

EXPRESSION
COMMUNICATION
ORIGINS OF
MEANING



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KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE

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University of Connecticut
McHugh Hall 301
Storrs, CT

ORGANIZED BY
PROF. DORIT BAR-ON
ALIYAR OZERCAN

ECOM RESEARCH GROUP

KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE

The Expression, Communication, and the Origins of Meaning (ECOM) research group was established in 2010 by Dorit Bar-On at UNC-Chapel Hill, as part of a 4-year NSF grant for collaborative research received in 2009 [award # 0925896]. In the summer of 2014 ECOM moved to the University of Connecticut, where it has received a start-up grant from the UConn Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. ECOM is affiliated with the UConn Philosophy Department, the UConn Cognitive Science Program, the CT Institute for Brain and Cognitive Sciences, and the UConn Humanities Institute.

To date, ECOM has brought together hundreds of researchers, faculty, and students, from several disciplines (philosophy, linguistics, psychology, anthropology, biology, and more), through its regular meetings, speaker series, workshops, and conferences. Members of ECOM have worked on different aspects of the ECOM research areas, while collaborating and contributing to its central themes. To learn more, visit our members page, our research page, and our list of publications. Members also participate in various ECOM events, including reading groups, speaker series, workshops and seminars.

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In several places, the epistemologist Ernie Sosa has distinguished two varieties of knowledge: animal knowledge and reflective knowledge, where “animal knowledge that p does not require that the knower have an epistemic perspective ... from which [one] endorses the source of that belief” whereas reflective knowledge “by contrast require such a perspective”. Sosa’s characterization makes it clear that he is concerned to distinguish two varieties of human propositional knowledge (what psychologists label ‘descriptive’ or ‘declarative’ knowledge), as opposed to nonpropositional (‘procedural’) knowledge, sometimes described as ‘knowledge how’. But Sosa’s discussion gives rise to questions that take us beyond human knowledge.

Philosophers and psychologists of different stripes have increasingly questioned whether all human knowledge – even if not reflective in Sosa’s sense – is best understood in terms provided by traditional epistemology, viz. as requiring (at least) having a belief that something is the case (e.g., that there is a laptop in front of me right now, that $2 \times 3 = 6$, that vixen are female foxes, that the way to get to campus is thus & so, and so on), which belief is both true and justified by reference to the merits of the knower’s way(s) of forming the belief. It is not clear that this traditional analysis of knowledge is fit to account for competent adult human knowledge of logical truths, of the rules of one’s language, of one’s own present-states of mind, or even perceptual knowledge. And it is unlikely to fit what psychologists describe as ‘core knowledge’ (the kind of fundamental understanding of the workings of the physical and social world that infants bring into the learning situation), or acquired knowledge of categories, for example. Moving beyond the human case, the analysis doesn’t seem to capture adequately talk of knowledge in connection with some of the cognitive abilities manifested by nonhuman animals.

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McHugh Hall 301
UConn - Storrs, CT

FRIDAY

4

ALEX BYRNE
KNOWING WHAT
I AM DOING

6

PIZZA PARTY

SATURDAY

9

BREAKFAST

9:30 - 10:30

SAM KANG

INTUITION AND ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE

10:30 - 10:40

COFFEE

10:40 - 11:40

INGER BAKKEN PEDERSEN

TWO APPROACHES TO THE
ACCESS PROBLEM

11:40 - 11:50

COFFEE

11:50 - 12:50

SAM CARTER

KNOWLEDGE OF EPISTEMIC
MODALITY

12:50 - 2

LUNCH

2 - 3

BEN WINOKUR

THERE IS SOMETHING TO THE
AUTHORITY THESIS

3 - 4

SHAO-PU KANG

LOOKING INWARD AGAIN?

