophy (Daniel Warren and Marleen
>Rozemond)*

Varieties of Subjectivism (Barry Stroud)

REFERENCES

Barry Stroud
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Michael Martin
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Columbia University
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John Campbell
Department of Philosophy
University of California, Berkeley
jjcampbell@berkeley.edu

David Ebrey
Department of Philosophy
Northwestern University
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DOSSIER

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Ordinarily when someone tells us about her psychological states, we immediately presume that she is right. By deferring to her in this way, we treat her as a kind of authority on her own psychological life. Although a person usually has this authority, she lacks it whenever she takes a more detached, indirect, third-personal point of view toward her psychological states. We see this, for example, when she learns about a belief or desire from a friend or therapist. For this reason an adequate account of first-person authority must explain why we have it only for some but not for all our psychological states.

The standard view is that first-person authority is an epistemic phenomenon, consisting in each of us being better situated to know about our own psychological states than anyone else. Against this view, I argue that because epistemic privileges are in principle available from a third-person perspective they cannot capture a kind of authority exclusive to the first-person point of view. As an alternative to the traditional approach, I propose that first-person authority is derived from the agency a person exercises in cognition. By relating to her psychological states in a first-personal way, a person is able to change or maintain them directly on the basis of good reasons. Since no other person can determine her psychological states in this way, her capacities as an agent guarantee her a unique kind of authority.

On my view, first-person authority is not a matter of special epistemic access to psychological facts and deference is not a response to the epistemic status of what someone says. It is an acknowledgment of the special role that a person's cognitive agency plays in determining her psychological life. Ordinarily when a person utters a psychological self-ascription two things coincide. First, she expresses her agential authority for her psychological states and, second, the content of her self-ascription represents a state for which she alone has this authority. The account I develop explains how these two features combine to justify our practice of deference.

Although some recent philosophers appear to be sympathetic to an agential account of first-person authority, they think it is ultimately an epistemic phenomenon. Richard Moran, for instance, believes that agency explains how each of us has an epistemically authoritative way of knowing our own psychological states. Moran is right to think that agency can explain a distinctive way of knowing our own psychological states, but he cannot legitimately infer that this way is superior to other ways of knowing without making one of two common assumptions, each of which is held by many philosophers.

The first assumption is that a person's psychological state can exist only if she also knows that it does. If this were true, however, we could not provide a plausible explanation for any of the mistakes we make about our own psychological lives. Especially given their frequency, some explanation of these errors is needed. The second assumption is that the causal processes underlying our first-personal way of knowing are more reliable than ones involved in perceptual ways of knowing. If this were true, our first-personal way of knowing would be epistemically superior because it does not rely on perception. However, contrary to this assumption, recent empirical studies demonstrate that we are not actually in a better position to know about our own psychological states that anyone else. Additionally, this research further indicates that the standard epistemic view of first-person authority is incorrect.

It is obvious that we have a distinctive first-personal way of knowing about our own minds. My view does not deny this. However, since this way of knowing is not epistemically superior to others, it cannot be the basis for our first-person authority. We do have this special kind of authority but only because we can determine what our psychological states are directly on the basis of reasons.