

The Ontology of Evidence

Workshop, 16th-17th April 2013
Geneva, Switzerland

Pascal Engel (Geneva and EHESS): **“Is Irrealistic Cognitivism About Reasons Tenable?”**

Johns Skorupski (2010) argues that reasons are facts, although facts need neither truth makers nor a robust notion of fact. I argue that we need a more robust notion of fact if we are to be realists about reasons (which we are to, according to me).

John Gibbons (Nebraska/Lincoln): **“Guidance”**

There are two very different ways of thinking about reasons. There are the objective (sometimes called normative) reasons, which are determined by the facts. And there are the subjective (sometimes called motivating) reasons, which are the kinds of things that make things reasonable. If what you ought to do is closely connected to what you have most reason to do, then it seems to matter a lot which kind of reason determines your genuine requirements. If we start with the assumption that what you ought to do is determined by the objective reasons, then you ought to be irrational on a daily basis, and the normativity of rationality is an illusion that we need to explain away. If we start with the assumption that the relevant reasons are rationalizers or justifiers, we get the normativity of rationality for free, but only because we assumed that real reasons are things that make things reasonable.

Clayton Littlejohn (King's College London): **“On the Ontology of Epistemic Reasons”**

A standard view about epistemic reasons is that they're states of mind (e.g., beliefs, intuitions, experiences). The standard rationale for the view seems to be that we need the statist view to understand the basing relation, the relation that holds between one's beliefs and the reasons for which one believes. The main problem with this view is that it's false and unmotivated. If there's a standard argument for the view, it's an argument that's attributed to Davidson. A careful read shows that Davidson's arguments cannot support the standard view. I'll discuss two alternative accounts of epistemic reasons, defend one of them, and explain why this account threatens to undermine some commonly held views about the relationship between justification and knowledge.

Arturs Logins (Geneva): **“Evidential Internalism and the Problem of Public Evidence”**

I propose an argument against the view according to which all of one's evidence (ultimately) supervenes on one's non-factive mental states, such as beliefs, feelings, seemings, apparent experiences, etc. (Evidential internalism). My argument follows the following pattern: there is public evidence —evidence that

is shared by multiple individuals—. The only way for evidential internalists to accommodate this fact is to endorse the Same Type thesis about all individual mental states on which (public) evidence supposedly supervenes. That is, to claim that individuals who share the same piece of public evidence are in distinct token non-factive mental states of the same type. However, I claim that such strategy is subject to a variant of the generality problem. In particular, it is impossible for evidential internalists to give a non-arbitrary account of how to characterize types of non-factive mental states on which evidence is supposed to supervene. Hence, I suggest, we should reject evidential internalism.

Veli Mitova (Vienna): **“How to Be a Truthy Psychologist About Evidence”**

I defend the view that the only things that count as evidence for belief are factive tokens of psychological states. I first assume that the evidence for *p* can sometimes be a good reason to believe that *p*. I then argue, with some help from metaethics 101, that a reason is a beast of two burdens: it must be capable of being both a good reason and a motive. I then show that truthy psychologism is the only position that can honour The Beast of Two Burdens Thesis, without ruffling our pre-101 intuitions about good reasons, motives, and explanations.

Ram Neta (Chapel Hill): **“Evidence Without Knowledge”**

For a subject to know a fact *F* is for that subject to be able to do something for the reason that *F*. It has been argued that this conception of knowledge (due to John Hyman) supports the equation of evidence with knowledge. I will argue that it does not, and that evidence—though it must consist entirely of true propositions for which the subject has non-inferential propositional justification—need be neither believed nor known.

Venue: Bâtiment Uni-Bastions, Room B 216, Rue de Candolle 5, 1204 Genève
Rue Saint Ours 5, Room 364 – Last talk!

The workshop is organized by Santiago Echeverri, Arturs Logins, and the *Episteme Research Group* in Geneva within the FNS project “Knowledge, Evidence, and Practice.”