

Zoe Jenkin
Curriculum Vitae

Contact Information

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Harvard University
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Areas of Specialization

Epistemology, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Psychology

Areas of Competence

Aesthetics, Ethics, Early Modern Philosophy

Education

2014-Present Ph.D. Candidate in Philosophy, Harvard University (expected Spring 2019)
Spring 2018 Recognized Student, Oxford University (supervisor: Timothy Williamson)
2012-2014 Ph.D. Candidate in Philosophy, CUNY Graduate Center
2008-2012 Williams College, B.A. in Philosophy and English
2010-2011 Visiting Student, St. Catherine's College, Oxford

Dissertation

“Reasons and Percepts”

Committee Members: Susanna Siegel (advisor), Selim Berker, Susanna Rinard, Elizabeth Spelke

Dissertation Summary

Perceptions can be based on reasons and are thereby epistemically evaluable as justified or unjustified. My arguments for this thesis upend the traditional picture according to which both epistemic basing and epistemic evaluation are restricted to the realm of belief, whereas perceptions are merely “unjustified justifiers.” I analyze three kinds of perceptual processes as cases of basing on reasons: core cognition, perceptual learning, and crossmodal interactions, drawing on psychological evidence to illustrate key similarities between these cases and more traditional instances of basing on reasons in belief. I also consider the unique psychological features of these cases, and argue that they do not preclude the cases from involving basing on reasons. Even unconsciously and automatically formed perceptions are within the scope of epistemic evaluability.

Publications

“Ethics of Belief” (with Eric Mandelbaum), in Stewart Goetz & Charles Talliaferro (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Religion*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, forthcoming.

“Cognitive Penetrability: Modularity, Epistemology, and Ethics” (with Susanna Siegel), *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 6(4):531-545, 2015.

Manuscripts Under Review

“The Epistemic Role of Core Cognition” (Revise and Resubmit at *The Philosophical Review*)

Manuscripts in Preparation

“Perceptual Learning and Reason-Responsiveness”

“Crossmodal Basing”

“Epistemic and Aesthetic Conflict: The Case of the Harvard Rothkos”

“The Perception of Distance by Sight: Berkeley on the Modality of Experience”

“The Logical Elements of Cognitive Maps”

Editorial Work

Co-editor (with Susanna Siegel) of “Cognitive Penetrability: Modularity, Epistemology, and Ethics,” a special issue of the *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*, 2015

Awards and Fellowships

Spring 2019	Graduate Research Society Merit Fellowship, Harvard University
Spring 2018	Bechtel Prize for best graduate philosophy essay, Harvard University
Spring 2018	Philosophy Department Fellowship for research, Harvard University
Fall 2017	Bok Center Distinction in Teaching Award, Harvard University
Spring 2017	Graduate Student Travel Grant, Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology
2014-2015	Mind, Brain, and Behavior Program Graduate Student Conference Travel Grant, Harvard University
2014-2019	Graduate Fellowship, Harvard University
2013-2014	Conference Presentation Support Grant, CUNY Graduate Center
2013	Doctoral Students Council Support Grant for Philosophy of Perception Reading Group, CUNY Graduate Center
2012-2014	Mellon Graduate Center Fellowship, CUNY Graduate Center
2012-2014	Enhanced Chancellor’s Fellowship, CUNY Graduate Center
Spring 2012	Laszlo G. Versenyi Memorial Prize for graduate studies, Williams College
Spring 2012	John W. Miller Prize for outstanding graduating philosophy student, Williams College

Presentations (*indicates invited)

*April 2018	“The Epistemology of Core Cognition,” Philosophy of Mind Works in Progress Seminar, Oxford University
March 2018	“From Core Object Representations to Object Kind Concepts,” Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, San Antonio, TX
*February 2018	“The Epistemic Role of Core Cognition,” University of Glasgow Postgraduate Seminar
*October 2017	“The Epistemic Role of Core Cognition,” Harvard-MIT Philosophy of Psychology works in progress group
August 2017	“The Logical Elements of Cognitive Maps,” European Society for Philosophy and Psychology Annual Meeting, Hatfield, UK
March 2017	“The Logical Elements of Cognitive Maps,” Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, Savannah, GA

*March 2017 “Perception and the Scope of Epistemic Evaluability,” Spelke Lab Meeting, Harvard University

November 2016 “Cognitive Penetration of the Perception of Art: Epistemic and Aesthetic Divergence,” American Society for Aesthetics Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA

*July 2016 “Cognitive Penetration of the Perception of Art: Epistemic and Aesthetic Divergence,” NEH Summer Institute on Presupposition and Perception, Cornell University

March 2016 “Core Cognition and Epistemic Evaluability,” Society for Philosophy and Psychology, Louisville, KY

*November 2015 “Perceptual Experience, Core Cognition, and Epistemic Evaluability,” Institut Jean Nicod

October 2015 “The Perception of Distance by Sight: Berkeley on the Modality of Experience,” Boston University Graduate Philosophy Conference

*July 2015 “Commentary on Jessie Munton’s ‘Bayesian Perception and Social Structures,’” Workshop on Bayesian Theories of Perception, Cornell University

