

# Dylan Bianchi

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## Areas

AOS: Philosophy of action, philosophy of mind, Buddhist philosophy

AOC: Normative ethics, epistemology, philosophy of science

## Education

- 2017 Ph.D. in Philosophy, MIT (anticipated)  
Dissertation: “How Know-How Explains Skill”  
Committee: Alex Byrne (chair), Sally Haslanger, Kieran Setiya, Agustín Rayo
- 2016 Kaufman Teaching Certificate, MIT Teaching and Learning Laboratory
- 2009 B. A. in Physics (*cum laude*) and Philosophy, Amherst College  
Undergraduate Thesis: “Characterizing a Crossed-Beam Optical Dipole Trap for Ultracold  $^{87}\text{Rb}$  Atoms” (Advisor: David Hall)

## Honors & Awards

- 2010 MIT Presidential Fellowship  
2010 Amherst College Fellowship  
2009 Phi Beta Kappa (Amherst College chapter)  
2007 Sigma Xi (Amherst College chapter)  
2006 Bassett Physics Prize

## Presentations

### REFEREED

- Spring 2016 “The Psychology of Attentional Control in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist *Śamatha* Meditation Literature”, Accountability for Attitudes Workshop, Harvard University (Invited).
- Spring 2015 “How Know-How Explains Skill”, Oklahoma University Philosophy Graduate Conference.
- Spring 2015 “How Know-How Explains Skill”, Yale University Philosophy Graduate Conference.
- Fall 2014 “The Nature and Epistemic Role of Rational Insight”, Cognitive Experiences Conference, University College, Dublin, Ireland.

### NON-REFEREED

- Spring 2015 “How Know-How Explains Skill”, Dissertation Workshop, MIT.
- Fall 2014 “Know-How, Practical Modes of Presentation, and the Explanation of Skill”, Work in Progress

Seminar, MIT.

- Fall 2014 “The Nature and Epistemic Role of Rational Insight”, MIT Epistemology Reading Group.  
Fall 2014 “Know-How, Content, and Explanation”, MIT pre-read dissertation workshop.  
Winter 2014 Comments on Richard Boyd’s talk, “Realism, Truth, and the Pessimistic Meta-Induction”, MITing of the Minds Conference, MIT.  
Fall 2012 “Inarticulate Know-How”, Dissertation Workshop, MIT.  
Spring 2011 Guest lecture on William James’ “The Will to Believe”, Classics of Western Philosophy; Instructor: Rae Langton, MIT.

#### PUBLICATION

- 2010 D. V. Freilich, D. M. Bianchi, A. M. Kaufman, T. K. Langin, and D. S. Hall, “Real-Time Dynamics of Single Vortex Lines and Vortex Dipoles in a Bose-Einstein Condensate,” *Science* **329**, 1182.

### Teaching

#### PHILOSOPHY TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

- Fall 2014 Minds and Machines (Instructor: Alex Byrne, MIT)  
Spring 2014 Bioethics (Instructors: Julia Markovits and Natasha Schüll, MIT)  
Spring 2012 Moral Problems and the Good Life (Instructor: Oliver Sensen, MIT)  
Fall 2011 Classics of Western Philosophy (Instructor: Rae Langton, MIT)

#### OTHER TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2012 Volunteer English teacher (Sakya Choepheling Monastery, Rimbick Bazaar, Darjeeling, India)  
2008-09 Physics tutor (Amherst College, Amherst, MA)  
2006-07 Volunteer high school mathematics tutor (Springfield, MA)

### Coursework

(\* = audited)

#### PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Topics in Philosophy of Mind: Mental Content\* (Alex Byrne and Agustín Rayo)  
Topics in Philosophy of Mind: Fragmentation (Agustín Rayo and Adam Elga)  
Topics in Epistemology and Philosophy of Mind (Declan Smithies)

#### EPISTEMOLOGY

Topics in Formal Epistemology (Robert Stalnaker)  
Knowledge and Abilities\* (Mark Richard)

#### HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Proseminar I – Frege to Carnap (Alex Byrne and Rae Langton)  
Proseminar II – Quine to Lewis (Robert Stalnaker and Agustín Rayo)  
Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics* (David Bronstein)

## VALUE THEORY

Topics in Kantian Ethics (Julia Markovits)

Topics in Philosophy of Religion (Alex Byrne and Rae Langton)

## PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Topics in Philosophy of Physics: The Direction of Time (Brad Skow)

Topics in Philosophy of Social Science: Social Structures (Sally Haslanger)

## BUDDHIST STUDIES

Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka Philosophy (Shenghai Li, Harvard)

Topics in Indian Buddhist Philosophy (Parimal Patil, Harvard; in progress)

Introductory Tibetan Language\*

Intermediate Tibetan Language

Introductory Sanskrit (in progress)

## Languages

Spanish (proficient)

Classical Tibetan (reading knowledge)

Sanskrit (elementary)

## Service

2014-15	Philosophy colloquium series co-organizer
2014-15	MIT pre-read dissertation workshop organizer
2013-14	MITing of the Minds conference co-organizer
2011-12	MIT prospective student visit co-organizer
2011	Philosophy of Mind reading group co-organizer

## References

Alex Byrne

Agustín Rayo

Kieran Setiya

Sally Haslanger (teaching)

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## Dissertation Summary

“How Know-How Explains Skill”

Human intelligence has multifarious expressions. Some are paradigmatically *intellectual*: we reason our way to new conclusions, deliberate about our actions, and construct scientific theories. But other expressions of intelligence do not seem similarly intellectual. These include *skillful performances* such as riding a bicycle, performing a sonata, or painting a portrait. In virtue of what do such performances express intelligence? A natural answer appeals to the subject's *knowledge-how*, an underlying cognitive state that guides a subject in executing her

skill.

What sort of cognitive state might know-how be? According to Jason Stanley and Timothy Williamson's influential doctrine of *intellectualism*, to know how to  $\phi$  is know that one could  $\phi$  in way  $w$ . Now intellectualists acknowledge that simply knowing the right piece of information doesn't suffice for knowing how: fill a person's head with detailed information about the mechanics of bicycle riding; still, that person may not be in a cognitive position to skillfully ride a bike. Intellectualists attempt to solve the problem by requiring that the information be grasped under a *practical mode of presentation*. But many theorists have found practical modes of presentation to be ad hoc and mysterious.

In "Know-How and Information Access" I argue that an important part of the work practical modes of presentation are introduced to do can be accomplished by a condition on the *purposes for which a piece of information can be easily accessed*. Purpose-relative information access properties are not only independently motivated; they include high-level functional features of human cognitive systems which make the difference between know-how and its absence. Moreover, viewing know-how as involving a kind of purpose-specific access to information casts light on three of the state's distinctive features: gradability, failure to be transmitted by testimony, and immunity from certain kinds of epistemic defeat.

I mentioned that intellectualists identify knowledge how to  $\phi$  with knowledge of a proposition concerning a way of  $\phi$ ing. But what exactly is a way of  $\phi$ ing, and how does grasp of one enable the guidance of skillful action? A natural proposal identifies a way of  $\phi$ ing with a set of general-purpose *rules* or *instructions* for  $\phi$ ing. Indeed it is hard to imagine what *else* a way of  $\phi$ ing could be such that grasp of it could possibly account for the flexible ability to  $\phi$  characteristic of know-how. In "How Know-How Guides Skill", I propose a different model for how know-how guides skillful activity. Instead of internalized rules, I identify know-how with perceptually based grasp of the *constitutive standards* for performances of the action  $\phi$ —viz. the standards that determine what makes a performance of  $\phi$  good *qua* performance of  $\phi$ . The resulting account provides insight into several phenomena connected with know-how and skilled action: practical modes of presentation, the fine-grained control exhibited by skillful performance, and the phenomenology of unreflective skill.

In "Agency in Skill", I shift focus from the question of intelligence to the closely related question of *agency*. What makes the highly precise but spontaneous and often inarticulate modulations to an activity during skillful performance attributable to the subject *qua* agent? Attempting to rationalize these modulations by viewing them as the upshot of a deliberative process over-intellectualizes skillful action. Rationalizing them by identifying them as parts of a larger action (following a suggestion by Michael Thompson) misses a more informative psychological level of rationalization that appeals to the subject's knowledge-how. Invoking the idea from my second chapter that knowing how involves grasping the constitutive standards of an action-kind, I show how the minute modulations and adjustments characteristic of controlled performance can be viewed as a response to normative demands arising from the nature of the activity itself. I suggest that this way of 'rationalizing' skillful control harmonizes with a general conception of agency as action performed 'under the guise of the good.'