Workshop: Epistemic Angst and Extended Knowledge

Date: Monday 29 May 2017
Venue: 75T 6.02, 75 Talavera Road.
Time: 09:00 - 18:10

Program:
09.00 - 09.25: Arrival
09.25 - 09:30: Introduction
09.30 - 11.00: Duncan Pritchard (Edinburgh/MQ), "Epistemic Angst"
11.00 - 11.30: Coffee
11.30 - 12.30: Stephen Hetherington (UNSW), "Relevant alternatives and fallible knowledge"
12.30 - 13.30: Lunch
13.30 - 14.30: Alex Gillett (MQ), "Knowledge and understanding: the impact of GPS devices on wayfinding"
14.30 - 15.30: Richard Heersmink (MQ), "Distributed learning: Educating and assessing extended cognitive systems"
15.30 - 16.00: Coffee
16.00 - 17.00: Albert Atkin (MQ), "Facitivity, Presupposition and scepticism"
17.00 - 17.10: Break
17.10 - 18.10: Jeanette Kennett (MQ) and Caitrin Donovan (USYD), "Reliable and unreliable judgments about reasons"

Keynote by Duncan Pritchard (Edinburgh/MQ), "Epistemic Angst"

Support is canvassed for a novel solution to the sceptical problem regarding our knowledge of the external world. Key to this solution is the claim that what initially looks like a single problem is in fact two logically distinct problems. In particular, there are two putative sceptical paradoxes in play here, which each trade on distinctive epistemological theses. It is argued that the ideal solution to radical scepticism would thus be a bicipic proposal—viz., a two-pronged, integrated, undercutting treatment of both putative sceptical paradoxes. A particular bicipic proposal is then explored which brings together two apparently opposing anti-sceptical theses: the Wittgensteinian account of the structure of rational evaluation and epistemological disjunctivism. It is argued that each proposal enables us to gain a purchase on one, but only one, aspect of the two-sided sceptical problem. Furthermore, it is argued that these proposals are not only compatible positions, but also mutually supporting and advanced in the same undercutting spirit. A potential cure is thus offered for epistemic angst.
About Duncan:

Duncan Pritchard is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, and Director of its Eidyn research centre (www.eidyn.org). In 2007 he was awarded the Philip Leverhulme Prize. In 2011 he was elected to a Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. In 2013 he delivered the annual Soochow Lectures in Philosophy in Taiwan, which were subsequently published by Princeton University Press as Epistemic Angst: Radical Scepticism and the Groundlessness of Our Believing. His other monographs include Epistemic Luck (Oxford UP, 2005), The Nature and Value of Knowledge (co-authored, Oxford UP, 2012), and Epistemological Disjunctivism (Oxford UP, 2012). Duncan is currently leading several large externally funded Eidyn research projects, including two major collaborative and interdisciplinary Templeton-funded projects and also the Edinburgh wing of an ERC-funded Marie Skłodowska-Curie European Training Network.

Additional event: Seminar by Duncan Pritchard (Edinburgh/MQ), "Risk"

Date: Tuesday 30 May 2017
Time: 13:00 - 14:30
Venue: W6A 708

All welcome, no registration required!

Abstract:

It is argued that the standard theoretical account of risk in the contemporary literature, which is cast along probabilistic lines, is flawed, in that it is unable to account for a particular kind of risk. In its place a modal account of risk is offered. Four applications of the modal account of risk are then explored. First, to epistemology, via the defence of an anti-risk condition on knowledge in place of the normal anti-luck condition. Second, to legal theory, where it is shown that this account of risk can cast light on the debate regarding the extent to which a criminal justice system can countenance the possibility of wrongful convictions, and can also (relatedly) cast light on the notion of legal evidence. Third, to the notion of aesthetic risk, and how more generally we can better account for how risk seems to add value to certain activities by appealing to the modal account of luck. Finally, fourth, some tentative remarks are offered on how the modal account of risk might be relevant to the good life of human flourishing.

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