

ADAM C. PODLASKOWSKI

CURRICULUM VITAE

Assistant Professor in Residence

University of Connecticut
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Areas of Specialization

Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Language

Areas of Competence

Ethics, Logic, Epistemology

Academic Appointments

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

Assistant Professor in Residence - Storrs Campus, Autumn 2007-Present

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Lecturer - Newark Campus, Autumn 2006-Summer 2007

Lecturer - Columbus Campus, Autumn 2006

Graduate Student Instructor - Columbus Campus, Autumn 2003-Summer 2006

Teaching Assistant - Columbus Campus, Autumn 2001-Spring 2003

Education

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, Columbus, Ohio

Ph.D., Philosophy, August, 2006

M.A., Philosophy, June, 2003

DISSERTATION:

Title: "Rule-Following and Recursion: Rethinking Projection and Normativity"

Committee: Neil Tennant (advisor), Stewart Shapiro, Robert Kraut

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, Ann Arbor, Michigan

B.A., *magna cum laude*, Philosophy and History, May, 1999

Honors Thesis Title:

"Uncovering Nonsense: Wittgenstein's Dissolution of the Problem of Skepticism"

Advisor: Ian Proops

Dissertation Abstract

In this project I develop a means of resolving Kripke's Wittgenstein's sceptical paradox for dispositional accounts of meaning and content. Kripke argues that no fact, not even one's dispositions (e.g., those featured in conceptual role semantics, teleological accounts, or information-theoretic accounts), can determine that one follows rules, employs meanings or possesses concepts. While rules prescribe how one *should* act, citing one's dispositions merely describes how one *would* act; dispositions cannot ground the normativity of rule-following. This is the 'normativity problem'. In response to this problem, various appeals to optimal conditions have been offered to supplement the dispositionalist's attempt to ground normativity. Yet, even if we succeed by appeal to optimal conditions, our dispositions are still only finite while rules have indefinite applications. In other words, our finite limits block otherwise fruitful attempts to ground normativity—this is the 'finitude problem'. I argue that, by solving the finitude problem, we are in a position to successfully appeal to optimal conditions in order to settle the normativity problem.

The key to solving the finitude problem is rethinking that which we require in order to make sense of following a rule with indefinite applications. Instead of appealing to all of one's dispositions in order to determine which rule one follows (i.e., crude dispositionalism), or appealing to those under optimal conditions (e.g., teleological accounts), I shift the focus onto those dispositions (under optimal conditions) that are operative in any fragment of a rule's use. Acting in new cases is just a matter of manifesting the same dispositions to handle manageable tasks in different contexts. For a rule such as 'addition', I argue that an agent need only have the ability (under optimal conditions) to characteristically manipulate numbers for any two columns (and rows) of a problem posed. In this sense, rules are recursive: they can be executed by means of simpler operations. I go so far as to construe our dispositions on the model of subroutines as used in computer programming.

The argument for this position involves two steps. First, I argue that Kripke makes an unwarranted assumption about the requirements for competence with a rule. He requires that one be capable of *directly* manifesting competence for any situation: because we are not disposed to give answers to addition problems outpacing our capabilities, we cannot read the rule for 'addition' off our dispositions. I argue that this demand on any account of competence with a rule is untenable, paving the way for a workable solution to the problem. The second step in my argument is characterized by concentrating on one's *indirectly* displaying competence with a rule by directly manifesting competence on feasible dispositions that are not subject to Kripke's attack. By grounding competence with 'addition' by appeal to dispositions not targeted by Kripke's attack, the determinacy that they possess is passed on to the indefinitely applicable rule. Though I start with 'addition' as an example, I argue that the lessons from my handling of this rule can be generalized to any rule.

Having answered the finitude objection, I indicate how to answer the normativity problem for dispositional accounts. By showing how to augment dispositional accounts that already make use of optimal conditions (thereby avoiding the finitude problem), I revive these accounts as live options for resolving Kripke's paradox. We have in hand, then, the basic shape for a successful dispositional account of rule-following.

