Drew Johnson

University of Connecticut
Department of Philosophy
344 Mansfield Rd
Storrs, CT, USA 06269-1054

Website:
https://sites.google.com/uconn.edu/drewjohnson/home
Email: drewjohnson3190@gmail.com
drew.johnson@uconn.edu
Phone (cell): +1(773) 574-0452

Research Areas

Areas of Specialization:
Epistemology: Self-Knowledge; Skepticism;
      Social Epistemology
Metaethics: Expressivist theories; Hybrid theories

Areas of Competence:
Ethics: Ethical theory; Applied ethics; Animal ethics
Philosophy of language: Speech act theory; Theory
      of truth; Teleosemantics

Appointments

- *Research Fellow*. University of Connecticut Humanities Institute.   2021-2022.
- *Graduate Assistant*. University of Connecticut Humanities Institute.   2020-2021
- *Graduate Assistant*. Philosophy Department. University of Connecticut.   2017-2020.
- *Teaching Assistant*. Philosophy Department. University of Connecticut.   2015-2017.
- *Teaching Assistant*. Philosophy Department. Northern Illinois University.   2014-2015.

Education

University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT   PhD, Philosophy, expected Spring 2022
     MA, Philosophy, 2017

- *Dissertation*: A Hybrid Theory of Ethical Thought and Discourse
- *Committee*: D. Bar-On, M. Lynch, P. Bloomfield, W. Lycan
- *Abstract*: This dissertation develops a hybrid account of ethical thought and discourse, drawing elements from cognitivist and expressivist theories. I argue that I propose an account of ethical claims and judgments in terms of their function of bringing about stable systems of social coordination anchored around morally salient features of social environments. Ethical claims perform this function by simultaneously tracking right-/wrong-making features of actions – their descriptive function – and directing fitting moral behavior through the expression of moral sentiments or attitudes – their expressive function.

Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL   M.A., Philosophy, 2015

Grinnell College, Grinnell, IA   B.A. (honors), Philosophy, 213

Publications

Johnson, D. (2021). Disjunctive luminosity. *Thought, 10*(2): 118-126. https://doi.org/10.1002/tht3.486 [Full text available here.]

Johnson, D. (2020). Deep disagreement, hinge commitments, and intellectual humility. *Episteme*: 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2020.31 [Full text available here.]

Bar-On, D. & D. Johnson (2019). Epistemological disjunctivism: Perception, expression, and self-knowledge. In C. Doyle, J. Milburn, & D. Pritchard (eds.), *New Issues in Epistemological Disjunctivism* (pp. 317-344). Routledge. [Full text available here.]

Johnson, D. (2019). Hinge epistemology, radical skepticism, and domain specific skepticism. *The international journal for the study of skepticism, 9*(2): 116-133. https://doi.org/10.1163/22105700-20191302 [Full text available here.]

Book Reviews

Bar-On, D., & Johnson, D. (forthcoming). 'Transparent' rules and basic self-knowledge: A critical study of Alex Byrne's *Transparency and self-knowledge*. *Inquiry*. (28 pages). [full text available here].

Papers Under Review

The proper function of ethical judgment. [Titled revised to preserve anonymous review. Conditional
      acceptance *Erkenntnis*. Full text available upon request].

Evolutionary debunking arguments and proper function. [Titled revised to preserve anonymous review. Under
review at *Biology & Philosophy*. Full text available upon request].

Presentations [invited presentations are indicated by a '*'. All others are at professional or graduate conferences]

Debunking arguments against moral realism and the proper function of moral belief.
- The 2021 Mountain-Plains Philosophy Conference.

Proper Function and Ethical Judgment: Towards a Biosemantic Theory of Ethical Thought and Discourse.
- Presented at the 2021 Eastern division meeting of the American Philosophical Association.
- Accepted for presentation at the 2020 meeting of the North Carolina Philosophical Society. *Cancelled due to COVID-19.*
- Accepted for presentation at the 2020 meeting of the Kentucky Philosophical Association. *Cancelled due to COVID-19.*

Deep Disagreement, Hinge Commitments, and Intellectual Humility
- The Illinois Philosophical Association. 2019.
- The Alabama Philosophical Society. 2019.

Deep Disagreement, Conviction, and Intellectual Humility
- The Arche Philosophical Research Centre, University of St. Andrews. 2019.*

On the Epistemic Significance of Deep Disagreement: Conciliatory Views, Hinge Epistemology, and Humility
- The Social Epistemology Working Group at the University of Connecticut Humanities Institute. 2019.*

Epistemological Disjunctivism: Perception, Expression, and Self-Knowledge (with D. Bar-On)
- The Arche Philosophical Research Centre, University of St. Andrews. 2018.*

Lies and Hypocrisy: Illocutionary Acts in Ethical Thought and Discourse
- The Philosophy Department at the University of Aberdeen. 2019.*
- The Illinois Philosophical Association. 2018
- The Alabama Philosophical Society. 2018
- The Western Michigan Graduate Conference. 2018

Belief, Representation, and Ethical Judgment
- The Minnesota Philosophical Society. 2017
- The UConn Graduate 'Grue' Conference. 2017*

Truth and Lies in a Non-Normative Sense
- The Illinois Philosophical Association. 2014.
- The Indiana Philosophical Association. 2014.

