

# Merve Rumeysa Tapinc

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**Areas of Specialization:** Epistemology, Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy

**Areas of Competence:** Moral psychology, Applied Ethics

**Additional Areas of Teaching Competence:** Ancient Philosophy, Continental Philosophy, Philosophy of Art.

## CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

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### Emerson College

Lecturer, Fall 2023

## EDUCATION

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Ph.D. Candidate Philosophy, Boston University Expected Fall 2023  
Dissertation: “Knowing Oneself in Action”  
Committee: Walter Hopp, Daniel Dahlstrom, Allen Speight, Sarah Paul

M.A. Philosophy, Bogazici University, June 2012  
B.A. Comparative Literature Istanbul Bilgi University June 2008

## PUBLICATION

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“Kuramsal Bilgi ve Algısal Deneyim”, *Dünyanın Teni*, ed. Zeynep Direk, Metis Yayınevi 2017.

(Title Translation: “Theoretical Knowledge and Perceptual Experience”)

“Perception and time-experience in Merleau-Ponty and Bergson”, *Kayıt*, 2015, Uludağ Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Felsefe Dergisi, 23, 163-184.

## UNDER REVIEW

“Self-Knowledge of Commitments” (Title redacted due to review)

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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**Full Instructor**

Free Will, Responsibility and Agency, Emerson College	Fall 2023
Ancient Philosophy, Boston University	Spring 2018
Philosophy of Art, Istanbul Technical University	Fall 2013
Philosophy of Art, Istanbul Technical University	Spring 2013
Philosophy of Art, Istanbul Technical University	Fall 2014

**Teaching Assistant, Boston University**

Existentialism, Matthew Clemente	Fall 2023
Intro to Philosophy, Walter Hopp	Spring 2022
Medical Ethics, Rachell Powell	Fall 2021
Medical Ethics, Ian Dunkle	Spring 2021
Intro to Ethics, Victor Kumar	Fall 2019
Intro to Ethics, Victor Kumar	Spring 2019
Introduction to Philosophy, Michaela McSweeney	Fall 2018
Introduction to Ethics, Victor Kumar	Spring 2018
Introduction to Ethics, Daniel Star	Fall 2017
Existentialism, Paul Katsafanas	Spring 2017
Introduction to Philosophy, David Roochnik	Fall 2016

**Boston University Questrom Business School of Business**

Negotiations Kristine Smith Crowe	August 2020
Ethical Leadership in the Global Economy	Fall 2022

**Harvard University**

Happiness, Susanna Rinard	Spring 2019
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**Harvard Extension School**

Intro to Philosophy, Ben Roth	Fall 2021
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**PRESENTATIONS AND CONFERENCES**

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“Knowing Your Beliefs is Valuing Your Beliefs” Upcoming Talk, Eastern APA, 2024

“Social Conditions of Moral Responsibility” Yale Early Career Ethics, April 2023

“Self-Knowledge of Commitments”, International Conference on Self-Consciousness and Self-Awareness ICSCSA on April 22-23, 2022 in London, United Kingdom

“Bergson and the Singularity of Duration”, The Unique, the Singular and the Individual: The debate about the Non-Comparable, Claremont University, February 2019

“Non-conceptual Perception” Concepts and Perception Conference org. by Eduard Machery and Jesse Prinz, University of Riga, May 2014

## **DEPARTMENTAL PRESENTATIONS**

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“Does Moral Ignorance due to Cultural Membership Exculpate Wrongdoings? The Socio-Epistemic Conditions of Moral Responsibility and the Limits of Blame”. The Dissertation Workshop, Boston University, March 2020.

“Are we blameworthy for our false moral beliefs?”, The Dissertation Workshop, Boston University, October 2019

## **APA CONFERENCE COMMENTS**

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1. Complicity and the problem of individual causal efficacy by Corey Katz Eastern APA 2021
2. Intellectual Courage and Inquisitive Reasons, Will Fleisher, Central APA 2022

## **AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS**

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PhD Summer Pilot Program by Post-Doctoral Affairs	Summer	2020
Non-Service Summer Fellowship	Summer	2019
Boston University Dean’s Fellowship	Fall-Spring	2016-2017
The Unique, the Singular and the Individual: The debate about the Non-Comparable, Claremont University the Paper Presentation for the conference)	February 2019	(Grant for
The Maria Stata Professorship Grant in Classical Greek Studies	Summer	2016

## **EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES**

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Diversity and Climate Committee Officer	Fall 2021-2023
Minorities and Philosophy Program Coordinator	Fall 2021-2022

## **INTERVIEW**

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[Interview for BUCH as a Representative Grad Student from Philosophy Dept.](#) (April 2021)

## **RESEARCH ASSISTANCE**

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2014-2015

Research Assistant Tubitak Project 114K348, *Concepts and Beliefs: From Perception to Action*.

## **RESEARCH ASSISTANCE AND OTHER ACADEMIC SERVICES AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY**

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BU Fall Intensive, 2020

Assistant for Negotiations Class by Kristin Smith-Crowe, MO853-P1.