Articles Under Review

“A Functionalist Approach To Semantic Normativity” – The thesis that the notions of ‘meaning’ and ‘content’ are normative has recently come under heavy fire. I argue that some of those attacks which attempt to sever the relationship between semantic correctness and normativity are flawed. My response to these attacks prompts the development of a functionalist account of semantic normativity.

“The Gruesome Truth About Rule-Following” – Kripke’s Wittgenstein uses bizarre rules such as ‘quaddition’ in a manner similar to Goodman’s use of ‘grue’. This similarity sparks a strong temptation to enlist elements of Goodman’s New Riddle of Induction to aid Kripke’s attacks on the possibility of determinate meaning. By adapting John Norton’s handling of the New Riddle, I argue that this move is unwarranted. The end result is a view of theorists explaining meaning without the need for an absolute foundation.

“Rule-Following, Dispositions, And The Finitude Problem” – According to Kripke’s Wittgenstein, the fact that one’s dispositions are finite blocks dispositionalists’ attempts to ground indefinitely applicable rules. I offer a partial solution to Kripke’s sceptical paradox, focusing on this finitude problem. Beginning with the result that mathematical rules are recursive—for each rule, its indefinite applications can be understood in terms of the exercise of simpler operations—I argue to the claim that rule-constituting dispositions share the same structure. An appeal to such dispositions can explain the indefinite application of rules by appeal to one’s feasible dispositions under optimal conditions. (*Note:* This article improves on a portion of my dissertation’s positive proposal.)

“Infinitism And Epistemic Normativity”, co-written with Joshua Smith (second author) – Klein’s account of epistemic justification, infinitism, supplies a novel solution to the regress problem. We argue that concentrating on the normative aspect of justification exposes a number of unpalatable consequences for infinitism, all of which warrant rejecting the position. As an intermediary step, we develop a stronger version of the ‘finite minds’ objection.

Works In Progress

“Semantic Normativity And Teleological Accounts Of Content” (Article) – Accounts of mental content such as those presented by Millikan purport to ground the normative feature of thought by appeal to the teleology of survival. I argue that the most plausible reading of the normativity of mental content is actually incompatible with the teleological strategy on a basic structural level.

“Nietzsche And Semantic Externalism” (Article) – Semantic externalism is typically regarded as a child of the twentieth century. Surprisingly, Nietzsche develops a similar view, published in the late nineteenth century. I reconstruct the original reasoning as well as indicate how it may be adapted to contribute to contemporary debates in the Philosophy of Mind.

Presentations

“Rule-Following And Feasible Dispositions” - Northwest Philosophy Conference -
Lewis & Clark College, Portland, OR, October 5, 2007

“The Meaning Of The Normativity Of Meaning” - University of Connecticut,
Internal Colloquium - September 26, 2007

“Rule-Following And Feasible Dispositions” - Alabama Philosophical Society -
Orange Beach, AL, September 21, 2007

“Rule-Following Without Idealization” - The Ohio State University
as the winning essay for the William H. Fink Award - June 2, 2006

Honors and Awards

Nomination for the Alumni Award for Distinguished Teaching - Ohio State U., 2007
William H. Fink Award, Best Philosophy Graduate Student Paper - Ohio State U., 2006
University Fellowship - The Ohio State University, 2000-2001
High Honors in Philosophy - University of Michigan, 1999
Class Honors - University of Michigan, 1999
Phi Beta Kappa, 1999
James B. Angell Scholar - University of Michigan, 1998

Service

Chair of APA Session, Central Division, “Coincidence and Cardinality”, April 18, 2008
ConnPRIG Internship Faculty Sponsor, University of Connecticut, Spring 2008
Graduate Students’ Ombudsperson, The Ohio State University, 2001-02, 2005-06
Computing Committee, The Ohio State University, 2003-04
Council of Graduate Students Representative, The Ohio State University, 2003-04

Professional Affiliations

The American Philosophical Association
Alabama Philosophical Society

Courses Taught

See the enclosed Teaching Portfolio for more information.

