

ABSTRACTS
WORKSHOP “DOXASTIC AGENCY & EPISTEMIC
RESPONSIBILITY”

Amy Flowerree
“Epistemic Agency: Some Hope”

In his recent article, “Epistemic Agency: Some Doubts”, Kieren Setiya voices a worry shared by many in the debate over epistemic agency. Belief is structurally unlike action. The disanalogy between belief and action, Setiya argues, is enough for us to conclude that epistemic agency is not possible in any robust sense. We may believe in accordance with reasons, and beliefs may be justified. But there is no stronger sense of agency - no rationalizing explanation - present in belief. I concur that belief is not structured like action, but argue that the proper analogue of belief is not action but intention. Once we clarify the analogy, the remaining dissimilarities are normatively insignificant. In epistemology we care about not just what would justify belief (propositional justification) but also the relation between belief and its reason when S believes p for that reason (doxastic justification). What is normatively significant – in both belief and action – is that we can have reasons for our φ ing, and we can φ for that reason.

Sanford Goldberg
“Culpable Ignorance: Moral and Epistemic Dimension”

In this paper I will be arguing that there are cases in which a subject, S , should have known that p , even though, given her state of evidence at the time, she was in no position to know it. But in what sense can it be correct to say that S should have known that p , even though that she was in no position at the time to know it? My core thesis is this: S should have known that p when (one) there is a legitimate practice that entitles others to have certain expectations regarding S 's epistemic condition, (two) the satisfaction of these expectations would require that S knows that p , and (three) S fails to know that p . In defending this thesis I will have an opportunity (i) to defend the doctrine that there are “practice-generated entitlements” to expect certain things, where it can happen that the satisfaction of these expectations requires another's having certain pieces of knowledge; (ii) to contrast *practice-generated entitlements to expect* with *epistemic reasons to believe*; (iii)

to generalize my analysis to cover cases in which the “should have known” allegation does not initially appear to derive from any practice-generated entitlement; (iv) to compare the “should have known” phenomenon with a widely-discussed phenomenon in the ethics literature – that of culpable ignorance – and in so doing to characterize the nature of the allegation involved when one says that *S* should have known; and finally (v) to suggest the bearing of the “should have known” phenomenon to epistemology itself (in particular, the theory of epistemic justification).

Christopher Hookway
“Judgment and Responsible Judgment”

TBA

Andrea Kruse
“What is Epistemic Responsibility Based On?”

Epistemic responsibility is an evaluative notion that assesses epistemic agents for holding doxastic attitudes from the epistemic perspective. The epistemic perspective can roughly be characterized by epistemic goals such as the truth-goal, the goal to gain knowledge or the goal to gain theoretical understanding. If we model epistemic responsibility along the lines of moral responsibility, then the question arises upon what kind of control epistemic responsibility is based on.

Fischer & Ravizza (1998) argue that moral responsibility is based on *guidance control*. According to Fischer & Ravizza an agent *S* has guidance control over φ iff φ is the outcome of a *reasons-responsive process owned* by the agent. There is a tendency among epistemologists to model the kind of doxastic control upon which epistemic responsibility is based on in analogy to guidance control. However, since forming a doxastic attitude differs in various respects from performing an action there are several kinds of *doxastic guidance control* in the literature (cf. Breyer 2013, Hieronymi 2006, McCormick 2011, McHugh 2013, Meylan 2013, Nottelmann 2007, Steup 2008). One can divide the approaches to *doxastic guidance control* in approaches to *direct doxastic control* and *indirect doxastic control* (cf. Meylan 2013, Nottelmann 2007). Approaches to direct doxastic control include approaches to *intentional doxastic control* as well as approaches to *strong* (cf. Breyer 2013) and *moderate evaluative doxastic control* (Hieronymi 2006, McCormick 2011, McHugh 2013, Steup 2008).

In this paper I will argue that epistemic responsibility is based on indirect doxastic control

rather than on direct doxastic control. To argue for this, I will present and discuss two cases to show that the responsibility assessment of an epistemic agent for holding a certain doxastic attitude is based on how well she has exercised her indirect doxastic control rather than on how well she has exercised her direct doxastic control. Since the duties which guide our indirect doxastic control apply to epistemically significant activities and satisfying them improves the agent's pursuit of certain epistemic goals, such duties can be characterized as *epistemic duties*. Moreover, if the exercise of indirect doxastic control is guided by epistemic duties, then the kind of responsibility based on indirect doxastic control can be characterized as *epistemic responsibility*. Or so I will argue.

