



UNIVERSITY OF  
**STIRLING**

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

***SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY***

**August 31<sup>st</sup>-September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007**

***\*REVISED\****

**CONFERENCE BOOKLET**

***SUPPORTED BY:***



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

[www.philosophy.stir.ac.uk/postgraduate/SocialEpistemologyConference.php](http://www.philosophy.stir.ac.uk/postgraduate/SocialEpistemologyConference.php)

## CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

*Friday 31<sup>st</sup> August*

- 12.00 Registration Desk Open  
Main Foyer, Stirling Management Centre
- 1.00-2.00 Tea/coffee
- 2.00 Conference Welcome  
Duncan Pritchard (Edinburgh), Conference Organiser
- 2.00-3.30 ***Alvin Goldman (Rutgers)***  
‘Why Social Epistemology (in both Radical and Less Radical Forms) is *Really* Epistemology’
- ABSTRACT. Much of traditional epistemology is focused on “doxastic decision making,” where an agent endowed with a given body of evidence chooses an appropriate doxastic attitude toward a specified proposition. An appropriate doxastic choice can always be made, *no matter what evidence* one possesses. Even ostrich-like agents can have rational attitudes, even if those attitudes have to be largely confined to suspensions of judgment. If one seeks truth or knowledge, however, one needs good evidence, evidence from appropriate sources, and that may take special evidence-gathering effort. I take the study of this activity to be part of traditional epistemology, although it is a less salient part than the one concerned exclusively with doxastic decision. Evidence gathering can be a purely individual enterprise; it needn’t involve other people at all. But testimony from others is a potentially rich vein of evidence, so the pursuit of socially generated evidence is naturally folded into the traditional epistemological enterprise. This introduces topics in social epistemology such as the epistemic evaluation of expert testimony, the question of how to take account of the opinions of others when they differ from your own, etc. A more radical part of social epistemology introduces an epistemologist who dons a different hat, not the hat of an advisor to agents pursuing their “private” epistemic affairs but the hat of an advisor to “public” entities. Public entities including legal systems, scientific organizations, the press, educational systems, etc., often take an interest in the epistemic success of their members or representatives. If epistemic success includes knowledge or truth possession (and not merely rationality or justifiedness), it’s important for these members to gain access to good evidence, the best evidence available. How should public entities organize themselves so as to promote the best patterns of evidence generation, evidence distribution, and evidence revelation? These are questions of institutional design that aren’t a traditional part of epistemology but deserve to be part of its mission because of their continuity with the historical preoccupations of the field. The public or institutional perspective on knowledge acquisition is admittedly novel and therefore radical, but it’s an important perspective that suits the pre-existing interests and techniques that epistemology has cultivated.
- Commentator/First Discussant:* Erik Olsson (Lund)  
*Chair:* Duncan Pritchard (Edinburgh)
- 3.30-4.00 Tea/coffee

4.00-5.30 ***Miranda Fricker (Birkbeck)***  
 ‘What’s Social About Social Epistemology?’

ABSTRACT. I shall map out the key features of social epistemology that make it social. And I will ask what these features do for us in terms of the illumination and/or expansion of epistemology. One focus will be on the anti-sceptical function of certain socializing moves. In particular, I shall look at Michael Williams’ diagnostic arguments against scepticism, and his use of the default-and-challenge model of justification in this connection. I shall present this model of justification as a social model, and argue that as such it has the resources to pre-empt not only Agrippan scepticism (as Williams argues) but also Cartesian scepticism.

*Commentator/First Discussant:* Kathleen Lennon (Hull)  
*Chair:* Alessandra Tanesini (Cardiff)

6.30 Conference Dinner  
 Stirling Management Centre

*Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> September*

9.30 Registration Desk Open  
 Main Foyer, Stirling Management Centre

9.30-10.00 Tea/coffee

10.00-11.30 ***Ernest Sosa (Rutgers)***  
 ‘The Epistemology of Disagreement’

ABSTRACT. This paper will take up how disagreement can properly bear on one’s epistemic justification for a belief. (This is of course a special case of the bearing of testimony in general).

