Second Annual

Conference for Political Epistemology

Amsterdam, December 13-14, 2019

Programme & Book of Abstracts

Conference Programme

Location:
Trippenhuis, Kloveniersburgwal 29, Amsterdam

Friday, December 13

8:30-8:50	Coffee and Registration
8:50-9:00	Introduction
9:00-10:15	Keynote **Alessandra Tanesini** (Cardiff Univ.) Intellectual Arrogance, Polarization and Arguing to Win
10:15-11:15	**Daniella Meehan** (Univ. of Glasgow) Epistemic Paternalism and Epistemic Vice
11:15-11:30	Break
11:30-12:30	**Josh Habgood-Coote** (Univ. of Bristol) How to Epistemically Evaluate Social Media
12:30-13:30	Lunch
13:30-14:30	**Elizabeth Edenberg** (Georgetown Univ.) Political Disagreement on Social Media
14:30-15:30	**Julian Müller** (Univ. of Hamburg) The Political Epistemology of Populism
15:30-16:00	Break

16:00-17:00	**John Waterman & Nicholas Tebben** (Univ. New England/Towson Univ.) Trust, Expertise, and Practical Interests
17:00-18:00	**Kenneth Boyd** (Univ. of Southern Denmark) Scientific Testimony and the Politicization of Expertise
19:00	Conference Dinner Location: Café de Jaren, Nieuwe Doelenstraat 20-22

Saturday, December 14

09:30-10:00	Coffee
10:00-11:00	**Ane Engelstad** (Univ. of Sussex) What Does Victim Testimony Tell Us About Justice?
11:00-11:30	Break
11:30-12:30	**Megan Blomfield** (Univ. of Sheffield) Epistemic injustice in the UK asylum claim process
12:30 -13:30	Lunch
13:30-14:30	**Klemens Kappel** (Univ. of Copenhagen) Science in Public Reason
14:30-15:30	**Pierre LeMorvan** (College of New Jersey) Epistemic Insouciance, Souciance, and Hypersouciance
15:30-16:00	Break
16:00-17:15	Keynote **Lisa Maria Herzog** (TU Munich/Groningen) Knowledge, Institution, and Resentment Against Elites
17:15	Closing Remarks

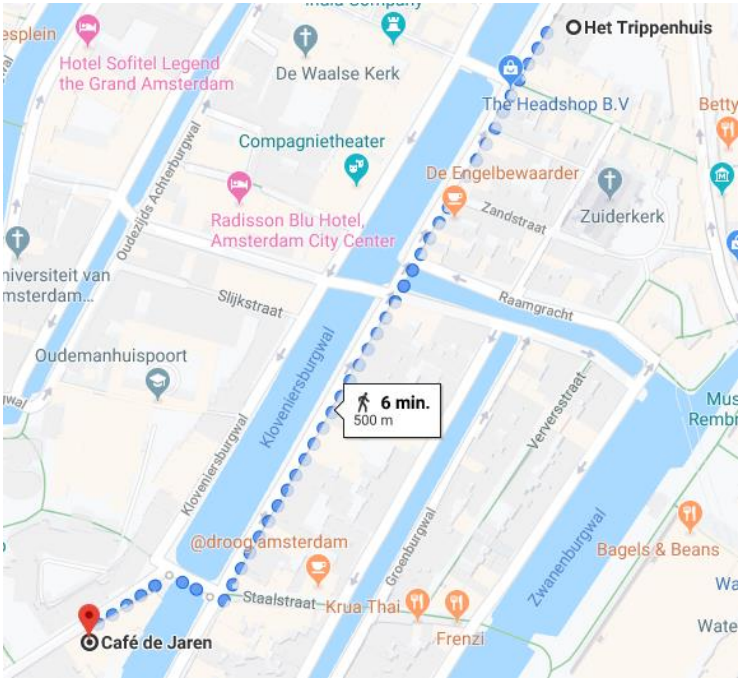
Practical Information

Venues

All presentations will be held at the Trippenhuis, Kloveniersburgwal 29, Amsterdam.

The conference dinner on Friday will take place at Café de Jaren, Nieuwe Doelenstraat 20-22, Amsterdam.

The restaurant is located at walking distance (500 m/6 minutes) from the conference venue. As you exit the Trippenhuis, turn left. Continue straight for about 450 meters, until you see Café Staalmeesters to your left. Take a right there, crossing the antique bridge. After the bridge, turn left to enter the Nieuwe Doelenstraat. The restaurant is located a little way down this street, on your left-hand side.



Transportation

There are various ways to get to the conference venue in the historical center of Amsterdam.

From Schiphol Airport

We recommend taking a train from the airport to Amsterdam Central Station.

