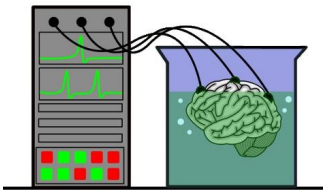
Formal Epistemology meets Epistemology

Workshop

April 11, 2016



Tydings Hall (TYD), Room 0102

Schedule

11:00	**Alan Hájek** A Tale of Two Epistemologies
12:00	**Charles Barclay** Fixing a Causal Theory of Knowing
13:00	Lunch
14:00	**Aidan Lyon** Resisting Doxastic Pluralism: The Bayesian Challenge Redux
15:00	**Veronica Gomez** Prospects for a Pluralist Account of the Relation Between Credence and Full Belief
16:00	Break
16:30	**Branden Fitelson** Two New(ish) Triviality Results for Indicative Conditionals
17:30	**Eric Pacuit** We can Almost Disagree Forever
19:30	Dinner (in Washington DC)

Abstracts

Alan Hájek: A Tale of Two Epistemologies

"Traditional epistemology" and "Bayesian epistemology" share a word, but it often may seem that they don't share a subject matter. They differ in their central concepts. Traditional epistemology puts 'knowledge' and 'belief' at center stage, while Bayesian epistemology is preoccupied especially with 'credences'. They differ in their main concerns. While traditional epistemology worries about skepticism, Gettierology, internalism vs externalism, closure, pragmatic encroachment, the role of testimony, and so on, Bayesian epistemology worries about such things as constraints on rational credences, how credences should be revised, whether they may be imprecise, and their role in decision-making. And they differ in their main theoretical moves. Traditional epistemologists offer various forms of foundationalism, contextualism, reliabilism, subject-sensitive invariantism, and virtue epistemology, while Bayesian epistemologists offer symmetry constraints, connections between credences and objective chances, connections between credences and future credences, convergence theorems, and so on.

However, in the last decade or so, there have been a number of attempts to build bridges between the two epistemologies. We will survey some of these attempts, and then suggest some more. There may be a common subject matter there after all.

Charles Barclay: Fixing a Causal Theory of Knowing

Alvin Goldman's 'A Causal Theory of Knowing' (1963) has been criticized for being too strong and too weak. It is too strong for it is possible for S to know that p without the fact that p being causally connected in the appropriate way to S's belief that p. It is too weak, for, as Goldman points in another paper "Relevant Discriminations", it is not Gettier-resistant (S may truly believe that p, and S's belief that p may be causally connected to the fact that p. Yet, we still might deny that S knows that p). Using a manipulability theory of causation, I modify Goldman's proposal to block the above objections.

Aidan Lyon: Resisting Doxastic Pluralism: The Bayesian Challenge Redux

Doxastic pluralism is the view that we have both full beliefs and partial beliefs as distinct kinds of doxastic attitudes towards propositions. Doxastic pluralism seems to be a rather popular view among philosophers these days, and this pluralism is usually motivated by the premise that an epistemology based solely on partial beliefs cannot do all of the work that a theory of epistemology ought to do. The pluralists have given various arguments for this premise. In this paper, I review these arguments and conclude that they fail. I then argue that this entails that, as things currently stand, it is reasonable to expect that Bayesian epistemology—broadly construed—is more realistic than any pluralist epistemology.

Veronica Gomez: Prospects for a Pluralist Account of the Relation Between Credence and Full Belief

Non-reductive pluralism about doxastic attitudes holds that there are two distinct kinds of attitudes (full-beliefs and credences) neither of which can be reduced to the other. The paper examines some of the main challenges that the non-reductive pluralist has to face and suggests some of the possible routes that could be taken in order to meet these challenges. I start by considering a form of argument against non-reductive pluralism that a appeals to a principle ontological parsimony. I argue that in response to this sort of argument the pluralist should grant that the ontological grounds of belief and credence are not independent of one another.

Then I argue that, if we make certain standard assumptions about how mental states are grounded in more fundamental states of affairs, a new interesting challenge arises for the pluralist. The problem with existing versions of pluralism, I argue, is that they have failed to establish that the mechanisms underlying information processing and decision making support rich characterizations of two distinct functional roles that are to be associated with these two kinds of doxastic attitudes. Unless the pluralist meets this challenge, she will have to face indeterminacy worries and she will not be able to establish that the same psychological reality cannot be described merely in terms of credence (which seems to be required to block an argument in favor of reductionism by appeal to theoretical parsimony). I conclude that, at this stage, pluralism should be thought of as a plausible empirical hypothesis in need of confirmation. Finally, I suggest where we might start to look for evidence in favor or against non-reductive pluralism.

Branden Fitelson: Two New(ish) Triviality Results for Indicative Conditionals

I will do two things in this talk: (1) present an axiomatic generalization of Gibbard's (logical) triviality result for indicative conditionals, and (2) present an algebraic strengthening of Lewis's (probabilistic) triviality result for indicative conditionals. Both results start from a very weak background theory (either logical or probabilistic) of the indicative conditional, and (relative to these weak backgrounds) both results will rely only on the so-called Import-Export Law. So, these results can be viewed as (general, and strong) "odd consequences" of Import-Export.

Eric Pacuit: We can Almost Disagree Forever

Robert Aumann's agreeing to disagree theorem shows that if two agents have the same prior probability and update their probability of an event E with private information by conditioning, then if the posterior probabilities of E are common knowledge, then the posteriors must be the same. Dov Monderer and Dov Samet prove a generalization of Aumann's result involving a probabilistic variant of common knowledge. In this talk, I use various methods from probabilistic and dynamic-epistemic logics to explore a dynamic characterization of the Monderer and Samet result.