

Dr. Evan Butts

ebutts@gordonstate.edu

Gordon State College
Academic Building
419 College Drive
Barnesville, GA 30204
United States
+1 7703580217 (Home)
+1 6785459335 (Mobile)

Academic Positions

Mercer University, upcoming January 2014

Adjunct Lecturer in Philosophy

Gordon State College, August 2013 – present

Adjunct Lecturer in Philosophy

University of Geneva, October 2011 – September 2012

One-Year Postdoctoral Researcher on Swiss National Fund project, “Knowledge, Evidence and Practice”

Education

University of Edinburgh,

PhD in Philosophy (27 June 2012)

Committee: Prof. Duncan Pritchard FRSE, Dr. Jesper Kallestrup,

Dr. Mark Sprevak, Prof. Andy Clark FRSE

Examiners: Prof. Sanford Goldberg (Northwestern),

Dr. Tillman Vierkant (Edinburgh)

University of Edinburgh

MSc in Philosophy specializing in Mind, Language, and Embodied Cognition (4 December 2008, with Distinction)

University of Georgia

B.A. in Cognitive Science specializing in Philosophy and
Anthropology/Linguistics (12 May 2007, Magna cum Laude)

Areas of Specialization

Epistemology, Social Epistemology, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Cognitive Science, Ethics, History of Philosophy

Areas of Competence

Metaphysics, Philosophy of Language, Meta-ethics, Symbolic Logic

Research Interests

Below are brief descriptions of the three specific topics in which I am currently interested.

(1) Supererogation is a familiar concept in the ethical/moral domain. However, I think it also has application within the epistemological domain. I aim to demonstrate the existence and importance of supererogation within the epistemic realm. In order to do this, I outline what features must obtain in a normative domain for supererogation to arise, using the ethical/moral domain as a starting point. I argue that the relevant features from the ethical/moral domain (where I assume the possibility of supererogation is a live option) also obtain in the epistemological domain.

(2) Interest is growing in the social dimensions of epistemological phenomena. While traditionally discussions in this area have been mostly limited to the nature of testimony, there is a great deal more to examine. For example, in his 2002 book *Knowledge by Agreement*, Martin Kusch contends that all non-communitarian approaches to epistemology, including reliabilism, fail to provide a sufficient answer to a crucial second-order question concerning rationality. That is, they fail to provide an account of what distinguishes rational belief from irrational belief. Crucially, the reason that the non-communitarian cannot provide such an account is because she does not give full consideration to relevant social factors. Part of fully appreciating these social factors, argues Kusch, is the rejection of the traditional assumption of individuals as the basic unit of knowledge attributions. My aim is to demonstrate that the reliabilist can resist Kusch's claims and provide a sufficient answer to the second order question, while preserving the individual as the locus of knowledge attributions.

(3) Recently, there have arisen questions concerning the connections between theories in epistemology and those in the philosophy of cognitive science. Specifically, there is a burgeoning literature on what sorts of epistemological theses are consistent with theories of extended and distributed cognition. Given the goal of epistemology to provide a unified account of knowledge across all cases, there are several theoretical difficulties to explore with respect to purported cases of extended and distributed knowledge. I propose to investigate this issue by transposing requirements placed on the possession of knowledge in the traditional cases of individual agents to purported cases of the possession of knowledge by collections of agents and super-agents (i.e., institutions and

groups treated as individual agents). Specifically, I will explore two questions. First, which epistemic statuses, if any, are appropriately attributable to the individual agents of a group across which sub-tasks of an overarching epistemic task have been distributed. Second, what are the prospects for a theory of extended knowledge to meet the ability constraint on knowledge: *wiż*, that constraint which demands that an agent must acquire her true belief through the exercise of a cognitive ability in order that this belief count as knowledge.

Dissertation Abstract

“Externalist Epistemology and the Constitution of Cognitive Ability”

Cognitive abilities have been invoked to do much work in externalist epistemology. An ability condition (sometimes in conjunction with a separate, anti-luck condition) is seen to be key in satisfying direction-of-fit and modal stability intuitions which govern the accrual of positive epistemic status to doxastic attitudes. While the notion of ability has been given some extensive treatment in the literature (especially by John Greco, Alan Millar, and Ernest Sosa), the implications for these abilities being particularly cognitive ones has been given less attention. To rectify this oversight, I examine the debate over the nature of cognition from philosophy of cognitive science, paying particular attention to the debate between defenders of the orthodoxy (Fred Adams, Kenneth Aizawa, and Rob Rupert) and heterodox theories (so-called “extended mind” positions). Armed with substantive accounts of cognition, I argue that the epistemological externalist’s obligation to repudiate epistemological internalism forces her to adopt some sort of heterodox account of cognitive systems.

Articles

Peer Reviewed

- (1) ‘Mentalism is not Ur-Internalism’. 2012. *Philosophical Explorations*. Volume 15, #2, 233 – 49.
- (2) ‘Slim is in: An Argument for a Narrow Conception of Ability in Epistemology’. forthcoming in *Journal of Philosophical Research*

Book Reviews

Review of Jason Stanley’s *Know How*. 2012. *Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 63, Issue 250, 180 – 84.