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Miriam McCormick
"Unity of Norms"

We assess and evaluate beliefs and actions. We find some actions permissible and some not and this is also true of beliefs. What are the norms that guide these assessments? What criteria ought to be employed in evaluating which beliefs are permissible? Most theorists think that doxastic norms are completely separate from the norms that guide action. In believing we seek to gain truth (or, more importantly, avoid falsehood) and so when we believe in ways, or for reasons, that are opposed to truth-gaining or falsehood-avoidance, we can be criticized for violating these norms. The norms that guide action- whatever they are - are thought to be very different from such epistemic norms. We are not trying to avoid falsehood in our actions but rather, avoid wrongness. I depart from most discussions of norms for belief in thinking the reason one is blamed or criticized for holding a particular belief is not different in kind from the reason one is blamed or criticized for performing a

particular action. The ethics of belief is not separate from ethics simpliciter. The norms of agency apply to both beliefs and actions. The source of normativity that deems which beliefs are permissible is the same source that tells which actions are permissible. When we say one ought to act a certain way and when we say one ought to believe a certain way, the source of these “oughts” is not distinct. It seems there is an “ought” associated with all our activities as agents, whether these result in beliefs or in actions.

One way of arguing for the view that doxastic norms are separate from the norms of action is to point to the passive nature of belief formation. The dominant view among contemporary philosophers is that belief is governed by evidential norms; the only good reasons there can be for believing are evidential. One way to defend evidentialism is to point out that the evidentialist thesis explains why we are unable to choose what to believe. We cannot choose what is true and if beliefs in some sense aim at or are governed by or are conceptually tied to truth, then this shows why we cannot choose to believe. One way to counter evidentialism is to deny that the phenomenon it purports to explain is genuine and to argue that sense can be made of doxastic agency, that even if we cannot believe at will, neither are we passive in the beliefs we form and maintain. We can see then why pragmatism (the view that some non-evidentially based beliefs are permissible) and some kind of doxastic voluntarism are often linked together. But many theorists who have argued that we can exercise agency or freedom in the doxastic realm (e.g. Steup, Hieronymi) align themselves squarely with the evidentialists.

When arguing that we are responsible for and have some kind of control over belief, theorists emphasize the similarities between belief and action. And yet if the norms that apply to beliefs are wholly separate from those of actions, this seems to pull them apart. It is preferable if we can make sense of a way in which the norms are unified or else it seems that doxastic responsibility is a different kind of responsibility than what we attribute to actions. The kind of failure that leads to blame in one realm would be of a wholly different kind than the kind of failure leading to blame for action. Believing badly would be more like skiing badly or being a poor chess player, something that is assessed according to its own distinct set of norms. Thinking of believing as analogous to chess-playing or skiing is, I think, misguided. What one believes is at least as central to who one is as how one acts (and, of course how one acts is connected in fundamental ways to what one believes). This paper will begin by arguing that to defenses of evidentialism requires that epistemic value is autonomous from other kinds of value. I will then argue that one cannot make sense of a point of view that is distinctly and exclusively epistemic while at the same time retaining the normative force that those endorsing evidentialism. The only way to make sense of epistemic value as a good to be promoted is to link it, or ground it, in the practical or moral. But once the instrumental value of truth and knowledge is acknowledged, we see that it is possible that some beliefs can help us achieve these goals independently of their truth-value, or of their being evidentially based. I will then point to the advantages of my view which views believing as a dimension of agency and so doxastic norms as ultimately

practical. On this view, the permissibility of some of our most central and resilient beliefs is not dependent on whether one can find evidence for them. I will conclude by considering some objections and concerns about my view, the most pressing being to explain what distinguishes pernicious non-evidentially beliefs from ones that are not.