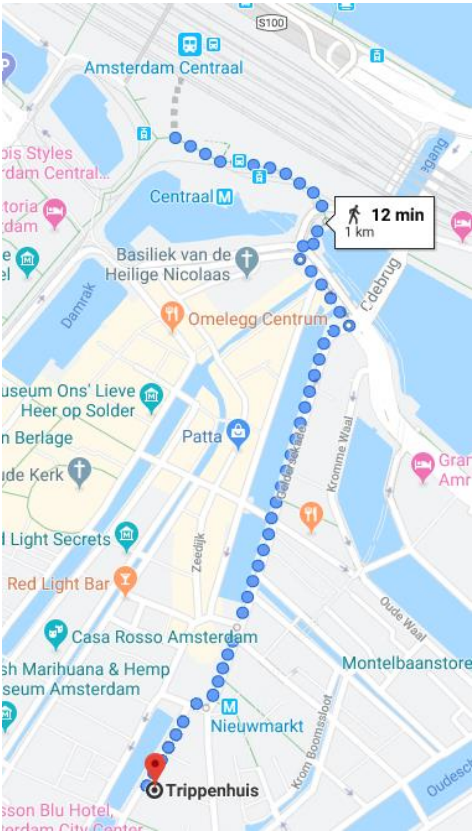
Go to the train station in the arrival hall at Schiphol Airport. You can buy a ticket directly from the yellow NS machines, or you can buy an OV-chip card from the NS service point counter there (please note that you must first load credit onto the card before taking the train).

From Amsterdam Central Station

Walking

The conference venue, Trippenhuis, is about a 12 min (1 km) walk from the station.

Exit Amsterdam Central Station through the main entrance (towards the city center). Outside, immediately turn left. Keep walking past the tram stops until you reach the Kamperbrug at your right. Cross the bridge, following the Gelderskade. Cross Nieuwmarkt square, and enter the Kloverniersburgwal, keeping the canal to your right. After 100 meters, you will find the Trippenhuis to your left.



Metro

From Amsterdam Central Station, you can take metro 51 (Isolatorweg), 53 (Gaasperplas) or 54 (Gein). Exit at the first stop, called Nieuwmarkt. From there, follow the above instructions.

Taxi

Taxis can be ordered by phone/app or found at taxi ranks near major stations and large hotels in the city. Take note that Amsterdam taxis are expensive, particularly if you are travelling to/from Schiphol Airport.

Cycling

Amsterdam is very well equipped to accommodate cyclists. Amsterdam Central Station, Leidseplein and Dam Square are major rental hubs, with day rates averaging € 10.

Helpful links

To plan your journey:
GVB (Amsterdam public transport): https://en.gvb.nl/
NS (Dutch railways): https://www.ns.nl/en
9292ov.nl (all Dutch public transport): https://9292.nl/en

More information on public transport in Amsterdam:
https://www.iamsterdam.com/en/plan-your-trip/getting-around/public-transport

Information on OV-chip cards:
https://www.ov-chipkaart.nl/everything-about-travelling/how-does-travelling-work-1.htm

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Book of Abstracts

In order of presentation

Intellectual Arrogance, Polarization and Arguing to Win

Alessandra Tanesini
Cardiff University

Group deliberation aimed at gaining knowledge and understanding is a complex matter of coordination and cooperation. There is good evidence that groups that consider and scrutinize a diversity of viewpoints do better than homogeneous groups at reaching good answers to the questions they address. This fact has prompted Hallsson and Kappel (2018) to argue that it is epistemically rational to be overconfident in one's views upon learning of a disagreement. It is rational to hold on to one's beliefs in a manner that is at variance with the evidence because initial steadfastness preserves a diversity of views within the deliberating group. In turn, diversity is truth-conducive because it promotes, via the motivated reasoning of individuals, the development of strong arguments for and against each view. One may surmise on the basis of these considerations that the intellectual vices of arrogance and overconfidence in one's position promote accuracy at the collective level (cf., Smart, 2018). However, this conclusion cannot be quite right since initial steadfastness produces continued steadfastness in most cases of disagreement which, unlike the Watson selection task, do not have a demonstrable and uniquely correct answer. Further, continued steadfastness promotes being invested in one's own arguments, strengthens one's imperviousness to counter-evidence, fuels over-confidence, and facilitates belief extremity. This kind of steadfastness is an obstacle to truth-seeking at the collective level because it inevitably leads to an impasse in deliberation. Contra Hallsson and Kappel (2018) individual overconfidence does not promote group deliberative success.