*June 2015 “Rational Evaluability and the Perceptual System,” Bled Philosophical Conference, Bled, Slovenia

April 2015 “Perceptual Expectations and Epistemic Downgrade,” Yale Graduate Philosophy Conference

April 2015 “The Epistemic Costs and Benefits of Perceptual Learning,” UT Austin Graduate Philosophy Conference

*April 2015 “Comments on Jake Beck’s ‘Marking the Perception-Cognition Boundary,’” Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, New Orleans

April 2015 “Understanding Color Memory Effects,” Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, New Orleans

March 2015 “The Epistemic Costs and Benefits of Perceptual Learning,” Workshop on Perception and Reasoning, Tübingen

March 2015 “Bayesian Perception: Questions and Problems” (with Susanna Siegel), Conference on Cognitive Penetrability and Predictive Coding, Ruhr University, Bochum

*March 2015 “Perceptual Learning and Perceptual Belief,” CUNY Cognitive Science Symposium

October 2014 “Perceptual Expectations and Epistemic Downgrade,” Rochester Graduate Epistemology Conference

September 2014 “Cognitive Penetration of the Perception of Art: Epistemic and Aesthetic Divergence,” British Society of Aesthetics Annual Conference, Oxford University

September 2014 “Perceptual Expectations and Epistemic Downgrade,” European Society for Philosophy and Psychology, Noto, Sicily

*April 2014 Comments on Emily McWilliams’ “Belief Polarization, Revisited,” CUNY Graduate Conference

*April 2014 “Expectations and Epistemic Downgrade,” Rutgers Philosophy of Mind Reading Group

*March 2014 “Expectations and Epistemic Downgrade,” NYU Philosophy of Mind Discussion Group

February 2014 “Crossmodal Effects and the Revision of Modularity,” Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, Charleston SC

*November 2013	“Expectations and Epistemic Downgrade,” Workshop on the Epistemology of Cognitive Penetrability, Harvard University
*August 2013	“The Epistemic Impact of Intramodular Effects,” CUNY Cognitive Science Symposium
July 2013	“Intramodular Effects and Epistemic Downgrade,” European Society for Philosophy and Psychology, University of Granada
June 2013	“Intramodular Effects and Epistemic Downgrade,” Poster Presentation, Society for Philosophy and Psychology, Brown University
May 2013	“Intramodular Effects and Epistemic Downgrade,” 9 th International Symposium of Cognition, Logic, and Communication: Perception and Concepts, The University of Latvia

Research Experience

Summer 2016	Research Assistant for Professor Sarah Moss, University of Michigan
2013-2014	Research Assistant for Professor Jesse Prinz, CUNY Graduate Center

Organizational Work

Mind, Brain, and Behavior program Graduate Student Steering Committee, Harvard, 2015-2017
 Co-organizer, MAP (Minorities and Philosophy), Harvard-MIT Chapter, 2014-2017
 Graduate Student Assistant, NEH Summer Institute on Presupposition and Perception, Cornell University, June-July 2016
 Co-organizer, Harvard-MIT Graduate Conference, February 2016
 Co-organizer (with Susanna Siegel), NSF-funded Conference on top-down effects and Bayesian theories of perception, Cornell University, June 2015
 Co-organizer, Philosophy and Psychology Reading Group, Harvard University, 2014-2015
 Co-organizer (with Susanna Siegel), Conference on the Cognitive Penetrability of Perception, Harvard University, April 2014
 Co-organizer, SWIP-Analytic Speaker Series, CUNY Graduate Center, 2013-2014
 Co-organizer, Philosophy of Perception Reading Group, CUNY Graduate Center, 2012-2014
 Co-organizer, CUNY Graduate Conference, April 2014

Professional Service

Referee for *Erkenntnis*, *Noûs*, *Thought*, *Synthese*, *Dialectica*, *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *Philosophical Psychology*, *Philosophical Studies*, and *Acta Analytica*.

Teaching Experience

As Primary Instructor

Fall 2018	Debates in Philosophy of Perception (junior tutorial), Harvard University
Spring 2014	Logic and Moral Reasoning (two sections), Baruch College, CUNY
Fall 2013	Major Issues in Philosophy (two sections), Baruch College, CUNY

As Teaching Assistant

Fall 2017	The True and the Good (intro-level), Harvard University, Professor Bernhard Nickel
Spring 2017	Appearance and Reality (intro-level), Harvard University, Professor John Bengson
Fall 2016	Logical Reasoning, Harvard University, Professor Ned Hall
Spring 2012	Skepticism and Relativism, Williams College, Professor Joseph Cruz

Graduate Coursework

At Oxford University

<u>Course</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Instructor(s)</u>
Epistemology (audited)	Spring 2018	Timothy Williamson, John Hawthorne
Locke Lectures Graduate Seminar: Learning and Doing: Toward a Unified Account of Rationality in Belief, Desire, and Action (audited)	Spring 2018	Peter Railton