Fellowships and Awards

Fellowship Award. The *Expression, Communication, and Origins of Meaning* (ECOM) Research
      Group. 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018.

The Ruth Garrett Millikan Fellowship Award. The Philosophy Department, University of
      Connecticut. 2019. $5000 support for research.

The C. Madeline Myers Graduate Award in Philosophy. The Philosophy Department, Northern
      Illinois University. 2015

The Worley Prize in Philosophy. The Philosophy Department, Grinnell College. 2013

Service to the Profession and Other Research Work

Administrator. The Virtual International Consortium for Truth Research ([VICTR](#)). 2020-2021.
- Organized VICTR's speaker series for 2020 – early 2021 alongside other VICTR Steering Committee members.
- Organized the Truth 2021 Online Conferences, hosted by VICTR, alongside other VICTR Steering Committee members.
- Maintained a calendar of VICTR events.
- Managed promotion of VICTR events and media presence through a variety of outlets, including mailing lists and VICTR's twitter account.
- Provided technical support for VICTR events on Zoom.
- Handled communications with speakers as needed.

Graduate Assistant. University of Connecticut Humanities Institute (UCHI). 2020-2021.
- Provided technical support for UCHI events on Zoom.
- Produced research reports for an UCHI-associated NSF proposal.
- Managed promotion for UCHI events, alongside other UCHI team members.
- Handled communications with speakers for UCHI events as needed.

Research Fellowship. Jointly held with the ECOM Research Group at the University of Connecticut, and with New York University. Summer 2020 - present
- Assisting D. Bar-On and C. Wright in preparing a book manuscript, *Expressivism and Self-Knowledge*, for Wiley's *Great Debate* series.
- Providing extensive comments and editorial advice in addition to preparing bibliography and index.
- Co-authoring two appendixes with Dorit Bar-On.

Journal Referee Service.
- *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*. 2021.
- *Inquiry*. 2020.

Treasurer. Philosophy Graduate Student Association. University of Connecticut. 2016-2017.

Treasurer. Graduate Student Association Committee. Northern Illinois University. 2014-2015.

Professional Affiliations

Visiting Student. Arche Philosophical Research Centre, St. Andrews University. Summer 2019.

Member. The Social Epistemology Working Group. The University of Connecticut Humanities Institute. 2016 – present.

Member. The *Expression, Communication, and Origins of Meaning* Research Group. The University of Connecticut. 2016 – present.

Teaching Experience

Summary of Teaching Evaluation Scores

The table below lists average scores for all courses taught as instructor of record for 3 representative questions from end-of-course student evaluation surveys. Responses are scored on a 1-5 scale, 1 = "Strongly Disagree", 5 = "Strongly Agree". Full teaching evaluation surveys for all courses taught are available upon request.

Question	Average score
The instructor presented the course material clearly	4.528

The instructor stimulated interest in the subject	4.528
The instructor's teaching methods promoted student learning	4.385

Fig. 1 Summary of student evaluation scores

Courses taught as instructor of record, at the University of Connecticut:

Philosophy and Social Ethics (each section roughly 25-30 students)
-   Spring 2020 (x2); Fall 2019 (x2); Spring 2019 (x1); Fall 2018 (x2); Summer 2018 (x1);
    Spring 2018 (x2); Fall 2017 (x2); Spring 2017 (x2); Summer 2017 (x1); Summer 2016 (x1)
Problems of Philosophy
-   Spring 2019 (x1)

Experience as teaching assistant at the University of Connecticut:

Philosophy and Social Ethics (managing discussion sections of roughly 20 students)
-   Spring 2017 (x4 discussion sections); Fall 2016 (x4); Spring 2016 (x4); Fall 2015 (x4)

Experience as teaching assistant at Northern Illinois University:

Ethics (each section roughly 60 students)
-   Spring 2015 (x1); Fall 2014 (x2)
Writing Tutor
-   Spring 2015

<u>Teaching Awards, Development, and Certifications</u>

Teaching Excellence Recognition Letter. Office of the Provost, University of Connecticut Avery
        Point Campus. Spring 2019.

Teaching Excellence Recognition Letter. Office of the Provost, University of Connecticut
        Stamford Campus. Fall 2018.

Teaching Training and Mentoring Program. Philosophy Department, University of Connecticut. Fall 2015 – Spring 2017.
-   Shared video recordings of discussion sections for constructive criticism with other TAs and faculty adviser
-   Reviewed best pedagogical practices and discussed issues in particular discussion sections.

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. University of Connecticut Seminars attended:
-   Making an Effective Pivot to Distance Learning. May 14, 2020.
-   Teach Remotely Using Webex. March 12, 2020.
-   Increasing Student Engagement. October 5, 2018.
-   Strategies for Increasing Student Engagement. August 9, 2017.
-   Specifications grading. January 11, 2021.
-   Inclusive pedagogy 2.0: Equity-minded teaching in distance learning. January 11, 2021.
-   Managing anxiety, yours and theirs. January 11, 2021.
-   Active listening. January 13, 2021.