However, if this is right, we seem to have reached a dilemma since lowering of confidence in one's views upon learning of disagreement undermines the epistemic value of diversity by inhibiting robust scrutiny of alternative viewpoints, since individuals are unlikely to defend views strongly about which they are insecure. In the second half of this talk I argue that this pessimistic conclusion is premature. Overconfidence might seem to be the only means to promote argument evaluation only if one assumes that epistemic agents always argue to win. However, there is empirical evidence pointing to a

different strategy: arguing to learn (Fisher et al., 2018). When people adopt this method of debating they focus on understanding the reasons that move those with whom they disagree. There is evidence that focusing on a point of view opposite to one's own counteracts propensities to motivated reasoning (Fisher & Keil, 2016) and weakens one's own investment in one's views (Fisher & Keil, 2014). In this manner one becomes less interested in the identity affirming qualities of one's position and more rationally sensitive to the strength of the evidence for views opposed to one's own. In this manner strong arguments for and against each view are elicited and scrutinised because each member of the group tries to figure out and evaluate the best arguments in favour of the view that they oppose. If this is right, individual intellectual arrogance undermines rather than promotes accuracy in collective deliberation. Intellectual curiosity and generosity would have the opposite effect.

Epistemic Paternalism and Epistemic Vice

Daniella Meehan
University of Glasgow

In this chapter, I aim to bring together two under-explored areas of epistemology yet to be studied in connection to one another – epistemic paternalism and vice epistemology. Briefly, vice epistemology is the philosophical study of the nature, identity, and epistemological significance of intellectual vices such as closemindedness and epistemic injustice (Cassam, 2019). Epistemic paternalism is the thesis that in some circumstances we are justified in interfering with the inquiry of another for their own epistemic good without consulting them on the issue (Ahlstrom-Vij 2013). One key feature of epistemic paternalism is epistemic nudging, which refers to the practice of 'nudging' people towards positive outcomes (Thaler and Sunstein 2009).

I argue that epistemic nudging initially appears like a successful attempt to combat epistemic vice. For example, by epistemically nudging people towards reliable sources and away from the kinds of environments that might be likely to exacerbate vice (e.g. by preventing intellectually vicious people from speaking on campus), it seems as though we'd be at the same time making people less intellectually vicious. This use of epistemic nudging as a form of vice-charging motivates an argument for the benefits of epistemic paternalism, in the sense that epistemic vices bring a great deal of harm to

epistemic communities and one's intellectual character so a successful method of combatting them is highly advantageous.

However, upon further investigation, I argue that combatting epistemic vices is not as straightforward as initially thought and at the very best amounts to a superficial and short-lived form of epistemic vice combat. To argue for this claim I draw upon recent discoveries in the field of epistemic vice offered by prominent vice epistemologists, Kidd (*forthcoming*) and Cassam (*forthcoming*) who both argue towards a deep concept of epistemic vice. Cassam states that ideologies are a form of false consciousness (constellation of beliefs, attitudes, dispositions etc.) which give way to epistemic vices. Epistemic vices under this definition are therefore understood as an expression of one's false ideologies, which are made up of various beliefs, concepts, attitudes, psychological dispositions etc. In a similar vein, Kidd has argued for the position that epistemic vices are the product of a practice known as 'epistemic corruption'. He claims that epistemic corruption occurs when an agential epistemic character is damaged due to the influence of conditions, processes, or structures that facilitate the acquisition of novel vices or the entrenchment, stabilization, or intensification of existing epistemic vices.

On these new understandings of vice, I argue that the practice of epistemic nudging to combat vices is insufficient. This is due to the complex nature of vices which are heavily entrenched and have roots deeply embedded in societal structures or are part of a psychological disposition, for example. Simply nudging one away from epistemically vicious practices is not enough to rid of the vice at hand which should now be understood in a far deeper epistemic sense. Furthermore, I argue that there is a concerning potential for epistemic agents to become dependent upon epistemic nudging, which gives way to the vice of epistemic laziness (Kidd, 2017). This amounts to a further argument against the use of epistemic nudging as a means of epistemic vice combatting.

How to Epistemically Evaluate Social Media

Josh Habgood-Coote
University of Bristol

In this paper, we take a step back from discussions of how to avoid echo chambers, 'fake news', and polarization to consider the more general question how to evaluate different social media sites from an epistemic point of view.

There are two reasons why this step back is important. First, the epistemic evaluation of social media sites has almost entirely focused on how to avoid negative outcomes -- 'fake news', polarization, hate speech, and so on. If social media sites are purely designed to avoid these phenomena, this might well lead to designs which do poorly on positive outcomes – knowledge, true belief, understanding and so on. Secondly, many of the terms used to pick out these perceived negative phenomena are semantically deficient, being used in ambiguous or even contradictory ways (see (Habgood-Coote 2018) on 'fake news', and (Nguyen 2018) on 'echo chambers'). This is worrisome, since it means that it is unclear what the phenomena to be avoided are.

We will canvass three epistemic desiderata for the design social media sites:

1. Leading to good epistemic outcomes for individuals using those networks;
2. Instantiating epistemically virtuous structures;
3. Being structurally epistemically just.