*Commentator/First Discussant:* Igor Douven (Leuven)  
*Chair:* Alan Millar (Stirling)

11.30-1.00 ***Peter Lipton (Cambridge)***  
 ‘Alien Abduction’

ABSTRACT. The aim of this talk is to explore the prospects of Inference to the Best Explanation (sometimes known as ‘abduction’) as an account of the way we decide whether to accept the word of others (sometimes known as ‘aliens’). Inference to the Best Explanation is a general account of inductive inference, but it has been applied in a particular way to the management of testimony. The governing idea of testimonial IBE is that we determine whether to believe what was said by considering why it was said. We will accept testimony if its truth would figure in the best explanation of the fact that the speaker gave it. This account has a number of conspicuous attractions, but also faces challenges of articulation and defence.

*Commentator/First Discussant:* Nenad Miscevic (Budapest)  
*Chair:* Peter Graham (UC Irvine)

1.00-2.00 Lunch

2.00-3.30

**Jennifer Lackey (Northwestern)**

‘A Justificationist View of Disagreement’s Epistemic Significance’

ABSTRACT. In this paper, I develop a *justificationist* account of the significance of disagreement between epistemic peers. Whereas current views maintain that disagreement, by itself, either simply does or does not possess epistemic power, my account holds that its epistemic power, or lack thereof, is explainable in terms of its interaction with other features, particularly the degree of justified confidence with which the belief in question is held and the presence of information that one possesses about one's own epistemic situation. In this sense, I reject *nonconformism*—the absence of doxastic revision in the face of peer disagreement is never justified merely by virtue of the fact that beliefs are either mine or are the product of correct reasoning—and *conformism*—substantial doxastic revision in the face of peer disagreement is never justified merely by virtue of equal weight being given to my own beliefs and to those held by my epistemic peers. Despite this, however, one advantage of my justificationist account is that it is able to explain why nonconformism provides the intuitively correct result in some cases, while conformism gives the intuitively correct result in other cases. A further advantage is that my justificationist account is generalizable in a way that neither nonconformism nor conformism is, and thus my view can handle some puzzles that arise for these other accounts.

*Commentator/First Discussant:* Nikolaj Pedersen (UCLA)*Chair:* Stefaan Cuypers (Leuven)

3.30-4.00

Tea/coffee

4.00-5.30

**Sandy Goldberg (Northwestern)**

‘If That Were True, I Would Have Heard About It By Now’

ABSTRACT. Most work on the epistemology of testimony focuses on issues pertaining to what I will call the testimony-to-truth transition—a transition one employs whenever one moves from having observed a piece of testimony to the effect that *p*, to the truth of the proposition that *p*. There are all sorts of questions that have been raised about this transition: when is a hearer entitled to make it (in the course of belief-fixation)? Under what conditions does it support the hearer’s acquisition of knowledge that *p*? But to my mind no one working on testimony has recognized the importance to epistemology of the converse transition. One employs this transition whenever one moves from the fact that one has not come across testimony that *p*, to the (likely) falsity of *p*. Although a straightforward reliance on this transition would exhibit the fallacy of ignorance, there can be little doubt that we often reason this way; and in this paper I will argue that we often do so to good epistemic effect. I develop this idea by speaking about our reliance on others, not just as providing us with sound (and reliable) testimony, but also as providing us with something approximating what I will call (*reliably*) *complete coverage* in various domains. I will argue that a full accounting of the social nature of knowledge, and of testimony’s role in reinforcing this social nature, is incomplete without an account of this sort of reliance on one’s community.

