

Southern California Epistemology Network (SCEN)
Meeting Nov. 2nd, 2024

Workshop venue: Humanities Instructional Building (HIB) 55, UCI Campus.

Parking: Mesa Parking Structure

- 11 - 12 Jennifer Carr (UCSD), *What Have We Learned?*
- 12 -1 Alexander Dinges (University Düsseldorf), *On Group Epistemology*
- 1 - 2 lunch break
- 2 - 3 Russell Ming (UCI), *Disagreement, Testimony, Assertion*
- 3 - 4 Eyob Zewdie (UCI), *No Rational Norms on Evidence Gathering*

Jennifer Carr, *What Have We Learned?*

Abstract: Evidence externalists hold that sometimes your evidence doesn't entail that it is your evidence. Non-transparent evidence of this sort creates a number of puzzles for accuracy-first epistemology: what is the best response to such evidence for agents who care about accuracy? Can it be rational to be uncertain of what your evidence is? What epistemic options are even available to agents whose evidence is nontransparent? Will the correct constraints on epistemic options ensure that the most accuracy-conducive response to non-transparent evidence is consistent with update policies widely accepted in formal epistemology and philosophy of science (e.g., Bayesian conditionalization)? If not, is that a mark against conditionalization or against the epistemic decision theories that conflict with it? This talk explores constraints on epistemic options and epistemic decision theories for non-transparent evidence. I develop an alternative epistemic decision theory that vindicates conditionalization, but that raises wider questions about the interpretation of decision theories in the epistemic context.

Alexander Dinges, *On Group Epistemology*

Abstract: We often ascribe beliefs to groups, institutions, companies and similar social entities, and many philosophers inquire into the nature of such beliefs. While different accounts have been proposed, many agree that group belief should be analyzed in terms of the behavior and the attitudes of the group's members. In this paper, I raise a principled worry against such individualistic accounts of group belief. The basic concern is that individualistic accounts of group belief cannot be squared with existing accounts of the nature of belief from the philosophy of mind, such as dispositionalism and functionalism. My focus will be on group belief, but parallel concerns can be raised for individualistic accounts of group justified belief, group knowledge and group assertion.

Russell Ming, *Disagreement, Testimony, Assertion*

Abstract: There are two questions at the core of the epistemology of disagreement. The first concerns whether learning of peer disagreement provides one with a higher-order defeater. The second concerns when it is reasonable to believe that someone is an epistemic peer. This paper focuses on the second question while assuming that Conciliationism — that is, an affirmative answer to the first question — is true. In doing so, I hope to produce a surprising result: if you are a Conciliationist, then you should be an Anti-Reductionist about testimony-based justification and a proponent of the thesis that assertion is governed by a robustly epistemic norm. In big picture terms, this paper hopes to show how various core issues in social epistemology, such as peer disagreement, testimony-based justification, and the norm of

assertion, are more intimately connected than has previously been recognized.

Eyob Zewdie, *No Rational Norms on Evidence Gathering*

Abstract: There has been a recent attempt to admit evidence gathering norms into the realm of rationality (Flores & Woodard (2023), McWilliams (2023), both inspired by Friedman (2020); cf. Buchak (2010)). According to these norms, agents are sometimes required to gather more evidence, on pain of irrationality. I will argue that this is mistaken. First, I distinguish between epistemic rationality and epistemic normativity, where the former is a species of the latter. In doing this, I assume that epistemic rationality is a part of the normative domain (contra Kolodny (2005); cf. Fogal (2020)). Second, I will assume an internalist account of epistemic rationality. Finally, I will argue that even if evidence gathering norms are epistemic norms, they are not epistemic norms qua epistemic rationality. I share with my targets the belief that epistemic rationality is normative, and perhaps even that there are norms of evidence gathering. However, I do not think that these are norms of rationality.

I will first lay out the view of rationality, following two prominent accounts in Broome (2013, 2021) and Wedgwood (2017, 2023). After developing this view, I will examine their two views of normativity as they relate to rationality. Then, I will look to a recent argument by Wedgwood on how the concept of “evidence” might have normative significance on the internalist (mentalist) variety of rationality presented here, showing that the term cannot be used without controversial implications for rationality. Finally, I will consider one more view of evidence, for which problems will arise as well. I hope to show that by undermining the potential uses of evidence on these views of rationality, that it will be clear there can be no norm on evidence gathering. The upshot of this view will be an error theory which tells us what is flawed about our practice of criticizing those with morally repugnant beliefs on rational grounds.