

My research in self-knowledge and moral psychology asks how we know our more elusive mental states—particularly desires and actions. In contrast to other approaches to self-knowledge, I focus on the *errors* we make about our mental states and what they reveal. Broadly, these errors suggest two conclusions: first, that many of the mental states we wish to know whether we have are difficult to know because they are (perhaps unexpectedly) dispositional, and second, that a virtue-theoretic approach to self-knowledge might help us to better recognize these states. In the long-term I plan to write a book, *Self-Knowledge and the Invisibly Near*, in which I argue that knowing many of our mental states is difficult due to those states' complexity and development over time.

My current research comprises several papers and papers in progress on the nature and epistemology of desire, disappointment, and action. I am working on a proposal for a book, *Knowing What You Want*, in which I bring these themes together into a coherent account of how we can better know what we want.

Epistemology

In several papers in progress, I examine how we know our desires. In “Dispositions and Desire Transparency,” I argue that the transparency procedure does not provide us with knowledge of our dispositional desires. Byrne (2018) argues that a specialized version of the transparency procedure applies to desires. According to Byrne, to discover whether one desires to do some action, one asks whether doing that action is desirable. I will argue that this procedure fails to inform us of our dispositional desires, since someone might follow it and believe that she wants something but later judge that she wanted something different all along. In this sense, her judgments of desirability may not tell her about her dispositional desires. In another paper in progress, “Two Ways of Being Wrong about What You Wanted,” I contrast the errors we make about our desires with the view that we are infallible with respect to our non-dispositional desires.

I am also working on applying virtue epistemology, specifically virtue contextualism, to self-knowledge. Virtue contextualism is the view that knowledge results from the epistemic competences required for safe beliefs—beliefs that could not easily have been wrong—in a given context. In “Self-Knowledge as an Exercise of Skill,” I argue that virtue contextualism applies to knowledge of the ‘inner’ as well as the ‘outer’ world. First, I present an argument from high-low skill pairs that some hold to support virtue contextualism (VC). Then I show that similar high-low skill pairs can be developed for self-knowledge. If we take these arguments to support VC respect to knowledge of the external world, they also support VC with respect to self-knowledge. Second, I argue that individual differences in our awareness of and ability to categorize our mental states support the more general claim that skill at identifying mental states is sometimes necessary for someone to know which mental state she is in. Together, these arguments favor adopting a virtue-theoretic approach to at least some types of self-knowledge.

Finally, I am working on a paper responding to the new intellectualism about know-how. This is the view that the knowledge involved in skilled action can be understood as a relation to a proposition. On the new intellectualism, for *S* to know how to *F* is to know a proposition that is true just in case *S* knows of some way of doing some way of acting *w*

that it is a way for her to *F*. In my paper in progress, “Know-How and Dispositional Knowledge,” I argue that in order to be plausible new intellectualism presupposes that know-that is a kind of know-how, and thus grants Ryle’s conclusion that know-how is more fundamental. While we sometimes attribute know-how to someone using know-that clauses (“she knows that she needs to make a sharp turn here”), we would withdraw these attributions of know-that if the person could not repeat her skillful action.

Philosophy of Mind/Moral Psychology

In a pair of papers, I examine the nature of desire and its relationship to our ideas of the good, and the nature of disappointment. These papers provide background for the work I am doing on desire epistemology. In “Evaluating Evaluative Theories of Desire,” I argue that desire is not simply an evaluation or a perception of an object as good—a position on which two recent theories of desire agree. The value appearance theory of desire holds that to want that *p* is for *p* to appear valuable, and the deontic view holds that to want that *p* is to see *p* as something that ought to be the case. I argue that neither of these theories provides a sufficient condition for desire. It is possible for someone to see *p* as good, or to see it as something that ought to be the case, without desiring that *p*. Additionally, we might give seeing *p* as valuable or seeing it as something that ought to be the case as reasons for wanting that *p*. Since a desire cannot generally serve as a reason for itself, these accounts do not provide analyses of desire. At best, they offer potential necessary conditions on wanting.

Disappointment is an emotion which has received little philosophical attention. In “Setting Ourselves Up for Disappointment,” I provide a new theory of the cognitive dimension of disappointment. To be disappointed that *not-p* is to want that some outcome occur at a time, learn that it has not, and to wish that it had. Call this the Counterfactual View of disappointment. I argue that two views of disappointment in the literature—the view that disappointment results from desire that *p*, expectation that *p*, and belief that *not-p*, and the view that disappointment arises from exposed illusions of value—each fail to capture important dimensions of disappointment which the Counterfactual View accommodates. My aim in providing a theory of disappointment is ultimately to illuminate certain ways we learn about our desires.