

My research concerns epistemic dimensions of two related topics: self-consciousness and the boundaries of the self.

Your beliefs and experiences make up your perspective on the world. Nobody else's contribute to your perspective in the same way. And the contribution your beliefs make to your perspective has normative significance, since rational belief and action depend on your perspective, not anybody else's. If it seems to you likely to rain, for example, maybe you ought to believe the picnic will be cancelled, and make other plans. But these further beliefs and actions will not be rational for you just because I believe it will rain. You might not even know about my belief, or you might know about it but disagree. So it matters not just which beliefs and experiences there are, but which ones are yours. In a slogan: *Ownership matters*.

Because ownership matters, it matters how beliefs and experiences must be related to a subject (or self), or else unified with one another, in order to make up a subject's perspective. This is the main concern of my first raft of papers. Two papers concern the ownership of past mental states, and present non-occurrent ones:

- (1) Is Memory Merely Testimony from One's Former Self?
- (2) Internalism, Stored Beliefs, and Forgotten Evidence

And two more address skepticism and the ownership of perceptual experience:

- (3) Perceptual Justification and the Cartesian Theater
- (4) What's the Matter with Epistemic Circularity?

While your beliefs and experiences matter because they make up your perspective on the world, they are also further items in the world that you have a perspective on. Just as you might encounter other people, you can encounter yourself and your mental states from the outside. This alienated perspective might be forced on you, for example, if you read your previously held views in a long-lost diary. And arguably, we are able to consider even our present experiences and beliefs from an alienated perspective, at least in a partial or incomplete way. As I see it, this is what self-consciousness is all about. It is a matter of stepping outside one's perspective, and viewing oneself *impersonally*.

But the dominant trend goes against this conception of self-consciousness. It says self-consciousness is a matter of conceiving of oneself *first-personally*. When I am aware of another person and their belief that it will rain, I am aware of them as objects—as further items in the world that are independent of the rain itself. But on the first-personal model, self-consciousness involves conceiving of myself as the subject of awareness and belief. Conceived of this way, there is not the same gap, from my perspective, between the world itself and the beliefs I have about it.

I think this dominant model gets self-consciousness all wrong, and my second raft of papers challenges it in various ways. The first opposes a specific account of introspective knowledge, which says that I can determine whether I believe it will rain just by considering whether it will rain:

- (5) Inferential Justification and the Transparency of Belief

The next two papers try to undermine a core motivation for this and many related accounts, involving Moorean and *cogito*-like assertions and judgments. As Moore observed,

there is a kind of incoherence in asserting ‘It will rain, but I don’t believe it will rain’, despite no logical inconsistency. To some, this reflects a deeper incoherence in a single perspective which says that it will rain, but also that its own subject does not believe it will rain. While I agree with the Moorean datum, I advance a more deflationary explanation in:

- (6) Self-Knowledge Requirements and Moore’s Paradox
- (7) Cogito and Moore

The first-personal model shows up not just in accounts of the source of self-knowledge, but of its role in guiding our beliefs. If reflection on my beliefs and evidence leads me to judge that my belief is irrational, then I allegedly should respond by revising it. Otherwise, I will exhibit another kind of Moorean incoherence, combining in my perspective a belief which according to the same perspective its subject should not have. But I doubt this really is incoherent, and again propose a more deflationary explanation of the data in:

- (8) Reflection Deflated

A final paper is a side project in decision theory. A key idea behind (6) and (7) is that Moorean assertions are *unratifiable*, like selecting a box which must be empty if you are going to select it. So I worked out a more general theory of unratifiable actions in:

- (9) Graded Ratifiability

Building off the papers, I have started a book that will offer a unified account of how core topics in epistemology—perception, memory, skepticism, and social epistemology—relate to the self and self-consciousness. So far I have preliminary drafts of the first three chapters:

- (10) Chapter 1, The Elusive Subject (rough draft)
- (11) Chapter 2, Ownership and Awareness (rough draft)
- (12) Chapter 3, Why Ownership Matters (rough draft)

Some of the remaining chapters will expand on ideas from the papers listed above, especially (1), (3), and (8). The main addition will be a more explicit positive alternative to the first-person model of self-consciousness, which is mostly implicit in the papers. The key idea is that the boundaries of the self are flexible. The same thought or experience that a moment ago was part of my perspective on the world can now be just another object to me.

Besides the book, my other immediate plan is to finish a historical project on the Cartesian Circle, which examines some underappreciated connections between Descartes’ epistemology and his metaphysics of the self. The research is complete, and the paper is about half-written. Further down the road is harder to predict, but lately I have been thinking about the difference between rationality and enlightenment, and about how we can derive value from work, even when the whole point of work is instrumental.

If you’d like to read my papers, here are some suggestions. You might start with (1) and (3) on ownership and the self, or (8) and maybe (6) on self-consciousness. From there, it depends on your interests. You might read (2) for more on the epistemology of memory, (4) for more on skepticism and circularity, (5) or (7) for more on introspection, or (9) for the decision theory behind (6) and (7).