*Commentator/First Discussant:* Jesper Kallestrup (Edinburgh)*Chair:* Martijn Blaauw (Aberdeen)

6.30

Conference Dinner

Stirling Management Centre

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September

9.30 Registration Desk Open  
Main Foyer, Stirling Management Centre

9.30-10.00 Tea/coffee

10.00-11.30 **Alan Millar (Stirling)**  
'Knowing Through Being Told'

ABSTRACT. Discussion focuses on the transmission of knowledge through telling. The setting for the discussion is provided by a general theory of practices conceived as essentially rule-governed activities. The transmission of knowledge through telling is explained in terms of a specific practice of knowledge-transmission. The practice works because speakers can often readily tell that they know this or that, and hearers can often readily tell that speakers are credible. An explanation is given of how these conditions can be met. The conception of knowledge in play in the discussion is shown to be distinct from traditional analytical conceptions of knowledge. This conception makes it possible to explain how knowledge can have the value for us that it does.

*Commentator/First Discussant:* Peter Baumann (Aberdeen)

*Chair:* Markus Lammenranta (Helsinki)

11.30-1.00 **Peter Graham (UC Riverside)**  
'Testimonial Entitlement and Normal Function'

ABSTRACT. Anti-Reductionism about testimonial entitlement is the view that recipients enjoy *prima facie pro tanto* entitlement to accept as true what they comprehend as presented-as-true. *Prima facie pro tanto* entitlement in general supervenes upon the normal functioning of a belief-forming process that is non-accidentally reliable in normal conditions when functioning normally. It is argued that accepting as true what is comprehended as presented-as-true is non-accidentally reliable in normal conditions when functioning normally, and so Anti-Reductionism is correct. Criticisms of this view from Faulkner, Sperber, *inter alia*, are discussed. It is also argued that this position is compatible with data that motivates Reductionist sentiments.

*Commentator/First Discussant:* Finn Spicer (Bristol)

*Chair:* Philip Ebert (Stirling)

1.00-2.00 Lunch

2.00-3.30 **Elizabeth Fricker (Oxford)**  
'Testimony: Local *versus* Global Reduction Revisited'

ABSTRACT. In 'Against Gullibility' I introduced the distinction, in the epistemology of testimony, between 'local' *versus* 'global' reduction of our entitlement to believe what we are told to general epistemic principles not special to testimony. In this talk I revisit that distinction, seeing whether it withstands various pressures which can be put upon it.

*Chair:* Adrian Haddock (Stirling)

3.30-4.00 Tea/coffee

4.00-5.30 ***Jon Kvanvig (Baylor)***  
'Rationality and Disagreement'

ABSTRACT. My goal here is to provide the epistemological underpinning to support this view of disagreement, the view according to which rational disagreement is unproblematic. I'll begin with some problems for the alternative view. These problems show the need for a restricted view of the significance of disagreement, and I will develop three models for such restrictions. We will see that though disagreement has some epistemic effect, it doesn't have the sort of effects the irrationality paranoids think it has.

*Commentator/First Discussant:* Klemens Kappel (Copenhagen)

*Chair:* Michael Brady (Glasgow)

5.30 Conference close

## TRAVEL INFORMATION

### *To The University*

#### By Road:

From the North, A9 via Perth and Bridge of Allan  
 From the East, A91 from St. Andrews A8, M9 from Edinburgh  
 From the South, M74, M73, A80, M80, M9  
 From the West, M8, A80, M80, M9 from Glasgow

#### By Rail:

Intercity Services to Stirling Station from London, 5 hours 15 minutes  
 From Edinburgh, 45 minutes  
 From Glasgow, 35 minutes

#### By Air:

Glasgow Airport, 1 hour 20 minutes drive  
 Edinburgh Airport, 45 minutes drive

**From Edinburgh Airport** you can get a regular shuttle to the main Edinburgh train station (this takes about 15-20 minutes). You can then get a train direct to Stirling, which should take about an hour. From the Stirling train station just take a cab to the conference centre, which should take about five minutes.

**From Glasgow Airport** you can get a regular shuttle to the local train station (Paisley Gilmour Street), which should just take a few minutes. From there you can get a train to Glasgow itself and then catch a direct train to Stirling. From the Stirling train station just take a cab to the conference centre, which should take about five minutes.

