Seminar: A Diachronic Perspective on Peer Disagreement

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The main issue in the epistemology of peer disagreement is whether known disagreement among those who are in symmetrical epistemic positions undermines the rationality of their maintaining their respective views. Douven and Kelp (2010, 2011) have argued convincingly that this problem is best understood as being about how to respond to peer disagreement repeatedly over time, and that this diachronic issue can be best approached through computer simulation rather than armchair philosophy. However, Douven and Kelp's favored simulation framework cannot handle Christensen's famous Mental Math example. As a remedy, I introduce an alternative (Bayesian) simulation framework, Laputa, inspired by Alvin Goldman's seminal work on veritistic social epistemology. I show that Christensen's conciliatory response, reasonably supplemented, gives rise to an increase in epistemic (veritistic) value only if the peers continue to recheck their mental math; else the peers might as well be steadfast.

The talk is based on an exact framework for studying social epistemology that my research group has described and applied in numerous publications. Some are found below.

References

I. Douven. Simulating peer disagreements (2010). Studies in history and philosophy of science, 41:148-157.

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E. J. Olsson (2013). A Bayesian simulation model of group deliberation and polarization. In F. Zenker, editor, Bayesian Argumentation: The practical side of probability. Synthese Library.

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