4 - 4:10

BREAK

4:10 - 5:10

JONATHAN BOWEN

A GIBSONIAN APPROACH TO PURPOSEIVE
BEHAVIOUR

5:10 - 6:30

KRISTEN ANDREWS

SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE IN GREAT APES,
MONKEYS, AND DOLPHINS

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

ALEX BYRNE
MIT, PHILOSOPHY

KNOWING WHAT I AM DOING

I may be doing something, say pumping poison into the water supply, without knowing that this is what I am doing. But when I am intentionally pumping poison I do know that I am pumping poison, at least typically. According to Anscombe, this is knowledge “without observation”; whether or not she’s right about that, it is unclear how such knowledge is acquired. The paper attempts to explain how one knows what one is doing.

KRISTIN ANDREWS
YORK, PHILOSOPHY

SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE IN GREAT APES, MONKEYS, AND DOLPHINS

Folk psychological knowledge about other minds is often described as knowing what others believe and desire. However, propositional attitude attribution is only a small part of social knowledge. In this talk I will examine the kinds of social knowledge animals may have. I start by presenting my theory of pluralistic folk psychology, according to which humans predict and explain others’ behaviors using a variety of different methods, and do not always think about others’ beliefs. I then turn to look at recent empirical work on other animals, primarily apes, (but also some discussion of monkeys and dolphins) in order to understand the varieties of animal social knowledge. I conclude that that while apes understand much about others’ minds and behavior, including the social norms that constrain group members’ behaviors, there isn’t evidence that apes metarepresent others’ false beliefs. By adopting pluralistic folk psychology, we can gain an enhanced understanding of the varieties of animals’ social knowledge, and a deeper understanding of the cognitive continuities and discontinuities between humans and other animals.

SAM KANG

PHD STUDENT, CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

INTUITION AND ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE

CHAIR: ALIYAR OZERCAN

Conceptual analysis through exploration of intuition plays a crucial role in much of the literature on knowledge in analytic philosophy. Among countless others, the vast literature on Gettier's counterexample to the Justified True Belief analysis of knowledge serves as a prominent example of such an approach. During the recent decades, however, this approach has come under increasing scrutiny by experimental philosophers who argue for a naturalistic approach to studying epistemic intuitions. These experimental philosophers say that the mainstream method of arguing by appeal to philosophers' intuitions is problematic because it arbitrarily privileges philosophers' intuitions over those of other groups when intuitions vary (or may vary) from group to group (such as Westerners and East Asians, or different socioeconomic groups). In particular, the claim by Weinberg et al. (2001) that intuitions about knowledge vary systematically between East Asians and Westerners has garnered considerable attention. In this paper, I take a closer look at the argument in Weinberg et al. and draw attention to a problematic assumption that both experimental philosophers and analytic philosophers share—that unlike beliefs, epistemic intuitions are like "brute facts" that are neither explainable by one's beliefs nor alterable through deliberation and argumentation. By using the cultural case in Weinberg et al. as a demonstrative example, I attempt to show how the boundary between intuitions and beliefs may be blurrier than what many philosophers seem to assume. Hence, instead of limiting ourselves to conceptual analysis of knowledge based on our currently-held intuitions, we should take a step back to locate the study of knowledge in a broader picture of our philosophical goals and open ourselves up to examining a variety of 'counterintuitive' forms of knowledge that may nonetheless prove valuable to our philosophical understanding.

INGER BAKKEN PEDERSEN

GRADUATE STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

TWO APPROACHES TO THE ACCESS PROBLEM

CHAIR: MENGJU HU

In this paper I argue that there are two kinds of answers to the access problem, which correspond to two approaches. Depending on the kind of answer one favours, the two approaches deal with the access problem in a very different manner. This methodological difference leads to certain constraints for what counts as an acceptable epistemological story of mathematical knowledge. My aim is twofold: 1) to argue that there are two distinct approaches in dealing with the access problem, and 2) to show that one of them is superior to the other and therefore should be pursued.

Employing Audrey Yap's (2009) distinction between an *internal* and an *external* type of answer to the access problem, I argue that these types characterize two distinct approaches to tackle the problem.