<u>Professional References</u>

Dorit Bar-On
Professor of Philosophy
University of Connecticut
dorit.bar-on@uconn.edu

Michael Patrick Lynch
Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of Philosophy
Director of the University of Connecticut Humanities Institute
Director of the New England Humanities Consortium
University of Connecticut
mplynch@uconn.edu

Paul Bloomfield
Professor of Philosophy
University of Connecticut
phsb@uconn.edu

William Lycan
Distinguished Visiting Professor of Philosophy
University of Connecticut
william.lycan@uconn.edu

Thomas Bontly (teaching reference)
Associate Professor of Philosophy
University of Connecticut
thomas.bontly@uconn.edu

Duncan Pritchard
Distinguished Professor of Philosophy
University of California Irvine
dhpritch@uci.edu

A Hybrid Theory of Ethical Thought and Discourse

Dissertation Summary

This dissertation defends a novel hybrid theory of ethical thought and discourse. I begin in Chapter 1 by identifying the surface features of ethical thought and discourse, features that any metaethical account should seek to explain or explain away. These include (i) the cognitivist (i.e. belief-like) appearance of ethical judgments, and the semantic and epistemic continuities between ethics and other domains, and (ii) the apparent close connection between making a sincere ethical judgment and being motivated to act on it, and the distinctively action-guiding character of ethical claims.

In Chapter 2, I examine prominent attempts to explain these features, with the primary emphasis on expressivist theories. The main insight of expressivism is the explanation it offers of the close connection between ethical judgment and motivation; namely, that ethical claims directly express motivationally-charged affective states, such as moral condemnation, or planning states. Nevertheless, traditional expressivism faces serious difficulties explaining the cognitivist appearances of ethical thought and discourse. I argue that these difficulties give us good reason to reject expressivism's semantic hypothesis that the meanings of ethical terms and sentences are exhausted by their function for expressing non-cognitive mental states.

Chapter 3 examines recent 'hybrid' metaethical theories combining components of expressivism and cognitivism about ethics. Hybrid theories seek to retain an expressivist-style explanation of the close connection between ethical judgment and motivation, while avoiding the main problems for expressivism by incorporating a cognitivist component in their analysis. Despite the initial promise of hybrid theories, I argue that extant hybrid theories are nevertheless committed to problematic semantic, metasemantic, or pragmatic assumptions, owing to a commitment (either implicit or explicit) many of these theories share to a mentalist conception of (meta)semantics that takes the sorts of mental states expressed by ethical claims as in some way determining the contents of ethical sentences.

Chapter 4 presents my own hybrid view. I begin by summarizing an existing view, ethical neo-expressivism (Bar-On & Chrisman 2009; Bar-On, Chrisman, & Sias 2014), which improves upon both hybrid and pure expressivist and pure cognitivist theories by avoiding commitment to mentalist (meta)semantics. Neo-expressivism proposes a distinction between two notions of expression: expression in the action sense (the way a person expresses her mental states) and expression in the semantic sense (the way, for instance, a sentence expresses a proposition). Ethical neo-expressivism retains the expressivist explanation of moral motivation in terms of act-expression, while preserving the semantic continuities between ethical sentences and sentences in other domains in terms of semantic expression. I argue, however, that ethical neo-expressivism must 'go hybrid' and maintain that ethical claims act-express beliefs in addition to non-cognitive attitudes, in order to explain certain features of moral inference. In Chapter 4, I additionally argue that many standard ethical claims are assertions of a distinctive kind. To count as making an ordinary assertion sincerely, one must believe the content of one's assertion. So too, with ethical claims, I argue. However, unlike with ordinary assertion, to make an ethical claim sincerely, one must not only believe one's claim, but also be moved to act in accordance with it -- otherwise, one is subject to censure for hypocrisy.

In Chapter 5, I provide a biosemantic account (following Millikan 1984, *inter alia*) of the proper function of ethical judgment. According to this account, the proper function of ethical judgment is (i) to correctly track the morally salient features of a given situation, and (ii) to direct appropriate moral behavior given those features, through the activation or expression of moral sentiments and attitudes. I also consider the implications of this account for theorizing about the evolutionary and developmental origins of moral cognition.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I defend one of the surface features of the ethical domain – the possibility of substantive moral knowledge – against a battery of arguments for moral skepticism. These include a skeptical argument from our apparent inability to know that moral nihilism is false (Sinnott-Armstrong 2006), and arguments from the epistemic significance of deep moral disagreement. The account of moral epistemology I propose is based on recent work in hinge epistemology (following Pritchard 2012, *inter alia*), according to which the very possibility of knowledge depends upon the fact that we each hold some commitments (our 'hinge' commitments) as certain, even though we cannot support those commitments with further reasons. I argue that our ordinary moral beliefs are protected from certain skeptical worries by our having moral hinge commitments, such as a commitment to the proposition that it would be wrong to torture innocent people just for fun.