

New Developments in Epistemology and Metaphysics

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

July 13, 2026

FLUP

In What Sense Can AI Systems Possess Epistemic Expertise and Authority?

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Abstract:

Recent advances in artificial intelligence have raised the question of whether AI systems can genuinely possess epistemic expertise and, consequently, qualify as epistemic authorities. This presentation argues that, although AI systems often outperform human specialists in domains such as medicine and scientific reasoning, they do not satisfy the central philosophical accounts of expertise when considered in isolation. Drawing on contemporary theories of epistemic expertise, it is argued that AI systems lack the epistemic capacities required for genuine expertise and authority. The paper defends the view that epistemic expertise can instead be attributed to collective epistemic agents constituted by human-AI partnerships. Building on the Extended Mind framework, AI systems are understood as components of coupled cognitive systems in which epistemic agency emerges from the interaction between human and artificial capacities. On this view, epistemic authority belongs not to AI alone, but to the integrated human-AI system.

Medical AI: Justification & Responsibility

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Abstract:

On the one hand, the development and implementation of Medical AIs (MAIs) have proven to be extremely fast and even surpassing human physicians in their accuracy. On the other hand, MAIs are opaque systems -black boxes - meaning that there is an impossibility or strong resistance to epistemic access about its inner workings. That is, physicians are unable to understand how a given diagnosis comes about. This opacity, it has been argued, makes the usage and reliance on MAIs unjustified. The underlying intuition in play is a Non-opacity condition (NOC), where opacity is incompatible with justification or knowledge. The goal of this paper is to make sense of the tension highlighted and to reject NOCs. First, I argue that NOCs are too strong and make standard cases of knowledge unjustified. Second, following Alvarado (), a particular kind of opacity -opacity towards error conditions- is considered and again rejected due to being over-demanding. Third, alternative proposals about the unjustified usage of opaque systems are considered: i) the usage of pragmatic encroachment, ii) that the epistemic norms in the medical field - Patient Centered Medicine Practices (PCM) - are incompatible with opacity (Patient Centered Medicine Practices). Against these alternative formulations of the problem, I argue that both i) pragmatic encroachment in the medical field and ii) PCM are compatible with the usage of opaque systems. If this is right, then it follows that the usage and reliance on MAIs are just justified.

Popperian and logical positivist readings on elgin's argument for paradigm incommensurability: an analysis

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Abstract:

In this presentation, I will defend Kuhn's paradigm incommensurability thesis against two other theoretical frameworks in contemporary philosophy of science. Firstly, an argument supporting the thesis of paradigm incommensurability, as proposed by Elgin (2008), will be presented, alongside an instrumental (though non-exhaustive) characterization of the positions held by the Logical Positivists and Karl Popper within the philosophy of science. This characterization will be based on two theses related to each position: the logical positivist position will be systematized by the Verification Principle (VP) and Reduction Thesis (RD), with particular instrumental emphasis on the latter; the Popperian position will be based on the Deductive Theory Testing (DTT) thesis (presented informally and followed by a formal version) and the Dominion Distinction Thesis (DD) . Following these characterizations, I will examine each approach's qualitative assessment of Elgin's argument. I will then argue that the positions of both Logical Positivism and Popper should be rejected in favour of Elgin's argument; particular emphasis will be placed on the argument's first premise, due to its intimate relationship with the thesis of theory-ladenness. Although the rejection of the logical positivist position will be presented, the focus will be on the Popperian framework, in particular by the permissibility of the DD thesis to an argument acceptable by Popper that has the first premise of Elgin's argument (the theory-ladenness of observation) as its conclusion. Since Elgin's argument is valid, the Popperian seems to be in a position in which a rational defence of the incommensurability thesis is very plausible

On valid arguments for fatalism and incompatibilism

Fabio Lampert

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Abstract:

