

# BIAP conference: Perceptual Evidence and its Role for Belief

07 – 09 April 2025, University of Barcelona (Seminari de filosofia)

## PROGRAM

### Monday, April 7th

15.30 – 16.50 **Ophelia Deroy**, 'Perception and Testimony: A False Epistemological Divide'

17.00 – 18.20 **Marc Lara**, 'Unmasking Dispositional Safety'

### Tuesday, April 8th

09.40 – 11.00 **Auke Montessori**, 'Appreciating Mental States'

11.30 – 12.50 **Cristina Borgoni**, 'Knowledge by Lived Experience'

15.00 – 16.20 **Julien Dutant**, 'Reliability and Weakening'

16.30 – 17.50 **Ram Neta**, 'Perceptual Evidence and Skepticism'

### Wednesday, April 9th

10:00 – 11:20 **Sanford Goldberg**, 'Reliabilist Perceptual Justification and the Epistemic Significance of Background Reasons'

11:30 – 12.50 **Verena Wagner**, 'Perceptual Evidence and Inquiry'

## ABSTRACTS

### Ophelia Deroy

*Perception and testimony: A false epistemological divide*

Perceptual and testimonial evidence are classically distinguished—whether in terms of directness, defeasibility, or content. This distinction is not just traditional; it is embedded in cognitive science paradigms, which contrast experience with instruction as separate cognitive processes.

I challenge this distinction and argue that perceptual and social evidence—as I prefer to call it—are fundamentally mixed. If this is right (as I will show, beyond the standard appeal to cultural or linguistic influences on perception), then the epistemological divide—let alone the assumed superiority—of perception over testimony is on unstable ground. Recognizing this forces a re-evaluation of what counts as first-hand knowledge and perceptual belief.

### Marc Lara

*Unmasking Dispositional Safety*

In this talk, I will articulate a new safety-based account of knowledge, Dispositional Safety, where knowledge is the manifestation of a safe cognitive disposition. Furthermore, I will defend Dispositional Safety against a putative case of an unsafe perceptual belief. My solution to this, as well as to other counterexamples to the necessity of safety for knowledge, is to exclude masking cases from the set of relevantly close worlds, which is the standard solution to the problem of masking in the metaphysics of dispositions.

## **Auke Montessori**

### *Appreciating Mental States*

It is commonplace amongst epistemologists to claim that one has to appreciate her evidence in order to use it to justify beliefs. For instance, if you do not appreciate the relevance of fossils for the existence of dinosaurs, you cannot use fossils as evidence for the existence of dinosaurs. Many epistemologists further think that certain mental states, like beliefs or perceptual experiences, can also be evidence. My (justified) belief that Mr. Mitchell is incompetent is good evidence that he would be unsuitable as president, for example. That seems to mean that mental states must also be appreciated, if the agent is to use them as evidence. In this talk, I investigate this phenomenon. In particular, I will argue that mental states are not automatically appreciated just by having them. While beliefs are always sufficiently appreciated to justify some, though not always all, conclusions that follow from them, nonconceptual mental states can be so poorly appreciated by the agent that the agent cannot use them as evidence for any conclusion.

## **Cristina Borgoni**

### *Knowledge by Lived Experience*

This talk articulates the notion of “knowledge by lived experience,” which refers to a type of knowledge acquired through having a particular condition or life experience. This form of knowledge has played a central role in various discussions, especially in mental healthcare research, corresponding policymaking, and the philosophy of psychiatry (see Castro et al. 2019). It has also been argued for in contexts such as sports and the arts—for example, in the arguably privileged position of trained dancers in perceiving certain aspects of dance performance (Montero 2013). Despite its central role in these discussions, various scholars have pointed out the lack of systematicity in its definition (Castro et al. 2019; Dings 2023). This talk addresses this conceptual gap and advances a notion of knowledge by lived experience as a unique type of knowledge, focusing on its specific epistemic warrants, which could be applied across diverse contexts of discussion.

#### *References*

- Castro, E. M., Van Regenmortel, T., Sermeus, W., & Vanhaecht, K. (2019). “Patients’ experiential knowledge and expertise in health care: A hybrid concept analysis.” *Social Theory & Health*, 17(3), 307–330. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41285-018-0081-6>
- Montero, Barbara Gail (2013) “The Artist as Critic: Dance Training, Neuroscience, and Aesthetic Evaluation”. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 71 (2): 169-175.
- Dings, R. (2023) “Experiential knowledge: From philosophical debate to health care practice?” *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice* 29(7): 1–8. DOI: 10.1111/jep.13845.

## **Julien Dutant (joint work with Sven Rosenkranz)**

### *Reliability and Weakening*

Suppose  $m$  is a belief-forming method or process. Suppose  $n$  is just like  $m$ , except that in few cases where  $m$  would output  $p$ ,  $n$  would output a logical consequence of  $p$  instead. Clearly (or so it seems),  $n$  is at least as reliable as  $m$ , though perhaps less informative. Call this the Weakening Principle: if a method  $n$  is just like a method  $m$ , except that in a few cases where  $m$  would output something,  $n$  outputs a logical consequence of it instead, then  $n$  is at least as reliable than  $m$ .

The Weakening Principle is closely related to the claim that single-premise closure preserves reliability. It is of particular interest to reliabilists, but it is also of interest to various accounts of epistemic consequence that appeal to some notion of disposition to be accurate. We argue that epistemologists face a dilemma: they must either give up the Weakening principle or the idea that reliability is a truth ratio (the ratio of true to false outputs of a method). We tentatively suggest that they should reject the latter.

## **Ram Neta**

### *Perceptual Evidence and Skepticism*

Abstract. Suppose you have a visual experience as of a red, round tomato in unremarkable circumstances. This visual experience (so it's commonly thought) justifies you in believing that there is a red, round tomato in front of you. But in order for that visual experience to justify you in holding that belief, you must also be justified in believing the conditional that, if you're having that experience, then there is a red, round tomato in front of you. And what justifies you in believing that conditional? Many philosophers (e.g., Hawthorne, Wright, Weatherson, White, Cohen, BonJour) have thought that the only non-skeptical answer to this question involves appeal to a priori knowledge of contingent features of the world around us. I show that their argument doesn't work: we can avoid both skepticism and also the contingent a priori.

## **Sanford Goldberg**

### *Reliabilist Perceptual Justification and the Epistemic Significance of Background Reasons*

Let one's *background reasons* be the reasons one has for believing e.g. that perception is reliable, or that conditions are normal, or that one's perceptual faculties are working properly. Assuming reliabilism about perceptual justification, how should one think about the epistemic significance of such reasons? After considering three possible answers to this question, I tentatively conclude that background reasons contribute, not to the *degree of justification* enjoyed by perceptual belief, but rather to what I call the *robustness* of that justification. I suggest some reasons for thinking that if this conclusion is correct, the lesson may transcend reliabilist epistemology.

## **Verena Wagner**

### *Perceptual Evidence and Inquiry*

Perceptual evidence is primarily discussed as providing subjects with direct justification for adopting beliefs. However, it is plausible that perceptual evidence not only gives rise to beliefs but also prompts questions, providing a link between traditional discussions of perception and the more recent "zetetic turn" in epistemology. In this talk, I will examine the relationship between inquiry and perception exploring how perceptual activities, asking questions, and belief formation interact in the process of inquiry.

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