The first desiderata is that a social media site leads to good epistemic outcomes for its users. The best developed framework for thinking about this kind of evaluation is Goldman's veritism, which evaluates social systems based on their outcomes for the true beliefs of those who use them (Goldman 1999). However, Goldman's approach is really one of a family of individualistic evaluative approaches. We might also want to consider non-maximizing evaluations of social media sites that focus on equality, priority, or sufficiency. We might rank social media sites based on how equally the true beliefs produced are, whether those who have the most false beliefs are gaining more true beliefs, or whether users have sufficient true beliefs to be fully engaged in political life.

The second desiderata is that a social media sites instantiates desirable epistemic structures. The literature on epistemically desirable social structures has largely focused on the social structure of science, so we might want to consider whether social media sites facilitate a division of epistemic labour (Kitcher 1993), (Strevens 2003), allow for epistemically beneficial disagreement (Zollman 2010), or manage to harness the wisdom or crowds (Sullivan et al forthcoming).

The final desiderata is that social media sites are epistemically just (Fricker 2007), (Anderson 2012). This desiderata requites not only that social

media sites facilitate remedies to testimonial injustice based in individual credibility judgements, but also that they are *institutionally just*, not systematically silencing, undermining, or smothering (Dotson 2011) the voices of epistemically oppressed groups.

We might hope that these three dimensions of evaluation are mutually supportive. However, there are good reasons to think that the opposite is true: these desiderata pull in different directions.

According to what Mayo-Wilson, Zollman, and Danks (2011) dub *the Independence Thesis*, the epistemic evaluation of group members and group structures can come apart, meaning that rational individuals can form irrational groups, and vice versa. There are numerous phenomena that support this thesis, but especially important for our purposes is the way that groups with fewer connections end up more reliably coming to a consensus on the correct answer (Zollman 2007, 2010). This desirable group structure can either be achieved by limiting individuals' access to information, or by individuals disregarding outcomes, both of which are undesirable individual-level characteristics.

The demands of epistemic justice are plausibly in tension with desirable social structures. One prima facie undesirable structure is the epistemic bubble (Nguyen forthcoming) – a group which lacks access to information from outside of the group. However, these groups may be crucial in resistance against epistemic oppression, allowing for the formation of counter-publics (Fraser 1992) that can develop new conceptual and theoretical resources.

Epistemic justice can also lead to tensions with individual epistemic outcomes. Newsfeed algorithms that reliably promote true information may nonetheless me epistemically unjust when implemented with users that have prejudicial credibility deficits. For example, an algorithm that promotes content that receives a large amount of engagement may lead to unfair outcomes when engagement is mediated by users' epistemic biases. If users with credibility excesses receive more engagement, their signal will be boosted, while those with credibility deficits will be undermined.

Given the tensions between these three desiderata, we face a puzzle: which desiderata should social media sites prioritize? We will consider two possible solutions: an attempt to find a compromise, and designing different social media sites that prioritise different desiderata.

Political Disagreement on Social Media
From Epistemic to Moral Understanding
Elizabeth Edenberg
Georgetown University

Contemporary society is rife with conflict over moral and religious ideals. These conflicts often play out in the political realm, with different groups of individuals attempting to use the political power of the government to secure what they take to be good for people. The problem arises from the deep disagreement between citizens about what constitutes the good life and how the government should support the flourishing of its citizens. Complicating this broader disagreement on questions of morality are new challenges to agreement on basic facts about our world. Much of this division is fueled by the new ways in which we access information—through digital means that are increasingly tailored to show us information we want to see. Algorithms filter our newsfeeds to show us stories we (or those similarly profiled) are likely to either agree with or engage with. Citizens across the political spectrum are exposed to different information, undermining the common ground of agreement about the facts relevant to responsible citizenry. Furthermore, foreign actors have successfully exploited the way information spreads through social media platforms—causing a general destabilization in political dialogue and throwing into question our epistemic assessments of new information.

In response, many have called for new social media literacy campaigns, flagging questionable news sources, increased fact-checking, and ways to remove or correct inaccuracies that spread online. These approaches attempt to improve our epistemic capacity to responsibly assess information online as a way to begin to bridge political divides. If only we could shore up individuals' epistemic capacities for responsible assessment of new information, we can return to agreeing on the facts, if not the values relevant to politics.

In this paper, I suggest reasons to be skeptical about the epistemic diagnosis of political divisions and the proposed epistemic solutions. To mend these divides and reestablish a common sense of political community, we must find some basis for cooperating with others with whom we disagree. However, I suggest that focusing too heavily on the epistemology of disagreement leads us to miss a more promising common moral basis for political cooperation grounded in building mutual understanding and respect. I will argue that the

breakdown of discourse online provides renewed reasons to draw out a moral basis for political cooperation among diverse citizens—one that is inspired by aspects of Rawlsian political liberalism. Rather than viewing politics as a battleground between factions, we must find ways to cultivate mutual understanding for our fellow citizens and seek ways to reestablish common moral ground for political debate.