At Harvard University

<u>Course</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Instructor(s)</u>
Norms of Belief (audited)	Fall 2017	Selim Berker, Susanna Rinard
Topics in Cognitive Development	Spring 2017	Elizabeth Spelke
Instructional Styles in Philosophy	AY 2016-17	Ned Hall
Understanding (audited)	Fall 2016	John Bengson
Responsibility	Spring 2016	Thomas Scanlon
Abstract Thought in Non-Human Animals, Human Infants, Young Children, and Human Adults	Fall 2015	Susan Carey, Elizabeth Spelke
Topics in Philosophy of Mind: Mental Content (at MIT)	Spring 2015	Alex Byrne, Augustín Rayo
Readings in Philosophical Psychology: Inference and Concepts	Spring 2015	Susanna Siegel
Advanced Topics in British Empiricism	Spring 2015	Alison Simmons, Jeffrey McDonough
First-Year Colloquium II	Spring 2015	Selim Berker
First-Year Colloquium I	Fall 2014	Bernhard Nickel, Susanna Siegel
Metaethics	Fall 2014	Selim Berker
The Ethics of Belief	Fall 2014	Susanna Rinard

At CUNY Graduate Center

<u>Course</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Instructor(s)</u>
Rationality in Aristotle (at NYU)	Spring 2014	Jessica Moss
Aristotle's <i>De Anima</i>	Spring 2014	Iakovos Vasiliou
Mind and Language (at NYU, audit)	Fall 2014	David Chalmers, Michael Strevens
Aesthetics (at NYU)	Fall 2013	Rob Hopkins
Quine and Sellars	Fall 2013	David Rosenthal
Mental Qualities (audit)	Spring 2013	David Rosenthal
Mind and Language (NYU/CUNY)	Spring 2013	Stephen Neale, Stephen Schiffer
The Body in the Mind	Spring 2013	Frederique de Vignemont
Aristotelean and Neo-Aristotelean Ethics	Spring 2013	Iakovos Vasiliou
Science Studies Seminar (audit)	Fall 2012	Jesse Prinz
Philosophy of Mind (at NYU, audit)	Fall 2012	Ned Block
Philosophy of Mind	Fall 2012	Jesse Prinz
Descartes	Fall 2012	David Rosenthal
Logic	Fall 2012	Richard Mendelson

References

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Edgar Pierce Professor of Philosophy
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Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Centre for the Study of Perceptual Experience
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Where does reasoning occur in the mind? According to a traditional picture, only conscious, deliberately formed beliefs are the sorts of things that are based on reasons. Because beliefs can be based on reasons, they are also typically thought to be epistemically evaluable as justified or unjustified. In contrast, perception is typically taken to have a starkly different epistemic role. Perceptions are not thought to ever be based on reasons, or to be epistemically evaluable as justified or unjustified. They are instead considered “unjustified justifiers,” providing justification without themselves being subject to its norms.

I argue, in contrast to this traditional picture, that perceptions can also be based on reasons, and are thereby epistemically evaluable as justified or unjustified. Drawing on psychological research, I examine three cases of basing on reasons in perception: core cognition, perceptual learning, and crossmodal interactions. The scope of mental states that are epistemically evaluable as justified or unjustified is not restricted to beliefs.

In chapter one, I focus on core cognition, a set of mental systems that lie at the border of perception and belief. Core cognition consists of a set of innate, domain-specific modules that generate basic conceptual representations of objects, agents, and numbers. Core cognition’s borderline states do not fit neatly into either side of the traditional epistemic divide between perception and belief, raising the question of their epistemic role. Focusing on core object representations, I argue that these states are based on reasons and are epistemically evaluable like beliefs, despite their many prototypically perceptual features. I draw on developmental psychology to argue that the core object system manifests key markers of the basing relation, such as epistemic support relations between inputs and outputs, rule-governed causal transitions, motivating behavior of the individual, and rich inferential role.

In chapter two, I focus on two examples of perceptual learning: correspondences between shape and color known as “color memory effects,” and perceptual expertise in chess players. I argue that the flexibility of perceptual learning is a way of responding to new epistemic reasons. In these cases, not only are individual perceptions formed in response to stored information, but the body of information stored in the visual system also changes due to experience. This flexibility makes it especially plausible that these perceptual states are based on reasons, and are thereby epistemically evaluable as justified or unjustified. I also consider options for the particular kind of justificatory statuses had by perceptions formed through perceptual learning.

In chapter three, I focus on crossmodal interactions, in which information from one sensory modality influences processing in another modality. I argue that a perceptual representation from one modality can serve as the reason for which another perceptual representation is formed. I consider psychological results showing that the length of a visible gesture influences the perceived duration of an audible tone. This process is mediated by the perceptual system’s “unity assumption,” a stored principle governing perceptual attributions of causation, depending on cues of spatial and temporal convergence of events. The richness of these causal contents and the communication across distinct sensory modalities make this case strikingly similar to standard instances of epistemic basing in cognition.

These three cases together furnish an argument that perceptual states can be based on reasons and thereby epistemically evaluable. None of these cases involves direct influence from cognition, demonstrating that reasons can be housed within perceptual systems themselves. The scope of epistemic evaluability extends beyond belief, to include even unconsciously and automatically formed perceptions.