Standard presentations of the argument for theological fatalism aim to show that infallible divine foreknowledge is incompatible with human freedom, that is, necessarily, if God foreknows what one will do, one has no choice about it. Yet as usually formalized, with a standalone premise stating that no one has any choice about God's past beliefs, the argument delivers only a material conditional, not the strict conditional the incompatibility thesis requires. The same holds for logical fatalism. I show how these arguments must be reformulated, replacing the categorical fixity premise with a necessitated one, to validly establish their intended conclusions, and identify the principles required for the reformulation. I then turn to the Consequence Argument for the incompatibility of determinism and free will. Although structurally parallel, it resists the same solution: its determinism premise involves sentential constants for the laws and remote past whose reference shifts across modal contexts, and which the standard modal language cannot anchor. Two upshots: (i) standard presentations of fatalistic arguments in the literature do not entail their intended theses, (ii) theological and logical fatalism admit valid modal reformulations that the Consequence Argument, absent distinct expressive resources, does not.

Scepticism: Position or Paradox?

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Abstract:

What is the interest of radical scepticism about our knowledge of the external world? The predominant answer to this question in contemporary epistemology is that the interest of scepticism lies primarily in its potential to present us with a paradox or puzzle that we might solve, rather than with a position that we might endorse. Notwithstanding current consensus, it is argued here that scepticism is interesting as a position, rather than as a paradox. This is not to say that scepticism is true, or that we should be sceptics, but that our attitude towards scepticism should be like our attitude to other positions in philosophy that we take seriously, regardless of whether we ultimately endorse them. This conclusion has important consequences for the question of what we want from a response to scepticism.

When is a question open?

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Abstract:

There is a general consensus that asking a question that is already closed is irrational, at least from a purely epistemic perspective; instead, we should only ask questions that are open. However, there is less agreement on what exactly it means for a question to be open. This paper puts forward a novel account of openness for ideally rational inquirers. On this view, a question Q is open for an agent only if it is not the case that their background information puts them in a position to know the answer to Q . It is tempting to think this view is logically equivalent to one recently defended by Willard-Kyle et al. (2025), on which a question Q is open for an agent only if their background information entails the answer to Q . I argue that these views are not logically equivalent. To do so, I present a simple yet fatal counterexample to the entailment view that does not apply to the position-to-know view. I conclude by showing that my account is not only distinct from Willard-Kyle et al.'s, but also enjoys stronger independent motivation.

From the actualism of the substance of the world to the possibilism of states of affairs

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Abstract:

Possibilism is rejected by Quine because, according to the logician, non-actual possible entities do not satisfy the following maxim: “No entity without identity”. Nevertheless, this essay aims to demonstrate, through Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, that not all non-actual possibilities fall under the problems raised by Quine. It will be concluded that possible states of affairs, insofar as they are inferred from actual objects, are identical to themselves and distinct from other cases.

A Wrong Way to Get Right: A Proposal on Epistemic Luck

Tiago Veloso

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Abstract:

Modal notions of epistemic luck have long been an established topic in general epistemology and have found a strong example in Duncan Pritchard's Anti-Luck Virtue Epistemology. Although Pritchard's theory is more complex than the simple addition of a modal condition to a theory of knowledge, it faces an unavoidable objection, that arises whenever the object is a necessarily true proposition. Cases where the agent believes a proposition that is trivially true, justified and unlucky (in a modal sense), Pritchard's theory must conclude that the agent knows the target proposition, even if it is an unintuitive and hazardous result for epistemology. I propose that examples like these are not that much different from general lucky scenarios (such as Gettier cases). I attempt to put into perspective the similarities that these examples may possess, in order to construe a new notion of luck. This new notion can't be modal, or else it would fail against the same problems that affect Pritchard's theory. The decision to start with a modal version is motivated by the positive characteristics that the luck analysis (as well as Pritchard's most recent risk analysis) have highlighted in the past, even though the solution is, ultimately, an abandonment of that notion.