## RESEARCH STATEMENT

Many of us think, or at least hope, that it matters whether we live our lives one way versus another, that there is some answer to the practical question of *what to do*. That question serves as the linchpin of my research, spurring projects in metaethics concerning the nature of practical truth, as well as how we can talk, think and know about it; projects in metaphysics, epistemology and the philosophy of language branching from those metaethical concerns; and projects in normative ethics, applied ethics and epistemology regarding the answers to particular practical questions.

My present focus in metaethics is the epistemology of practical claims, specifically the worry that metaethical realists are unable to accommodate a relationship between beliefs and truth required for knowledge. In **Knowledge**, **Necessity and Defeat** (under review), I focus on the most historically significant representative of this worry: the 'Benacerraf-Field Challenge' that the in-principle impossibility of explaining correspondence between beliefs and truth in a domain should undermine our beliefs in that domain. I defend that challenge against a line of attack originating with David Lewis and recently pursued by Justin Clarke-Doane. In a follow-up paper, **Non-Naturalism and the** 'Third-Factor' Gambit, Aaron Elliott (Nebraska) and I argue that understanding the Benacerraf-Field Challenge as I do in the former paper reveals that the currently most popular—and, more troublingly, arguably the *only possible*—non-naturalist reply fails to meet the challenge.

My other present epistemological project, **On Withholding as an Epistemic Default**, was inspired by a puzzle from John Turri: What do you do if an authority about P tells you that withholding judgement on P is not the thing to do, yet offers you no further information about P? This is one of several purported examples of *epistemic dilemmas* in which an agent is apparently unjustified in taking *any* attitude towards some proposition. Yet, intuitively, withholding is an *epistemic default*: an agent is justified in withholding on P just so long as she isn't justified in taking any *other* attitude towards P. I show how disambiguating 'justification' alleviates the apparent tension between these cases and withholding's status as an epistemic default. I further argue that Turri's puzzle case is not a genuine dilemma; given the nature of practical testimony, you should simply withhold judgement.

My past work in the epistemology of practical claims concerns the possibility of moral perception. In **A Hard Look at Moral Perception** (*Philosophical Studies* 2014), I suggest that a central motivation for defending moral perception is the appealing prospect of subsuming moral epistemology under the (relatively comfortable) umbrella of the perceptual or empirical. I argue that though moral perception may be possible, this loftier epistemological goal is almost certainly unreachable.

Outside of epistemology, many of my metaethical projects are motivated by a fascination with the implications of certain core intuitions about the nature of normativity—e.g., concerning objectivity, action-guidance, and supervenience. On Leaving Room for Doubt: Using Frege-Geach to Illuminate Expressivism's Problem with Objectivity (forthcoming in Oxford Studies in Metaethics) explores the implications of normative objectivity for expressivism. Expressivists are challenged to offer a semantics that accords with the logical structure of normative thought and language. While this "Frege-Geach problem" is a central focus of much critical work on expressivism, most who reject the view seem to do so for other reasons—in many cases, precisely because they find it hard to square expressivism with normative objectivity. I show how Frege-Geach can be used to vindicate this worry.

The positive view I find most promising takes this focus on 'core intuitions' to its extreme, holding that specific normative-descriptive supervenience relations are entailed non-obviously by core claims about action-guidance, supervenience, etc. Ultimately, the idea is to provide a kind of transcendental argument for a substantive normative view: merely by asking the question of *what to do*, we rationally commit ourselves to the right answers. This view, which I first explored in my dissertation, will be developed in **Transcendent Normativity**, in which I will argue that our best hope for *jointly vindicating* a number of core metaethical intuitions is to hold that the correct substantive normative view *follows from* them.

Other future projects connect my interests in ethics and epistemology. Consider the question of what it is to respond to a reason, keeping in mind the twin ideas that knowledge involves responding to one's epistemic reasons, while 'morally worthy action' involves responding to one's practical reasons. Along these lines, Julia Markovits and Mark Schroeder have defended structurally similar accounts of morally worthy action and knowledge, respectively. But Schroeder's view is susceptible to a variety of Gettier-style cases. Intriguingly, it is similarly possible to generate "practical Gettier cases" for morally worthy action. In **Responding to Reasons**, I will explore the implications of such cases for both the general question of what it is to respond to a reason and the prospects for superior analyses of morally worthy action and knowledge.

In normative and applied ethics, most of my projects are at the intersection of business ethics and political philosophy, both because of my independent interest as well as inspiration from my numerous colleagues in these areas: at Bowling Green, within the PPE program at Chapel Hill, and in the Georgetown Institute for the Study of Markets and Ethics. My current project, **Allowing the Wrong, to Bring About the Good** (under review), challenges a popular argument against the wrongfulness of arguably exploitative practices (e.g., sweatshop labor) and shows that both deontologists and (more surprisingly) consequentialists can endorse the view that certain practices are wrongfully exploitative, yet should be permitted because they lead to better outcomes.

My previous work in this area focuses on the nature of property rights. **To Inspect and Make Safe: On the Morally Responsible Liability of Property Owners** (*Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 2014; with Peter Jaworski (Georgetown)) offers a novel account of when and why property owners are morally responsible for damages caused by their property, and considers the implications of this view for questions of legal liability. In a related paper, **Do Property Rights Presuppose Scarcity?** (*Journal of Business Ethics* 2014), I argue that the standard intuitive argument for the claim that property rights presuppose scarcity fails, and consider the implications of this fact in a world in which technological advancements have the potential to greatly increase the number of non-scarce good types.

As may already be apparent, many of my projects are fueled by an affinity for collaborative work. In addition to those already mentioned, David Shoemaker (Tulane) and I have an ongoing program in experimental philosophy on the relationship between ignorance and moral responsibility. We have completed three relevant studies. The results of the first two appear in Insanity, Deep Selves, and Moral Responsibility: The Case of JoJo (Review of Philosophy and Psychology 2010) and Huck vs. JoJo: Moral Ignorance and the (A)symmetry of Praise and Blame (Oxford Studies in Experimental Philosophy 2014). The third, Good Selves, True Selves (revise and resubmit at Philosophy and Phenomenological Research) concerns the relationship between judgements of praise/blame and judgements about the true self.