Anne Meylan “Doxastic Responsibility. Against the Diagnosis of Peculiarity”

It has often been argued (McHugh 2014, Notelmann 2006, Steup 2008) that doxastic responsibility, viz. what we exercise over our doxastic states, cannot be modelled on agentive responsibility, viz. what we exercise over our actions. Doxastic responsibility requires a peculiar kind of account, one that sharply differs, in several respects, from our account of agentive responsibility. Let me call this idea “the diagnosis of peculiarity”. The purpose of this paper is not to directly argue against the various accounts of doxastic responsibility (see e.g. Hieronymi 2008, 2009, McHugh 2014) that result from this diagnosis but mainly to show why the diagnosis of peculiarity is wrong and that there is no need for such peculiar accounts. In certain circumstances – and, quite importantly, precisely in the circumstances in which we most intensively feel the need to hold the subjects responsible for their doxastic states –, the doxastic responsibility at work is of the same kind than the one at work when we are responsible for our actions. More precisely, in these circumstances, our doxastic responsibility is of the same kind than the one we exercise when we are responsible for our non-basic actions. It will also be shown that this way of understanding doxastic responsibility does not restrict doxastic responsibility to doxastic states that result from inferences or high-level pieces of reasoning. It does not preclude our being sometimes responsible for our perceptual doxastic states, i.e. for the deliverances of our senses. We are responsible for our perceptual doxastic states (contra Weatherson 2008) via what Matthen (2014) calls “sensory exploration”.

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Nikolaj Nottelmann

“A Brief Exploration of the Dialectical Situation Surrounding our Efforts towards a Theory of the Basis for Paradigmatic Ascriptions of Doxastic Responsibility”

Recent years have seen a number of highly sophisticated contributions to the literature on the sources of doxastic responsibility, not least treating on the prospects for various compatibilist understandings of responsibility-conferring doxastic freedom and intentionality. In the process, very many fine and interesting observations on the nature of intentionality, responsibility and doxastic states have been made. Yet the question of why we would want to apply a compatibilist theory in the first place, somehow seems to have retreated to the background. In this talk I aim to answer in outline basic questions such as: Why do we need theoretically to account for ascriptions of doxastic responsibility? What do we want a theory of doxastic responsibility to do for us? When we rule a subject blameworthy for holding a belief p , which other ascriptions of blame (if any) ground that ascription? Regarding the first question, I will aim to show how reflections on our practice of ascribing responsibility for conditioned reflex reactions, emotions, and intentions, clarify the specific theoretical challenge w.r.t. doxastic states. Regarding the second question, I will argue that our primary concern is with descriptive, rather than normative, ethics. Regarding the third question, I shall argue that without any obviously significant loss our doxastic responsibility ascriptions may be subsumed under a general theory for ascriptions of responsibility for undesirable consequences of action consequences, and that methodologically this approach is preferable to a sui generis compatibilist account. Doxastic compatibilism perhaps would be preferable, were we to make satisfactory sense of actual intentional belief-formation, but here we simply do not possess the relevant psychological evidence fruitfully to compare belief-formations with even the most subtly and implicitly intentional patterns of behaviour. I shall discuss, what such evidence would look like, and why our hopes of collecting it seem dim.

Rik Peels
“Epistemic Justification and Responsible Belief”

On the deontological conception of epistemic justification, epistemic justification is a matter of believing responsibly by meeting or at least not violating one’s epistemic obligations. William Alston famously argued that this conception is misguided, because we lack control over our beliefs. In this paper I consider a particular response to Alston’s argument. On this response, we have influence on what we believe via our control over such belief-influencing factors as changing our evidential situation and working on our cognitive virtues and vices. Alston admits that we have influence on our beliefs, but, according to him, that saves responsibility for our beliefs, not the deontological conception of epistemic justification. I argue that Alston’s argument begs the question by assuming that an account of epistemic justification should be extensionally equivalent to the main externalist or internalist accounts of epistemic justification that have been given. This raises the question of which criterion the account at hand should meet in order to be a viable account of epistemic justification. I argue that the account meets three important criteria that one might propose: it shows a concern with the Jamesian goal of having true rather than false beliefs, it is relevantly similar to accounts of justification in non-doxastic realms, and there is good reason to think that it provides a necessary condition for knowledge. However, I also provide two objections against the idea that epistemically justified belief could be understood as epistemically responsible belief. First, epistemically responsible belief requires the ability to believe otherwise, whereas epistemically justified belief does not. Second, certain excuses leave room for epistemically responsible belief, but exclude epistemically justified belief. I conclude that, even though epistemically responsible belief cannot be identical to epistemically justified belief, the two are nonetheless closely related to each other.

