

Gnothi Seauton (know thyself).

- Temple at Delphi

Am I not that being who now doubts nearly everything, who nevertheless understands certain things, who affirms that one only is true, who denies all the others, who desires to know more, is averse to being deceived, who imagines many things, sometimes indeed despite his will, and who perceives many likewise, as by the intervention of the bodily organs? Is there nothing in all this which is as true as it is certain that I exist ... ? I hear noise, I feel heat. But it will be said that these phenomena are false and that I am dreaming. Let it be so; still it is at least quite certain that it seems to me that I see light, that I hear noise, and that I feel heat. That cannot be false; ...

- Descartes, Meditation II

Descartes, Rene. *In Meditations on First Philosophy in Focus*. Edited by Stanley Tweyman. Routledge, 1993. © Routledge. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <http://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

... for a man cannot conceive himself capable of a greater certainty than to know that any idea in his mind is such as he perceives it to be; and that two ideas, wherein he perceives a difference, are different and are not precisely the same.

- Locke, Essay, IV

Locke, John. *In Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*. Edited by R. Ariew and E. Watkins. Hackett Publishing Company, 2009 © Hackett Publishing Company. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <http://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

For since all actions and sensations of the mind are known to us by consciousness, they must necessarily appear in every particular what they are, and be what they appear. Everything that enters the mind, being in reality as the perception, tis impossible anything should to feeling appear different. This were to suppose that even where we are most intimately conscious, we might be mistaken.

- Hume, Treatise, I

Hume, David. *In Epistemic Justification: Essays in the Theory of Knowledge*. Cornell University Press, 1989. © Cornell University Press. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <http://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

Among the incorrigible statements are statements about "private" experiences and mental events, e.g., pain statements, statements about mental images, reports of thoughts, and so on. These are incorrigible in the sense that if a person sincerely asserts such a statement it does not make sense to suppose, and nothing could be accepted as showing, that he is mistaken, i.e., that what he says is false.

- Sydney Shoemaker, "Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity"

Shoemaker, Sydney. *Self-knowledge and Self-identity*. Cornell University Press, 1963. © Cornell University Press. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <http://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

It is possible that, say in an accident, I should feel a pain in my arm, see a broken arm at my side, and think it is mine, when really it is my neighbor's. And I could, looking into a mirror, mistake a bump on his forehead for one on mine. On the other hand, there is no question of recognizing a person when I say I have toothache. To ask "are you sure that it's you who have pains?" would be nonsensical. ... And now this way of stating our idea suggests itself; that it is as impossible that in making the statement "I have toothache" I should have mistaken another person for myself, as it is to moan with pain by mistake, having mistaken someone else for me. To say, "I have pain" is no more a statement about a particular person than moaning is.

- Wittgenstein, Blue Book

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *The Blue and Brown Books*. Harper Torchbooks, 1965. © Harper Torchbooks. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <http://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

I think the facts that give rise to the illusion of privacy would be the following : (a) you can be in doubt as to whether I am in pain, but I cannot; (b) you can find out whether I am in pain, but I cannot; and (c) you can be mistaken as to whether I am in pain, but I cannot.

- Norman Malcolm, "Direct Perception"

Malcolm, Norman. Direct Perception. *Philosophical Quarterly* 3 (October):301-316. © Philosophical Quarterly. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <http://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

Infallibility: it is logically impossible that a belief about one's own mental states should be mistaken or unjustified.

Privilege: beliefs about one's own mental states, acquired through the usual first-personal route, are more likely to amount to knowledge than other beliefs (including beliefs about others' mental states)

Omniscience: if one is in a mental state M, it is logically impossible to fail to know that one is in M.

Reliability: normally, in good circumstances, we know of our own mental states (comprehensive self-blindness is impossible).

Incorrigibility: It is logically impossible that P should believe she is in M and another person could have grounds on which to show that P is mistaken.

Immediacy: knowledge of one's own mental states is groundless/direct/noninferential.

Immunity to error through misidentification: self-ascriptions of mental states cannot be mistaken in virtue of mistaking the subject of the mental state.

Questions:

1. What is the distinctive philosophical interest of self-knowledge?
 - a. Is it epistemically foundational?
 - b. Is it a question about the architecture of the mind?
 - c. Is it a partly normative question about subjectivity, freedom, and responsibility?
 - d. Is it instrumentally valuable for some further thing, or constitutive of some further valuable thing, like eudaimonia?
2. What is the relevance of work in empirical psychology? Are philosophical theories of self-knowledge making empirical claims that are subject to correction by social science research, or are they uncovering a structure that is partly logical or normative?
3. Relatedly, is self-knowledge really an *epistemic* achievement? To what extent should it be subsumed under traditional epistemology? Or is traditional epistemology hostage to an "incorrigibly contemplative conception of knowledge" (Anscombe) that is inadequate in this context?
4. Is it plausible that there is a uniform explanation of all distinctively first-personal self-knowledge? If not, which types of mental phenomena deserve different treatment? Is it even the case that all propositional attitudes should be treated uniformly?

References

William Alston, "Varieties of Privileged Access," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 8(3), 1971.

Brie Gertler, *Self-Knowledge*, OUP 2011.

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