The Political Epistemology of Populism

Julian Müller
University of Hamburg

Populism – in its different varieties – is on the rise. In the past decade, this has led to an unprecedented surge in academic interest. Political scientists have produced various comparative studies of populist movements, economists and sociologists have focused on explaining the sudden uptake of populism and the various disciplines concerned with language and communication have studied populist forms of agitation. Given the importance of populism as a political phenomenon, one would have thought that philosophers had weighed in on this debate. However so far, political philosophers have neglected the topic almost entirely. This is even more surprising, since the notion of populism itself is contested and thus invites philosophical investigation. The goal of this article is to fill this gap by offering an account of populism within the framework of epistemic democracy. 1) I want to argue that epistemic democrats share a specific epistemological outlook on the epistemic nature of political problem-solving. According to epistemic democrats, political problems are both cognitive and hard. They are cognitive in the sense that epistemic democrats believe that there are procedurally independent standards of rightness that apply to political problem-solving. Moreover, epistemic democrats believe that most political problems are hard in the sense that well-meaning, informed people can, with regard to political problems, often come to different conclusions looking at the same set of evidence. 2) Building on Karl Popper's inroads into political epistemology (a body of thought that is curiously, entirely absent from the debates on populism), I want to argue that populism can be best understood as a political folk theory that accepts the first epistemological commitment of epistemic democratic theory but denies the second one. The core claim of this paper is then that populism is best characterized as a stance in political epistemology that holds that political

problems are a) cognitive but b) not hard. Specifically, I want to argue that populism should be understood as a view that is committed to two principles, the first principle being that the "truth is manifest" Popper (2010, p. 8) in political matters. The second principle, flowing in part from the first, is that since the truth is manifest there cannot be reasonable disagreement in politics. If one is committed to the view that truth of a political matter is manifest, meaning that a true proposition is recognizable as such, "if put before us naked" (Popper 2010, p. 9), then it follows that everybody who does deny this truth must either be malignant or corrupted. Note that populism denies that on can disagree based on ignorance because the truth of a problem solution put forward is to a high degree self-evident. 3) The third part of the essay is mainly about drawing on political theory and recent studies into the communication of populists to establish the latter point. 4) In the last part of the essay, I want to show that this account of populism does not only capture the main features usually associated with populism, but that it is explanatorily more powerful, more parsimonious and coherent than recent accounts put forward by Jan-Werner Müller (2017), Cass Mudde and Christóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2017), Yascha Mounk (2018) and others.

Trust, Expertise, and Practical Interests

John Waterman & Nicholas Tebben
University of New England/Towson University

It is tempting to think that respect for expertise has reached its nadir in Western democracies. Many in the UK voted for Brexit despite warnings about its dire economic consequences. The consensus among climate scientists, that human activity is altering the climate, is dismissed by roughly half of the electorate in the United States. The pressing question then seems to be: what changed about how people decide whom to trust, such that expertise is no longer respected?

We wish to argue that respect for expertise has not declined in Western democracies, and that nothing has changed about how we decide whom to trust. Philosophers like to pretend that the process of inquiry is shaped exclusively by epistemic considerations. Our hypothesis is that trust is not primarily an epistemic phenomenon, but is, in the first instance, a practical one.

Information is both valuable and costly to acquire (Stigler, 1961). We argue that one trusts a source of information when the *total value* of the information provided by that source exceeds the net expected benefit of further inquiry. In the economic model of trust that we build, we take information to have both *practical value* and *consumption value*. The *practical value* of a belief is determined by what one can do with it: information about where dishwashers are on sale is useful if I'm in need of a new one.

The *consumption value* of a belief is the value that accrues to a believer simply as a result of holding the belief in question: information to the effect that the black rhino population is rebounding makes me happy, even if it makes no material difference to my life. Together, these two components of the value of information determine how much effort it is practical to expend in attempting to corroborate or falsify a belief. While typically a belief's *practical value* far exceeds its *consumption value*, and thus plays a dominant role in determining our information gathering behavior, both play a meaningful role in the economy of information transmission when viewed at the population level.

What has changed in recent years, according to our hypothesis, are the costs of information search. When major networks and newspapers held a near monopoly on the delivery of information, it was extremely costly to seek out alternatives and compare sources. People had no practical choice but to trust the sources on offer to them. The internet, however, has made information gathering less costly, and for the purposes of understanding the seeming decline in trust for experts, it has made it practically rational for those who find some item of information discomforting to seek out alternative sources that challenge it. Specifically, according to our model, although the *consumption value* of information is typically small, because internet search costs are very low, for those that find some item of news displeasing it is now practically rational to seek out alternative views that have higher *consumption value*.