Hans Rott
“Negative Doxastic Voluntarism and the Concept of Belief”

TBA

Matthias Steup
“Defending Doxastic Voluntarism”

According to doxastic compatibilism, for a belief to be free, it need not be uncaused. Instead, it must be caused in the right way, namely by a reason-responsive process. In the recent literature, this view has been rejected on the basis of a wide range of objections. In my talk, I will present and reply to the most important of these objections.

Verena Wagner
“Free Will and Free Belief: Two Inconsistent Concepts”

Doubts concerning doxastic freedom focus on dis-analogies of actions and doxastic states. While actions are usually caused by intentions, doxastic states are not. Actions that are caused by intentions are said to be under the agent’s voluntary control and as such can be free. For doxastic states like beliefs are usually not controlled by the agent’s intentions, they are said to be held or formed not voluntarily and therefore cannot be free. Against such views, philosophers like Pamela Hieronymi [2008], Nishi Shah [2002] and Conor McHugh [2011] argue that doxastic freedom (or doxastic responsibility) should not be modelled on the basis of free action, but that we should rather focus on the analogy of intention and belief. In contrast to actions, intentions are not caused by intentions themselves. Both, intentions and beliefs are said to be the result of a process governed by the agent and her (practical or epistemic) reasons. On this basis, doxastic freedom can be modelled analogously to freedom of intention mainly by making use of compatibilist accounts of free will. If free will is defined by reference to a reasons-responsive mental process, so the argument, free belief should also be. The fact that intentions are not controlled by intentions has no impact on our views of practical freedom and responsibility; therefore, so Hieronymi, Shah and McHugh, the fact that beliefs are not controlled by intentions is no basis for denying doxastic freedom and responsibility. However, I will argue that this analogy does not support the claim that there is doxastic freedom or responsibility.

I agree that there is a certain analogy between beliefs and intentions (or instrumental desires) and I also accept that free will and free belief should be modelled analogously. More precisely, I agree that if free will is defined by reference to a reasons-responsive mental process, free belief should also be. But I deny the truth of the antecedent and reject the idea of any freedom that goes beyond freedom of action: there is no free will for the very same reason why there is no free belief. In this paper, I will argue that freedom is not a concept that can be applied to intentions, desires, the will or doxastic states, but only makes sense when applied to the agent’s doing. This doing can be seen in a wider

context than mere bodily action: there are mental actions like repeating a certain thought or directing and controlling attention etc. Indeed, there are many actions that can be (and often are) used to influence mental processes like forming beliefs and intentions, or like acquiring desires etc. These actions can be means for exercising indirect control over doxastic states, intentions and desires. In this paper, I aim at providing a unified account of indirect control exercised by means of actions. These actions of the agent are the proper objects of freedom and coercion, but not the beliefs or intentions they influence. In this context, it will be necessary to distinguish the concepts of freedom, control, voluntariness and responsibility.

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Heinrich Wansing **“Remarks on the Logic of Imagination”**

Imagination is one of the few propositional attitudes that are clearly agential. Agents decide to imagine. There is a lot of work on the phenomenology of imagination and also some literature on its epistemic relevance. However, as it seems, there is not much work on the logic of imagination. In this talk I will critically discuss the two papers on the logic of imagination I am aware of, one by Ilkka Niiniluoto (1985), the other by Alexandre Costa-Leite (2010). In particular, I will suggest to combine the branching time models from the most prominent logic of agency, namely stit theory as developed by Belnap, Perloff, Xu, Horty and von Kutschera, with the neighbourhood semantics for classical modal logics.

Jan Willem Wieland **“Evidence You Do Not Possess”**

Unpossessed evidence abounds. There is much to be seen and much to be had. Much of it will never have an impact on our epistemic standings, but some of it does. Some evidence is such that we are blameworthy for not having it. This paper aims at making progress at delineating this class of things. Meanwhile, it unravels Clifford’s famous case.