#### By Bus:

By Citylink Bus to Stirling Bus Station, Goosecroft Road, Stirling, 3 miles from Stirling Management Centre.  
 Local bus services—Bus No's 53, 54 and 81 every 15 minutes from and to the campus.

#### By Taxi:

The railway station is only a short taxi ride from Stirling Management Centre. A taxi stand is directly opposite the station entrance.

### *To The Stirling Management Centre*

From the main entrance of the University you simply follow the road up past the sports centre on your left and take a left turn at the first island you come to. This takes you straight to the Management Centre. (Please note that those who arrive in cars will need to stop at the barriers near the entrance of the University to report as a visitor. It is recommended that those arriving by car arrive by the main entrance for this reason).

From the rear entrance of the University you simply follow the road around to the first island, where you carry straight on. At the second island you come to, take a left turn which will take you directly to the Management Centre.

## USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

Stirling Management Centre—(+44) (0) (1786) 451666 ([www.smc.stir.ac.uk](http://www.smc.stir.ac.uk))

University of Stirling—(+44) (0) (1786) 473171 ([www.stir.ac.uk](http://www.stir.ac.uk))

Philosophy Department—(+44) (0) (1786) 467555 ([www.philosophy.stir.ac.uk/index.php](http://www.philosophy.stir.ac.uk/index.php))

Conference Webpage—[www.philosophy.stir.ac.uk/postgraduate/SocialEpistemologyConference.php](http://www.philosophy.stir.ac.uk/postgraduate/SocialEpistemologyConference.php)

University of Stirling Maps—[www.cs.stir.ac.uk/~kjt/general/univ.html](http://www.cs.stir.ac.uk/~kjt/general/univ.html)

Information about Stirling—[www.stir.ac.uk/town/town.html](http://www.stir.ac.uk/town/town.html)

Stirling Tourist Information—(+44) (0) (1786) 445222/462517

Scottish Tourist Board—[www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)

Train Timetables—(+44) (0) 8457 484950 ([www.nationalrail.co.uk/planmyjourney/](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/planmyjourney/))

Local Taxi Numbers:

AA Taxis—(+44) (0) 1786 479799/448866

Ace Taxis—(+44) (0) 1786 449955

Albion Taxis—(+44) (0) 1786 812141

Goosecroft Taxis—(+44) (0) 1786 472220

Stirling Taxis—(+44) (0) 1786 447177

Local Airports:

Edinburgh Airport—(+44) (0) 131 3331000 ([www.baa.co.uk/main/airports/edinburgh](http://www.baa.co.uk/main/airports/edinburgh))

Glasgow Airport—(+44) (0) 141 8871111 ([www.baa.co.uk/main/airports/glasgow](http://www.baa.co.uk/main/airports/glasgow))

Stirling Bus Station—(+44) (0) 1786 446474 ([www.stirling.co.uk/local\\_services/busstation.htm](http://www.stirling.co.uk/local_services/busstation.htm))

Stirling Car Hire:

Abercromby, Kerse Rd—(+44) (0) (1786) 472222

Arnold Clark, Kerse Rd—(+44) (0) (1786) 478686

Eurodollar, Borestone Crescent—(+44) (0) (1786) 470123

Europcar, Drip Road—(+44) (0) (1786) 472164

Ian Grieve, Glasgow Road—(+44) (0) (1786) 811234

*Knowledge, Mind and Value* Project:

Project Webpage—[www.philosophy.stir.ac.uk/deparment/KM&VProject.htm](http://www.philosophy.stir.ac.uk/deparment/KM&VProject.htm)

Project Weblog—<http://epistemicvaluestirling.blogspot.com/>

Project Research Resources—[www.philosophy.stir.ac.uk/postgraduate/EpistemicValuePage.php](http://www.philosophy.stir.ac.uk/postgraduate/EpistemicValuePage.php)