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

- **Problems of Philosophy** (Philosophy 101)
Autumn, 2007; Spring, 2008 (one lecture section, coordinating six TA's over eleven recitation sections)
- **Philosophy and Social Ethics** (Philosophy 104, Honors)
Spring, 2008
- **Philosophy of Mind** (Philosophy 250)
Autumn, 2007
- **Philosophy of Language** (Philosophy 241)
Spring, 2007

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD

- **Introduction to Philosophy** (Philosophy 101)
Winter, 2006; Spring, 2006; Autumn, 2006; Winter, 2007; Spring, 2007
- **Introduction to Logic** (Philosophy 150)
Summer, 2006; Winter, 2007
- **Introduction to Ethics** (Philosophy 130)
Winter, 2005; Spring, 2007; Summer 2007
- **Contemporary Moral Issues** (Philosophy 367)
Autumn, 2003; Winter, 2004 (two sections); Spring, 2004; Autumn, 2004; Spring, 2005; Summer, 2005;
Autumn, 2005; Autumn, 2006

TEACHING ASSISTANT

- **Introduction to Philosophy** (Philosophy 101)
Autumn, 2001 (two recitation sections); Winter, 2002 (grader); Winter, 2003 (two recitation sections)
- **Introduction to Logic** (Philosophy 150)
Autumn, 2002 (grader); Spring, 2003 (grader)
- **Asian Philosophy** (Philosophy 215)
Spring, 2002 (grader)

Graduate Coursework

PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE AND MIND

- Contemporary Issues in the Philosophy of Language (William Taschek)
- Theories of Truth (Stewart Shapiro)
- Early Analytic Philosophy: Frege and Russell (Steven Boer—audit)*
- Carnap and Quine (Robert Kraut)*
- Sellars' *Empiricism And The Philosophy Of Mind* (Robert Kraut—audit)*
- Semantic Anti-Realism (Neil Tennant)
- Concepts—Language and Mind (Neil Tennant)
- The Explanatory Role of Intentional Content (Louise Antony)

FORMAL LOGIC

- Advanced Symbolic Logic (Stewart Shapiro)
- Advanced Logical Theory—Gödel and Incompleteness (Neil Tennant—audit)

EPISTEMOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

- Theories of Knowledge (Marshall Swain)
- Skepticism (Marshall Swain)
- Kant's Transcendental Idealism (Lisa Shabel)*
- Kantian Intuitions (Lisa Shabel)*
- Reduction, Explanation, and Emergence (Robert Batterman)
- Sklar's *Theory and Truth* (Robert Batterman)

ETHICS AND AESTHETICS

- Ethics And Practical Reason (Sigrun Svavarsdottir)
- Metaphysics of Ethics (Justin D'Arms and Robert Kraut)
- Mass Art (Lee Brown)

Courses marked with an asterisk also count as HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY courses.

References

Neil Tennant, *Department of Philosophy, The Ohio State University, 350 University Hall, 230 North Oval Mall, Columbus, Ohio 43210*, neilt@mercutio.cohums.ohio-state.edu.

Stewart Shapiro, *Department of Philosophy, The Ohio State University, 350 University Hall, 230 North Oval Mall, Columbus, Ohio 43210*, shapiro.4@osu.edu.

Robert Kraut, *Department of Philosophy, The Ohio State University, 350 University Hall, 230 North Oval Mall, Columbus, Ohio 43210*, kraut.1@osu.edu.

Michael Lynch, *Department of Philosophy, University of Connecticut, 101 Manchester Hall, 344 Mansfield Road, Storrs, CT 06269-2054*, mplynch@uconn.edu.

Dan Farrell, *Department of Philosophy, The Ohio State University, 350 University Hall, 230 North Oval Mall, Columbus, Ohio 43210*, farrell.4@osu.edu.