An *external* answer to the access problem is characterized by accepting the challenge as posed. This means that the gulf between physical and mathematical reality must be bridged, and that some means – capable of both breaching the causal limits of physical reality and probe into mathematical reality – must be endorsed. The approach favouring an external kind of answer I call the *head on approach*. It involves the postulation of a special faculty capable of such bridging, and it thus has a transcending quality. The postulation of this special faculty has often been made in the guise of mathematical intuition, a faculty described by analogy to sense perception.

I argue that this approach should be discarded in favour of the second approach, that of *tweaking of the question*. This approach rejects an external kind of answer, on the grounds that it entails a standard for what counts as an adequate epistemological account of mathematical knowledge that is impossible to meet. Instead, one should answer the problem in an internal fashion. That means to lower the standard for what counts as an adequate epistemological account and reduce our ontological commitment. Furthermore, I argue that the style of argument used to defend the head on approach does not warrant the postulation of a metaphysically speculative faculty. While inference to the best explanation is the favoured argument style for the other approach as well, I argue that ontological parsimony and the value placed on conforming to ordinary scientific standards have a better fit with this type of argument.

SAM CARTER

PHD STUDENT, RUTGERS

KNOWLEDGE OF EPISTEMIC MODALITY

CHAIR: ENO AGOLLI

The information which agents possess produces a perspective on the world. Epistemic modals provide us with a way of reporting on this perspective, as in (1):

- (1) Zsa Zsa $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{must} \\ \text{might} \end{array} \right\}$ have poisoned the Admiral.

Knowledge attributions (and their duals) provide a different way of reporting agents' access to the world, as in (2):

- (2) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Etta knows that} \\ \text{For all Etta knows,} \end{array} \right\}$ Zsa Zsa poisoned the Admiral.

These tools can be combined, as in (3). When they are, they provide a way to report agents' access to their own perspective:

- (3) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Etta knows that} \\ \text{For all Etta knows,} \end{array} \right\}$ Zsa Zsa $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{must} \\ \text{might} \end{array} \right\}$ have poisoned the Admiral.

This paper is interested in knowledge of the kind which is reported by ascriptions such as those in (3). That is, it is interested in our knowledge of epistemic necessity and possibility.

I'll investigate the consequences of accepting a pair of popular principles, **Epistemicity** and **Transparency**. The former states that what is epistemically necessary is known. The second states that what is known and what is known to be epistemically necessary coincide. As I'll show, this package of views creates problems for a simple, relational account of epistemic modality, since it implies that agents have unrestricted introspective access to their own epistemic states.

This consequence can be avoided, however, by moving to a richer, domain semantics for epistemic modals. I'll show why this is, and look at some of the other results of this move. I'll conclude by arguing that, while **Epistemicity** and **Transparency** directly entail that what is epistemically necessary is luminous, they are in fact compatible with a surprising amount of ignorance about what is epistemically contingent.

BEN WINOKUR

PHD CANDIDATE, YORK UNIVERSITY

THERE IS SOMETHING TO THE AUTHORITY THESIS

CHAIR: DREW JOHNSON

Many philosophers believe that self-ascriptions of one's current mental states are authoritative, in that they are owed and tend to receive a special sort of deference from their hearers. Moreover, it is often thought that the authority of self-ascriptions can and should be explained in terms of the so-called *privileged self-knowledge* that they manifest. Recently, however, Wolfgang Barz (2018) has argued that there is no adequate specification of the idea that self-ascriptions are authoritative. This, he argues, is because more detailed specifications of this so-called "Authority Thesis" turn out to be either (1) philosophically interesting but false, or (2) true but philosophically uninteresting. If Barz is right, philosophical theorizing about self-knowledge should not be constrained by claims about the so-called authority of self-ascriptions. It may also have negative implications for the quality of justification hearers possess for accepting self-ascriptive testimony. Contra Barz, however, I argue that there *are* plausible and philosophically interesting specifications of the idea that self-ascriptions are authoritative. Some of these preserve the spirit of specifications that he rejects, while others are specifications that he does not appear to consider.

SHAO-PU KANG

PHD STUDENT, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

LOOKING INWARD AGAIN?

