René Descartes Lectures 2014

Rational Belief, Stability, Reasoning, and Action

Tilburg, 20 – 22 October 2014
Synopsis

The topic of these lectures will be a theory of rational belief that links up traditional accounts of categorical (all-or-nothing) belief with modern subjective probability theory by means of one principle: *it is rational to believe a proposition just in case it is rational to have a stably high degree of belief in it*. We will make the corresponding notion of stability precise, we will justify the resulting theory in different ways, we will explain what consequences the theory has for reasoning, acting, and communicating rationally, and we will apply the theory to well-known paradoxes and problem cases in epistemology, philosophy of science, and the philosophy of language.

Organizers: TiLPS

Descartes Lecturer (Main Speaker)

Hannes Leitgeb (LMU Munich)

Hannes Leitgeb is Professor of Logic and Philosophy of Language at LMU Munich, where he also co-directs the Munich Center for Mathematical Philosophy, which he has founded in 2010. Before moving to Germany, he had been Professor of Mathematical Logic and Philosophy of Mathematics at the University of Bristol. He holds doctoral degrees in philosophy and mathematics, which he earned at the University of Salzburg, Austria. In recent years, Hannes Leitgeb was awarded a Philip Leverhulme Prize, a Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Research Award, and an Alexander von Humboldt Professorship. He is the Coordinating Editor of the Review of Symbolic Logic and the Editor-in-chief of Erkenntnis. His articles, many of which appeared in the leading journals in logic, philosophy of science, philosophy of mathematics, and general philosophy, are dealing with topics such as: theories of truth and modality, conditionals, belief revision and induction, metacognition, foundations of probability, abstraction and criteria of identity, provability, and structuralism about mathematics. For more information, see his webpage¹.

¹ [http://www.philosophie.uni-muenchen.de/lehreinheiten/logik_sprachphil/personen/hannes_leitgeb/index.html](http://www.philosophie.uni-muenchen.de/lehreinheiten/logik_sprachphil/personen/hannes_leitgeb/index.html)
Lecture I: The Humean Thesis of Belief

Abstract: This lecture develops the theory that it is rational to believe a proposition just in case it is rational to have a stably high degree of belief in it. By means of the probability calculus, a particular interpretation of David Hume's conception of belief in his "Treatise of Human Nature" is explicated.

Commentator:

- Richard Pettigrew (Bristol)

Lecture II: Stability and Reasoning

Abstract: This lecture investigates the applications of the emerging theory for suppositional-inductive reasoning on the basis of the beliefs of an agent. The consequences are evaluated with respect to the epistemic accuracy of the acquired beliefs.

Commentators:

- Nina Gierasimczuk (ILLC/University of Amsterdam)
- Jan-Willem Romeijn (University of Groningen) (presentation)

Lecture III: Stability and Action

Abstract: This lecture adopts a more pragmatic angle and applies the belief stability theory to topics such as acceptance, action, and assertion.

Commentators:

- Alexandru Baltag (ILLC/University of Amsterdam)
- Gerhard Schurz (DCLPS/University of Düsseldorf)
Program

Monday, 20 October 2014

09:30 - 10:00  Registration
10:00 - 11:30  Opening and René Descartes Lecture I
   Hannes Leitgeb (LMU Munich): The Humean Thesis of Belief
11:30 - 12:00  Coffee break
12:00 - 13:00  Commentary by Richard Pettigrew (Bristol University)
13:00 - 14:00  Lunch break
14:00 - 16:00  Contributed Talks
   Pavel Janda (Bristol University): Reflection Principle and Epistemic Utility of Future Contingents
   Ted Shear and Branden Fitelson (Rutgers University): Diachronic Norms of Rational Full-Belief and the Pressure Toward Stability
   Kevin Kelly and Konstantin Genin (Carnegie Mellon University): An epistemic justification of Ockham's razor
16:00 - 16:30  Coffee break
16:30 - 17:50  Contributed Talks
   Lasha Abzianidze (TiLPS)
   Leszek Wronski (Jagiellonian University Krakow): Constraints on credences in two not mutually exclusive propositions: the search for the best belief update function
17:50 - 18:30  Welcome Reception (Dante Building room DZ 5)

Tuesday, 21 October 2014

10:00 - 11:15  René Descartes Lecture II
   Hannes Leitgeb (LMU Munich): Stability and Reasoning
11:15 - 11:45  Coffee break
11:45 - 13:00  Commentaries by Nina Gierasimczuk (University of Amsterdam) and Jan-Willem Romeijn (RU Groningen)
13:00 - 14:00  Lunch Break
14:00 - 16:00  Contributed Talks
   Frederik Herzberg (Bielefeld University): A graded Bayesian coherence notion
   Paul Thorn (Düsseldorf University): Another problem with deductive closure
Jan Sprenger (TiLPS): Hypothesis Acceptance and Degree of Corroboration

16:00 - 16:30  Coffee Break
16:30 - 17:50  Contributed Talks
   Wolfgang Spohn (Konstanz University): The value of knowledge
   Gerhard Schurz (Düsseldorf University): Impossibility results for stable rational belief

19:30  Conference Dinner (Café Anvers)

Wednesday, 22 October 2014

10:00 - 11:15  René Descartes Lecture III
   Hannes Leitgeb (LMU Munich): Stability and Action
11:15 - 11:45  Coffee Break
11:45 - 13:00  Commentaries by Alexandru Baltag (University of Amsterdam) and Gerhard Schurz (Düsseldorf University)
13:00 - 14:00  Lunch Break
14:00 - 16:00  Contributed Talks
   Roger Clarke (Queen's University Belfast): Contrastive Belief, Full and Partial
   Weng Hong Tang (National University of Singapore): Belief and Conditional Certainty
   David Atkinson and Jeanne Peijnenburg (RU Groningen): Knowledge and Partial Knowledge
16:00 - 16:30  Coffee Break
16:30 - 18:00  Final Session
   Branden Fitelson (Rutgers) compares Hannes Leitgeb's coherence requirements for (degrees of) belief to the requirements he develops in his own book
18:00 - 18:30  Farewell Reception (Dante Building room DZ 5)
Acknowledgement

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