- Helped managing participation and grading for an MBA class on negotiations.

BU Summer 2020, Research Assistant.

- Prepared annotated bibliography for Daniel Dahlstrom's research on the concept of expression, 1970-2022.

BU Spring 2018, Research Assistant,

- Indexed for Juliet Floyd's book: Wittgenstein and Turing, Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics

BU Fall Intensive 2022

Ethical Leadership in the Global Economy, by David Epstein. Professional Evening MBA course

- Helped managing participation and grading.

## **GRADUATE COURSEWORK**

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*\*denotes audit*

### **BOSTON UNIVERSITY**

Philosophy of Mind, Walter Hopp  
Topics in Aesthetics, Allen Speight\*  
Speculative Philosophy, Daniel Dahlstrom  
Ancient Philosophy, David Roochnik  
Plato, Theaetetus, Marc Gasser-Wingate  
Philosophy of Language, Juliet Floyd  
Epistemology, Michaela McSweeney  
Fanaticism and Ethics, Paul Katsafanas  
History of Ethics, Aaron Garrett

### **HARVARD**

Self-Knowledge, Richard Moran\*  
Philosophy of Action, Richard Moran\*  
Hume, Christine Korsgaard\*

### **MIT**

## REFERENCES

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Daniel Dahlstrom, Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Boston University.

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Walter Hopp, Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Boston University.

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Victor Kumar, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Boston University.

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Sarah Paul, Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, NYU, Abu Dhabi.

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Allen Speight, Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Boston University.

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## Dissertation Summary

As moral agents, we care about our beliefs. We might aspire to be the kind of a person who makes certain judgements and not others, who has certain beliefs and not others. Those agents are not only alienated from their current beliefs, but they also aspire to have different beliefs. The phenomenon of what I call as “epistemic aspiration” allow us to disavow our current beliefs, and

its implication for epistemology of our beliefs is not a well-trodden territory in the current self-knowledge literature. On the one hand, we might have dispositional beliefs that we can learn about only through observation, as the empiricist views claim. Yet, those beliefs might not truly express our “real self”. We might feel embarrassment, shame, or repulsion towards our attitudes and aspire to be a sort of a person who makes certain judgements and not others, who has certain beliefs and not others. This phenomenon of alienation is not limited to extreme cases like compulsion, or pathological cases in which agents cannot update their beliefs in face of evidence. It also occurs in everyday situations of internal struggle and anguish. Crucially, those very attitudes of alienation might provide evidence that we do not quite identify with our dispositional beliefs. After all, someone who has misogynistic beliefs, yet who does not endorse those bad beliefs in her conscious reasoning is better than someone who endorses her dispositional beliefs. However, a momentary, transient feeling of alienation is not sufficient to wholly defeat the evidence of our current beliefs either. If we care about our beliefs, we take responsibility for our beliefs by deciding to protect that belief, or resist it, or recover from it. First-personal views acknowledge the significance of taking responsibility for our beliefs, yet they argue that “judgement” about whether P is sufficient to immediately self-ascribe the beliefs without referring to ourselves. Yet, this leads to the very problem of epistemic irresponsibility they aim to combat. Judgements alone are insufficient to build or attain self-knowledge of our beliefs. The question then becomes, what is the best approach to take responsibility for our beliefs, and how do we know we are taking responsibility for those beliefs? These two questions are central to this dissertation, and the account I present is reserved for self-knowledge of those morally significant and character-defining beliefs.

In this dissertation, I propose an account of self-knowledge that explains not only the significance of caring about one’s attitudes, but also the moral significance of gaining external evidence about one’s attitudes. I do this by arguing that, contrary to what the contemporary literature on self-knowledge has highlighted, we need to appeal to a more nuanced, complex, diachronic attitude of “commitment” rather than an episodic attitude of “judgment,” or gathering theoretical knowledge about oneself to understand how we know our beliefs and intentions. As I will show, the crucial feature of commitment is that we take them on only when we sincerely value the goal we aspire to achieve. Commitments are expressive of our “real self”, thus, our committed actions distinguish unalienated action from alienated actions. When we ordinarily intend to go for a run, pour another cup of coffee, we do not express deeply held values or judgments about whether our actions are worthwhile to do. Commitments, on the other hand, capture the appropriate class of actions that derive from the agent’s values. Agents who care about their beliefs adopt a commitment attitude toward forming their beliefs in ways that are representative of their genuine self.