This hypothesis has a number of explanatory virtues. First, there is at present a lively debate at the intersection of epistemology and the cognitive sciences over whether the best explanation of the declining quality of public discourse is that people are biased information processers (Kahan 2013, Haidt 2012, Mercier & Sperber 2011) or that they are cognitive misers (Toplak, West, & Stanovich 2014). Developing insights from both research programs, our economic model of trust makes more precise predictions about how cognitive

effort is expended. Second, by taking a population-level view of information processing, this model explains the overall decline in trust of experts observed in recent years, while recognizing that individuals vary in education, values, and particular behavior.

Scientific Testimony and the Politicization of Expertise

Kenneth Boyd
University of Southern Denmark

A persistent problem in social epistemology concerns how to convey scientific information to laypeople, especially when that information concerns topics that have received scientific consensus but are nevertheless controversial because they have been politicized (e.g. information about the safety of vaccines or the existence of anthropogenic climate change). A worry is that laypeople are unable to determine who to listen to given that they potentially lack the scientific knowledge required to evaluate the content of different instances of scientific testimony that conflict with each other. Two commonly proposed solutions address this problem from different angles: one seeks to put a layperson in a better position to evaluate scientific testimony by increasing their *scientific literacy*, while another argues that laypeople can choose who to believe by appealing to *higher-order markers of expertise*. According to this second approach, since a layperson cannot evaluate the *content* of an expert's testimony, they must instead appeal to factors like the testifier's credentials, reputation, consistency in views, etc., in deciding who to listen to.

In this paper I aim to do two things: I first argue that there are significant problems with both the scientific literacy and higher-order marker approaches to combating the problem of communicating politicized scientific belief; then, I propose a different kind of first-order approach.

I address problems with the above approaches in turn: first, I appeal to empirical results from the science communication literature that indicates that there is little correlation between amount of scientific knowledge and acceptance of politicized scientific beliefs. Second, I argue that that appealing to higher-order markers of expertise will generally fail as a strategy to cut through the politicization of scientific belief, as those factors that have traditionally been taken to be markers of expertise have themselves become highly politicized. The result is that instead of a layperson believing the content of an expert's testimony because they bear the makers of expertise, it has

become increasingly common to question an expert's credentials on the basis of the overall stance that they take on a politicized scientific issue. In order for a higher-order solution to work, then, laypeople must be able to determine which markers of expertise are themselves reliable, something that requires a significant amount of knowledge that they are unlikely to possess.

Next, I make a case for a different kind of first-order approach, one that focuses on the way in which scientific testimony is conveyed between expert and layperson. The relationship between scientific expert and layperson is often conceived of as a *deferential* one, such that the expert provides knowledge to the layperson in a way that requires the latter to completely defer to the authority of the former. However, my proposal here is that politicized scientific information can better be communicated if we conceive of the relationship between testifier and layperson as a *cooperative* one, such that scientific information is not just presented to someone who is expected to accept it because it comes from an expert, but in which a testifier actively draws on the background knowledge and cognitive abilities of the recipient in order for her to acquire relevant scientific knowledge and understanding. The benefit of this approach is that since the recipient will employ their own cognitive resources to a more significant degree in the process of communicating scientific information that they will be more likely to accept it.

What Does Victim Testimony Tell Us About Justice?

Ane Engelstad
University of Sussex

From the increasing interest in (and heated discussions about) identity politics[1], to the methods employed in developing the Green New Deal policy proposal[2], the idea that we should listen to victims of injustice is gaining traction. The reason for this is an increasing acknowledgement that victims may have key information about the injustices they are experiencing, and what is required for them to achieve justice. Moreover, one of the ways in which

[1] Cressida Heyes' (2018) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Identity Politics provides a good and comprehensive overview of the term as discussed both within and outside philosophy.

[2] I highly recommend this interview with Rhiana Gunn-Wright, the policy architect of the Green New Deal in the US on the Ezra Klein Show podcast https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/vox/the-ezra-klein-show/e/59687986 (last accessed 30.07.2019).

injustices are perpetuated is through many different mechanisms that silence victims by taking them to be less credible, and through denying them the platform and capacity to speak[3]. As a result, we should be suspicious of any theory of how to best organise society which does not make a genuine effort to counteract this silencing. Political philosophers, however, generally do not engage with victim insights and perspectives. It seems less straightforwardly clear that victim perspectives could be informative, indeed essential, when determining abstract political concepts such as justice.

In this paper, first, I argue that knowledge about injustices is often epistemically obscured, and that attending to victim testimony is one of few ways to reliably break through the epistemic barriers to knowledge about injustice. Secondly, I argue that knowledge of present injustices must inform how we arrive at a conception of an ideally just society if we want to ensure that present injustices do not persist under the radar in societies we perceive to be just. Thus, I show that it is not only possible for victim testimony to productively inform our theorising about justice, but that it should indeed be taken as a central condition for forming good political theories.