Works in Progress

- “Testimonial Justice and Epistemic Supererogation”, in progress
- “Anti-Individualism and Communitarianism in Epistemology”, in progress
- “Defending Epistemic Responsibility”, in progress

Awards

Career Development Fellowship, University of Edinburgh, 2008 - 2011

Research Support Grant (to attend the European Epistemology Network Conference 2011: see below), University of Edinburgh, June 2011

Phi Beta Kappa Society Induction, University of Georgia, 2007

Presentations

Peer-Reviewed Conference Submissions

“Is Mentalism Epistemological Ur-Internalism?”

European Epistemology Network Meeting, Lund University, March, 2011

“The Notion of Ability in Epistemology”

Congrès SOPHA, Paris, 5 May, 2012

“Beyond the Call of Epistemic Duty: Supererogatory Inquiry”

European Epistemology Network Meeting, University of Bologna, June, 2012

“Mentalism is not epistemic ur-internalism”

Extended Cognition and Epistemology (Workshop), Eindhoven University of Technology (Organizer), June 2012

Invited Submissions

“Mentalism and the Possibility of Cognitive Externalism”

Justification II: From Reasons to Reasoning (Workshop), Institut Jean-Nicod, 3 May 2012

Non-refereed Submissions

"Mentalism is not Epistemic Internalism"

Epistemology and Extended Cognition Workshop, University of Edinburgh
November, 2010

"Epistemic Supererogation"

Ethics and Epistemology Workshop, University of Edinburgh, July, 2010

“Supererogation, Epistemology and You”

University of Edinburgh X-mas Epistemology Fest, December, 2009

"Phenomenal Character and Access",

Michael Tye Workshop, University of Edinburgh, November, 2009

"A Fistful of Externalisms, and A Few Externalisms More?: The Relationship Among Various Types of Philosophical Externalism",

Postgraduate Work in Progress Seminar, University of Edinburgh, July, 2009

"Sosa on Perspective and the Distinction between Animal and Reflective Knowledge"

Virtue Epistemology Workshop, University of Edinburgh, April, 2009

"The Cognitive in Epistemology"

Epistemology Research Group, University of Edinburgh April, 2009

"Forbidden Fruit: Truths With Zero or Negative Epistemic Value"

Postgraduate Workshop in Epistemology, University of Edinburgh, January, 2009

"The Interface of Mind Extension and Epistemology"

Postgraduate Workshop in Epistemology, University of Edinburgh, December, 2008

Teaching

Lectures

Mind, Brain and Behavior (topics to be decided), Spring 2014

Introduction to Ethics: Dimensions of Ethical Evaluation (Ethical Theories), Fall 2013: 16 lectures

Self, Agency and Will (Self-Knowledge; Conceptions of the Self), Spring 2011: 2 lectures

Mind, Matter and Language (Theories of Mind; Philosophy of Language), Fall 2010: 15 lectures

Tutorials

Knowledge and Reality, Spring 2010

Greats: Plato to the Enlightenment, Spring 2010

Mind, Matter and Language, Fall 2009

Morality, Rationality and Value, Fall 2009

Introduction to Philosophy, Fall 2008 and Spring 2009

Introduction to Philosophy 2A, Fall 2008 and Spring 2009

Logic I, Fall 2008

Committees and Departmental Activity

University of Edinburgh

Assistant Organizer, First Annual Edinburgh Postgraduate Epistemology Conference,
March, 2011

University of Edinburgh Philosophy Staff-Student Postgraduate Liaison Committee, 2009-10

Professional Service

Editorial

Member of the Editorial Board of *Dialectica* (Nov 2011 – present)

Article Referee for:

Dialectica

Erkenntnis

Philosophical Investigations

The Review of Psychology and Philosophy

Languages

English (native)

Spanish (intermediate)

French (elementary)

Portuguese (elementary)

References

Research

Prof. Pascal Engel

Department of Philosophy, University of Geneva, Rue de Candolle 2, CH-1211 Genève 4,
Switzerland

Pascal.Engel@unige.ch, (+41) 22 379 7050

Prof. Sandy Goldberg

Department of Philosophy, Northwestern University, Kresgee 2 – 335, 1880 Campus Dr.,
Evanston, IL, 60208, USA

s-goldberg@northwestern.edu, (+1) 847 491 8524

Prof. Duncan Pritchard FRSE

Department of Philosophy, University of Edinburgh, Dugald Stewart Building, 3 Charles St.,
Edinburgh, EH8 9AD, Scotland, UK

Duncan.Pritchard@ed.ac.uk, (+44) 0131 651 1784

Dr. Jesper Kallestrup

Department of Philosophy, University of Edinburgh, Dugald Stewart Building, 3 Charles St.,
Edinburgh, EH8 9AD, Scotland, UK

Jesper.Kallestrup@ed.ac.uk, (+44) 0131 650 3655

Teaching

Prof. Stephen Raynie

Department of Humanities, Gordon State College, Academic Building, 419 College Drive,
Barnesville, GA 30204, USA

srayine@gordonstate.edu, (+1) 678 359 5047

Dr. Alasdair Richmond

Department of Philosophy, University of Edinburgh, Dugald Stewart Building, 3 Charles St.,
Edinburgh, EH8 9AD, Scotland, UK

A.Richmond@ed.ac.uk, (+44) 0131 650 3656