Second, I will argue that knowledge of commitment requires external evidence derived from our regular patterns of reasoning. Just as there can be disparity between what we value and what we desire to do, there can be a disparity between what the agent is committed to doing and what the agent is most strongly motivated to do. Many of us make commitments that we know we might someday break: we commit to writing a book, we commit to a relationship, or we commit to a job. How do we know that we are truly committed to these pursuits? How can we tell the difference between a commitment that we are capable of sustaining and a mere intention that we may deviate from at a whim? Being the fallible agents we are, committing and acting in accordance with one’s commitments are not same thing, and the gap between our momentary decisions and what we do to complete the intended goal grows as the realization of that goal becomes more complicated and

temporally spread out. As this gap grows, so does the epistemic gap between what we believe we intend to do and what we know we intend to do. I show why commitments are incompatible with weakness of will and why regular patterns of weakness of will defeat the existence of commitments. Third, we take up commitments towards actions that are difficult to achieve and the success conditions for which might not be foreseeable. That is why, as I will show, we need *knowledge of fit* between what we take ourselves to be committed to and what we are in fact doing to know whether we in fact act in the way we are committed to.

In Chapter I, I discuss the shortcomings of the current popular views on self-knowledge, which provides some preliminary steps and insights into how one should take responsibility for knowing one's beliefs. On the transparency view, we take responsibility for our beliefs by making up our mind about whether P. Yet, I argue, this is not a responsible way of knowing one's beliefs; judgements are episodic in nature, whereas significant beliefs are diachronic and not simply formed by our judgement whether P. Indeed, as I will demonstrate, this view leads to the very epistemic irresponsibility that it purports to resist, so it is neither a reliable way to have unalienated self-knowledge of our current judgments and decisions, nor is it a reliable way to know of our diachronic attitudes. The third-personal view focuses on self-knowledge of morally significant attitudes in the Delphic Oracle's sense "Know Thyself". As I interpret the Oracle's advice, we not only need to have knowledge of our beliefs, but we also need to care about whether our beliefs are worth believing. After all, the Oracle shows Socrates as an exemplary person who has self-knowledge, and what Socrates does well is to take responsibility for whether a belief is worth believing. Although I agree that this view gets the epistemic story right about how we know some of our beliefs, it does not recognize the importance of the fact that we care about what we believe and we take responsibility for our beliefs. I call this the "problem of indifference" for the third-personal view. According to the problem of indifference, there might be some proposition P about yourself such that (a) you are in possession of (robust) evidence that P but (b) you do not care about your belief that P. This again falls short of knowing oneself in the Oracle's moral sense. To address both issues, I will explain why we require an account of self-knowledge that is spared from the problems of epistemic irresponsibility and indifference. This chapter finishes by discussing the need for deliberation as well as the importance of reality checks, and whether we truly reason like an agent who believes that P.

In Chapter II, I explain the current literature on "avowals" in the context of unalienated self-knowledge. I show that consistency between what one judges and how one acts is necessary for unalienated self-knowledge and avowal of our morally significant beliefs. Second, I argue that unalienated self-knowledge does not necessarily require using the transparency method, according to which one simply self-ascribes the belief when one judges that P. I show that a third-personal description of our beliefs can also be intelligible and lead us to avowing that P. I argue that sometimes, but not always, a third-personal epistemic engagement with one's diachronic self might just as important as one's deliberative stance. Third, I conclude that what explains alienation is a failure of identifying with our belief, because we care about what we believe.

In Chapter III, I focus on breakdowns where one's beliefs are in contradiction with one's values. This shows that identifying with our beliefs requires consistency between our beliefs and what I call our "value-driven self-concept." Here, I show why aspiring to have certain beliefs can allow us to disavow our current ones, therefore providing evidence to undermine the current belief.

Because the beliefs we value take time to acquire, I show why the attitude of commitment is the right attitude to form and avow the beliefs we value. The surprising fact is that whereas on the first-personal view, judgements immediately lead to the self-knowledge of belief, on my view, commitments lead to avowals and commitments already presuppose a lot of self-knowledge.

In Chapter IV, I suggest that many substantial cases of intentions for the purposes of self-knowledge take the form of commitments, persisting intentions which are more representative of human agency. I argue that unlike ordinary intentions, commitments demand that we regularly resist temptations and constant changes of mind. I argue that we cannot know our commitments only by referring to a mental item, without needing to see our regular patterns of action, because commitments are in tension with regular patterns of weakness of will. Our repeated patterns of actions, weakness of will or endurance in the face of temptations provide a significant source of evidence about the degree of our commitments.

In Chapter V, I show why the complexity of the attitude of commitment, as well as the complexity of the actions our commitments are aimed toward, make it too difficult to have prior knowledge of whether we will succeed in completing our goals without looking at evidence from our actions. I critically discuss the Neo-Anscombian cognitivist views in the philosophy of action, according to which intentions are a kind of belief. by which you know non-observationally that you will succeed in acting in the way you intend I will argue that the wide epistemic gap between knowledge of our intentions and knowledge of what we will do in the case of commitments partly stems from the fact that commitments involve more complex desires, some of which cause us to act in goal-directed ways even if we do not have explicit intention at the time of action. Second, I show why a committed agent would do a reality check to see whether the actions she chooses are indeed conducive to achieve her goals. Lastly, I propose that we need *knowledge of fit* between what we commit to and external evidence from what we do, to know whether we succeed in progressing towards our intended goals.