My paper proceeds in the following manner: in section 1, I evidence the claim that there are epistemic barriers to knowledge about injustices, as our shared knowledge practices tend to be biased in favour of the distribution of power that also produces the injustice at hand. In section 2, I argue that consciousness raising, a methodology developed within feminist activist circles in the 1970's, shows how victim testimony could be taken as a reliable source of information about injustices. In section 3, I present what I take to be the strongest case for why political philosophers should not consider testimony about specific injustices in theorising about justice, namely Rawlsian Ideal Theory, and I argue that this case fails. In section 4, I argue that consciousness raising facilitates a form of reflective equilibrium that both allows for victim testimony to be centered, and for consensus to be reached about what an ideally just society must consist in, such that no present injustices implicitly persist under such a society. Thus, I argue that victim testimony can be informative for theorising about justice in general, and that there are strong reasons why this should be done. This paper forms the central argument in my PhD, which I am due to complete summer 2020.

[3] For the most central recent accounts of this, see Dotson (2011) and Fricker (2007).

Epistemic Injustice in the UK Asylum Claim Process

Megan Blomfield
University of Sheffield

In this paper, I examine the system by which the UK Home Office determines asylum claims (claims to be granted international protection as a refugee) as an epistemically unjust institution. My aims in doing so are twofold. First, I seek to show that concepts from the philosophical literature on epistemic injustice can help to illuminate some of the ways in which people claiming asylum in the UK are treated unjustly. In particular, in some cases in which individuals have their asylum claims denied, they are subjected to a distinctly epistemic form of injustice – alongside the material harm of such refusal. Though this epistemic injustice may not seem critical when compared to the material harm of being returned, or threatened with return, to a situation of persecution; it ought not be overlooked. To disclose one's experiences of persecution and trauma, only to told that you are not believed, can be devastating. In interviews with individuals who had sought asylum in the UK, for example, Jannesari, Molyneaux and Lawrence found that "A key retraumatising factor was the continual disbelief interviewees felt they encountered when recounting traumatic events".[4] It is important to recognise such impacts as a significant harm of the asylum process and to understand how they are generated. In this paper, I argue that such harm should be understood as engendered (at least in part) by forms of unjust treatment that are distinctly epistemic in nature.

My second aim is to show that by devoting attention to the systems of inquiry by which states determine asylum claims, philosophers can learn various things about epistemic injustice in its institutional mode (a form that has been relatively underexplored in the philosophical literature) – and how such injustice may be resisted. The example that the UK asylum system provides is, furthermore, significant in the sense that the caseworkers who decide asylum claims are given explicit instructions concerning how to assess their credibility; providing a clear demonstration of how institutions may generate testimonial injustices (the form of epistemic injustice whereby a speaker is wrongfully accorded a deflated level of credibility).

[4] Jannesari, Sohail, Emma Molyneaux, & Vanessa Lawrence. 2019. "What affects the mental health of people seeking asylum in the UK? A narrative analysis of migration stories." *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, p. 10.

The structure of the paper is as follows: In §1, I introduce some key philosophical concepts of epistemic injustice. In §2, I briefly outline the system through which asylum claims are made and decided in the UK. In §§3-5, I explain how the forms of epistemic injustice previously introduced – individual testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice, and structural testimonial injustice – my arise within this system. Whilst some of the problems that I identify map onto examples of epistemic injustice that have been widely discussed in the philosophical literature, others appear to constitute relatively unfamiliar forms of epistemic injustice (examples include injustices that may arise in cross-cultural or cross-linguistic exchanges, injustices that are specific to testimony relating to trauma, and injustices that are engendered by institutional culture or performance targets). In §6, I draw some general conclusions about how epistemic injustice may be generated within institutions. In §7, I discuss how epistemic injustice in the asylum claim process may be resisted. §8 concludes.

Science in Public Reason

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Rational decision-making requires a value input and a factual input, and by extension this holds also for democratic decision-making. Where should the factual input come from in democratic decision-making? On the further assumption that well-functioning scientific institutions represent our best hope of discovering policy-relevant facts, the answer is: well-functioning scientific institutions. A difficult problem arises, however, when science or particular parts of science comes to be controversial among the citizenry. How, it might be asked, might we respond to citizens who do not trust science, or certain parts of science, and who therefore disagree with legislation and political decisions based on what they consider a misguided trust in science?

I will address this problem using Rawls's public reason framework, and specifically consider the view that science is part of public reason. In the first part of the presentation, I will briefly sketch what it means that science is part of public reason: it means, among other things, that there is a distinct obligation to defer to science and scientific results, findings, opinions, for the purpose of justifying fact-dependent policy decisions, and maybe also in our public conversations about political questions. Thus, even if one privately

disagrees with, or distrusts certain scientific findings or institutions, one should nonetheless defer to science for the purposes of presenting reasons to fellow citizens for or against coercive legislation.

