

Seminar on Self-Knowledge G9646
Fall 2010

Instructor: Akeel Bilgrami, 719 Philosophy Hall.

Office Hour: By appointment (Please send me an email at ab41@columbia.edu to make an appointment.

I will lecture through the semester for an hour or a little more in each class. This will be followed by a class-wide discussion for the rest of each session.

We will begin with questions about what the intuition of ‘privileged access’ amounts to regarding our intentional states and then move on to discuss the normative nature of intentionality, the normative nature of agency, and the distinction between the first and third person point of view. All this will set the stage to provide arguments for why we should think self-knowledge is set apart from other forms of knowledge in possessing properties such as transparency and authority. If there is time at the end of the semester, I want to discuss two further questions. 1) What is the kind of self-knowledge we gain from psychoanalysis and 2) What consequences does the notion of self-knowledge have for the nature of linguistic meaning?

I won't try and give a breakdown here of which of these topics and questions will be covered in which week since a lot will depend on the pace at which I can develop the overall argument in my lectures, which will, in turn, depend on how extensive the class room discussions get to be.

I'd like the class to start reading the texts mentioned below at the beginning of the semester and keep reading down the list over the weeks of the semester. In each class, I'll let the class know which

readings will be particularly useful to read for the coming week. Unlike survey style courses at the 4000 level, the focus will be on getting clear on the themes that surround the subject of self-knowledge by looking at the relevant concepts and arguments, rather than on a textual exegesis of the readings. Even so, it is a good idea to have a good sense of some of the relevant literature.

I have asked “Book Culture” to stock some copies of my own book mentioned in the list below since I will be leaning on the material there in my lectures. I will ask Butler Library Reserves to keep on non-lending reserve all of the other readings.

The requirements for the class are 1) strictly regular attendance and 2) one term paper at the end of term of 15-25 pages. I will be leaving New York City on December 11th, but will be happy to have term papers sent to me electronically till as late as five days before the deadline for grades to be submitted.

Both graduates and undergraduates may enroll for the class.

Readings:

Descartes, Meditations.

Gilbert Ryle The Concept of Mind, (ch. on Self-Knowledge)

Alison Gopnik “How we Know Our Own Minds” Brain and Behavioural Sciences, 1993.

David Armstrong A Materialist Theory of Mind, (ch. on Introspection)

Kripke: Wittgenstein on Rule Following and Private Language

Davidson: Essays on Actions and Events (“Mental Events” and any of the other essays in that volume that are on the subject of intentionality and normativity.)

G.E. Moore, Principia Ethica (Section 13 on the naturalistic fallacy)

John McDowell “Functionalism and Anomalous Monism” in Perspectives on Language and Interpretation, ed. E. Lepore

Hume, Enquiry concerning Human Understanding (section on Liberty and Necessity)

P.F.Strawson “Freedom and Resentment” in Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays.

Crispin Wright’s chapter in Reflections on Chomsky, ed. A. George

Sydney Shoemaker “Self Knowledge and Inner Sense” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 1994

Tyler Burge “Our Entitlement to Self-Knowledge” Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1994

Christopher Peacocke Being Known (ch. on Self Knowledge and Intentional content

Akeel Bilgrami Self-Knowledge and Resentment

Philosophy and Phenomenological Research will publish a symposium with two commentaries on ‘Self-Knowledge and Resentment’ this Fall, with my Replies. It may be out before the semester’s end.