CHAIR: RYO TANAKA

How do we know our own minds? According to inner sense theories, we obtain self-knowledge by a perception-like faculty of inner sense. Despite their long history, inner sense theories have come under sustained attack in recent decades. In fact, the view has few adherents these days.

The decline of inner sense theories is followed by the rise of various theories. But it is fair to say that transparency theories take center stage in current epistemology of introspection. Roughly, the idea is that we know our minds by considering relevant facts about the external world.

The goal of explaining our access to our minds without positing inner sense is widely shared among transparency theorists, even though only some of them state it explicitly. Call this goal the "central goal." Whether transparency theorists can achieve the central goal depends on the scope of transparency theories. If the transparency method does not apply to some mental states, we might need to invoke inner sense or something similar to explain our access to them, unless there are further alternatives. More importantly, if we do need to explain our access to them in this way, the central goal is frustrated.

A rough and ready way to test the scope of transparency theories is to look at hard cases. The idea is that if the transparency method works in hard cases, it is reasonable to be optimistic about the prospects for extending it further and achieving the central goal; if it does not, it is reasonable to be pessimistic.

Sensation is arguably such a hard case. Despite the apparent difficulty of extending the transparency method to sensation, Byrne (2018) offers a transparency theory of knowledge of sensation, which is the only one in print. In fact, he is the only transparency theorist who has developed an across-the-board transparency theory. This makes his account particularly worth considering.

In this talk, I argue that the transparency method does not apply to sensation. I start by arguing that Byrne's account faces a dilemma. I then respond to the objection that we could extend other transparency theories to sensation. In particular, I develop and criticize an initially plausible account inspired by the work of Silins (2012, 2013). I close by highlighting the implications of our discussion for the epistemology of introspection.

JONATHAN BOWEN

PHD STUDENT, THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

A GIBSONIAN APPROACH TO PURPOSEIVE BEHAVIOUR

CHAIR: KENSUKE ITO

Beginning with their 1955 paper “Perceptual Learning: Elaboration or Differentiation?” James and Eleanor Gibson began to develop a maverick theory of perception. In this paper, they contrasted two approaches to perception. *Enrichment theories* state that perception is a matter of receiving some impoverished stimulus—say, patches of light transduced to a pair of retinal image streams—and then adding to, modifying, or interpreting it with the use of concepts, schemas, unconscious inferences, or some other elaborative mental process. *Differentiation theories*, on the other hand, assume that all of the richness in perception is *out there in the world*, and the job of a perceptual system is to tune itself to this pre-existing richness.

According to this distinction, it is clear that dominant approaches to mindreading have all been *enrichment* theories. In this paper, I will begin a sketch of an outline of a *differentiation* theory of mindreading along Gibsonian lines. The first step in this process is describing what needs to be perceived--what purposive behaviour consists in, such that a perceptual system can tune itself to it.

Two general views of purposive behaviour can be distinguished: the *etiological* and the *ecological*. According to etiological views, what makes a behaviour purposive is that it is produced by certain kinds of internal causal mechanisms. Ecological views, by contrast, have it that purposive behaviour is an important subset of behaviour with certain ecologically significant characteristics. I will present and defend the following position: purposive behaviours are *flexible, persistent, economical commercings-with the affordances of an organism's environment*. Each of these qualities are directly observable in overt characteristics of behaviour. After presenting this second view, I will argue that the conditions of the etiological criterion are *not necessary* for a behaviour to be purposive, and the conditions of the ecological criterion are *sufficient* for a behaviour to be purposive. I will show this by appealing to cases where only one of the two criteria is met: the behaviour of a robot that perfectly implemented any of our best representational theories of mind but nonetheless failed to exhibit the ecological criteria's *behavioural* characteristics would not properly be called purposive. On the other hand, a creature without *any* kind of representational system--perhaps one without a central nervous system, or any other candidate for a realizer of a representational system--that nonetheless exhibited these behavioural characteristics would plausibly still be capable of purposive behaviour.