In the second part, I consider how the view that science is part of public reason can be defended. Building on previous work, I will outline how the view actually seems to be in tension with Rawls's general motivation of his political liberalism. Thus, some different sort of justification for viewing science as part of public reason seems called for. Next, after some preliminary remarks on public reason theory, I consider four strategies found in recent discussion. First, what we may call the argument from extension: as ordinary reasoners are committed to basic epistemic principles, which in turn commits to scientific principles of evidence and inquiry, and therefore to regarding science as part of public reason. Second, what we might call the argument from hypothetical acceptance, which is the idea that we would accept scientific standards of evidence and reasoning, if we were sufficiently rational and well informed. Third, the argument from restraint, which assumes that in cases of disagreement, we should withhold some of our convictions and try to seek a common ground. There are various forms that this argument may take. One appeals to the publicity of scientific standards, and another to what we might call an epistemic veil of ignorance. I argue that all three arguments fail. I then turn to the possibility that we consider the view that science is part of public reason basic in a certain sense. I consider whether this view can be defended against the charge that it is an unreasonable form of dogmatism, and the objection that it fails to respect everyone as free and equal.

Epistemic Insouciance, Souciance, and Hypersouciance

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As the digital age presents new challenges for epistemology, Quassim Cassam (2019, 2018)'s account of an epistemic vice he has named *epistemic insouciance* proves extremely timely. Inspired by and extending his work, I discuss a virtue and a vice that have hitherto not been identified let alone discussed in the literature: the virtue of e*pistemic souciance* and the vice of *epistemic hypersouciance.* I argue that this virtue is of singular importance in the digital age and can be usefully understood as a mean between the vices of epistemic insouciance and epistemic hypersouciance.

In part 1, I delineate salient aspects of Cassam's account of epistemic insouciance according to which this vice involves a casual lack of concern about whether one's beliefs and statements have any basis in reality, a nonchalance about the challenge of finding answers to complex questions, and a penchant for regarding the finding of evidence in support of one's beliefs and statements as a mere inconvenience not to be taken seriously. In brief, it involves "not giving a shit" as Cassam puts it.

In part 2, I extend Cassam's account by arguing that epistemic insouciance is abetted by, and proves particularly problematic given, our increasing reliance on technologies using AI and opaque algorithms such as search engines, personalized news feeds, social media, and anonymous and anonymized online sources. I also argue that this vice exacerbates what Fricker (2007) has critiqued as testimonial injustice that occurs when someone's knowledge is ignored or not believed because that person is the member of a marginalized social group.

In part 3, I break new ground in developing a corresponding account of epistemic souciance according to which this virtue involves a genuine concern about whether one's beliefs and statements have a basis in reality, a genuine caring about the challenge of finding answers to complex questions, and taking seriously the need to find evidence in support of one's beliefs and statements. In short, it involves "giving a shit." I argue that epistemic souciance proves particularly important given our increasing reliance on technologies using AI and opaque algorithms. I also show how this virtue can promote what Fricker (2007) has characterized as testimonial justice.

In part 4, I further break new ground in developing an account of the vice of epistemic hypersouciance according to which this vice involves an excessive or obsessive concern about facts and whether one's beliefs and statements have a basis in reality, an obsessing about the challenge of finding answers to questions (viewing such questions as more complex than they really are), and an excessive attention to the need to find evidence in support of one's beliefs and statements. In brief, it involves "giving too big a shit." I use (and update for the digital age) George Elliot's character of Casaubon in *Middlemarch* as a particularly useful exemplar of this vice.

In part 5, I conclude by showing how the virtue of epistemic souciance lies as a mean between epistemic insouciance and epistemic hypersouciance.

Knowledge, Institution, and Resentment Against Elites

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In recent years, there have been many forms of (populist) resentment against experts, which are perceived as part of an „elite“ that cannot be trusted. In this talk, I discuss two perspectives on how knowledge can be used in politics: „knowledge as a weapon“ or „knowledge based on methods“. I argue that there are many problems with a naive picture of knowledge production, and that the charge that knowledge claims are sometimes used as weapons is not completely unjustified. Nonetheless, we can defend an account of knowledge based on methods as an *ideal* that we strive to realize in our practices. When doing so, however, one runs into problems of institutionalizations: for various reasons, formal institutions are not enough for realizing a responsible use of knowledge as based on methods. This explains, to some extent, why there can be resentment against experts, especially in situations in which accountability is difficult or impossible. I conclude by drawing out some political implications of the general tension between democratic equality and differential expertise, both with regard to epistemic-political practices and with regard to the broader structures of democratic societies.