

## STATEMENT OF RESEARCH INTERESTS

Benjamin Bayer

My writing sample (“In Search of Direct Realist Abstractionism”) stresses the importance of philosophy of perception and theory of concepts for dealing with a traditional problem in epistemology (the question of foundationalism vs. anti-foundationalism). I see this piece as a cornerstone for future research, which also seeks to relate questions in epistemology to topics which are not traditionally epistemological.

First, a quick note about the epistemological relevance of some of my other completed papers. Although usually a question in the philosophy of mind or action theory, the question of whether and how we choose our beliefs is also connected to questions about epistemic justification. Whether we control our acts of inquiry and the belief contents resulting from them partially determines whether epistemic justification requires cognitive access to evidence, or merely an externally-evaluable reliability. In my paper with Gregory Salmieri (“How We Choose Our Beliefs”), we argue that that externalist critics of “doxastic voluntarism” are mistaken, and that there is an epistemically robust form of control over our beliefs. In a separate paper (“The Elusiveness of Doxastic Compatibilism”), I consider attempts by internalist epistemologists to defend of compatibilism about belief-control. I argue that such attempts fail and that one must either embrace externalism or a libertarian account of voluntary belief-formation.

My current work in progress picks up where my earlier papers left off. My work on both foundationalism about justification and voluntarism about belief formation lend themselves quite naturally to an internalist theory of epistemic justification, wherein knowers are thought to have cognitive access to the evidence that makes justification possible. In a paper currently in progress, I critique Alvin Goldman’s prominent critique of internalism, which holds that internalism must view this access as direct and simultaneous to the facts that do the justifying. I argue that this is a straw man characterization of what internalism is, and that even if internalist cognitive access is indirect and non-simultaneous, this still permits much distinction between (my) internalist view of justification and prominent externalist views. I have already written up a short paper (currently available on my web site) about this approach to internalism, and submitted it as a colloquium paper for the Eastern Division American Philosophical Association.

The project I will begin once my internalism project is completed (shortly), will concern the application of my foundationalist and internalist views to problems concerning the epistemology of testimony. I am fascinated by a large amount of work that has recently been done, especially by Jennifer Lackey, concerning the amount of positive justification a knower must seek to attach to testimony before accepting it. I believe that a proper approach to foundationalism, together with an improved understanding of inductive generalization (not tied down to Humean confusions) can explain how even small children are in the position to seek evidence that their parents are reliable testifiers. I think this approach promises to show how testimonial justification is not a special exception to what otherwise appears to be the foundational structure of our knowledge (contra the claims of many externalists and coherentists).

In future research projects, I also hope to explore the relationship between perception, theory of concepts, and inductive generalization. In line with other direct realists about perception, I think that some causal relationships can be directly perceived, and that this provides the basis for a form of inductive foundationalism which avoids Hume’s regress problems. Ultimately I hope to use all of this to isolate the causal relationships most salient to value properties, and to sketch a version of normative foundationalism needed for value naturalism.