

Oscar A. Piedrahita

University of California, Irvine
Department of Philosophy
85 Humanities Instructional Building
Irvine, CA 92697-4555

piedraho@uci.edu
www.oscarpiedrahita.com

Research

AOS Epistemology • Ethics
AOC Metaphysics (esp. Free Will & Moral Responsibility) • History of Analytic Philosophy (esp. Wittgenstein)

Education

2023 (exp.) University of California, Irvine, Ph.D. in Philosophy
Dissertation: *As Luck Would Have It: Luck, Ignorance, and Moral Responsibility*
Committee: Duncan Pritchard (Chair), Sven Bernecker, Aaron James, Dana Nelkin (UCSD)

2018 Universidad de los Andes (Colombia), M.S. in Philosophy

2016 Universidad de Antioquia (Colombia), B.S. in Philosophy, *Summa Cum Laude*

2015 Justus-Liebig Universitat, Giessen (Germany), Visiting Student

2014 Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (Brasil), Visiting Student

Publications

2021 [Lucky Ignorance, Modality and Lack of Knowledge](#)
Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 102: 468–490

[Can Hinge Epistemology Close the Door on Epistemic Relativism?](#)
Synthese 199: 4645–4671

2020 [Relativism and Circularity](#)
Discusiones Filosóficas 21: 25–37

In Progress

The Modal View of Luck (Further) Defended.
Excusing Ignorance, Factivity, and the Simple Views of Ignorance
Lucky to be Morally Responsible: Why Defenders of Luck Modalism Should Accept Moral Luck
Ignorance, Access, and Epistemic Responsibility

Presentations († ≡ Invited)

2022 Ignorance, Epistemic Access, and Normativity
11th Vienna Forum for Analytic Philosophy Graduate Conference @ University of Vienna

The Modal Moral Luck Problem
Beyond Free Will: Variety in Understanding of Choice, Luck, and Necessity @ Vilnius University

Ignorance, Access, and Epistemic Responsibility

- Francophone Society for Analytic Philosophy (SoPhA) @ University of Geneva
- 2021 Ignorance, Excuses, and Modality
APA Pacific Division Meeting
- Ignorance Isn't Modal
APA Eastern Division Meeting
- Epistemología de Bisagra y (anti)relativismo[†]
VII Seminario en Historia y Filosofía de la Ciencia @ Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia
- 2020 Ignorance and Epistemic Luck: Or Why Ignorance is not Lack of Knowledge
Workshop on Luck, Risk and Competence @ Universidad de Sevilla, Spain
- Suerte Epistémica e injusticia epistémica[†]
Desacuerdo e Injusticia Epistémica @ Universidad EAFIT, Medellín, Colombia
- Ignorance, Lack of Knowledge, and Excuses[†]
A Socially Distant Open Topic Conference @ UC Irvine

Teaching

As Primary Instructor

- Fall 2022 CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
Truth, Lies, and Bullshit
- Su 2021 UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE
Contemporary Moral Problems

As Graduate Student Instructor

- Su 22, Wtr 21, Fall 19 UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE
Introduction to Philosophy
- Wtr 2022, Fall 20 Puzzles and Paradoxes
- Spg 2022, Su 20 Technology and Society
- Spg 2022, Wtr 22 Introduction to Ethics
- Spg 2021 New Media and Digital Culture (Film & Media Studies)
- Wtr 2020 History of Religions (Religious Studies)
- 2016–18 UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES
History and Philosophy of Science (×4)

Other Teaching

- 2018–20 TH!NK: Philosophy for Early Adolescents (UC Irvine)
- 2018 Writing Center Consultant (Universidad de los Andes)

Awards and Scholarships

- 2018–22 PhD Fulbright Scholarship
- 2021 Miguel Velez Fellowship
- 2019–21 Project Fellow, [Latam Freewill and Responsibility](#)
- 2018 Graduate Dean's Recruitment Fellowship (UC Irvine)
- 2015 DAAD Exchange Program Scholarship
- 2014 Santander Bank Exchange Scholarship

Departmental Service

University of California, Irvine

2020–21
2020

Organizer: Graduate Work in Progress Series

Student Representative: DECADE (Diverse Educational Community and Doctoral Experience)

Graduate Coursework (* ≡ Audit)

Metaphysics, Mind, & Epistemology

Luck (Pritchard) • Epistemology of Ignorance (Pritchard) • Relativism (Coliva) • Justification* (Coliva) • Easy Epistemology (Korman, UCSB)

Ethics

Moral Responsibility and Free Will (Nelkin & Vargas, UCSD) • Emotions (Amaya), Accountability* (James) • Metaethics (Schafer)* • Anti-Racism (Schafer & Manchak)*

Language & Logic

Modal Logic (Bencivenga) • Speech Ethics (James) • Indexicals (Barrero)

History

Aristotle (Perin) • Hume (Schafer) • Wittgenstein (Maddy) • History of Analytic Philosophy (Heis) • Wittgenstein's *Blue Book* (Engelmann)

Other

Philosophy of Biology* (Ross, LPS) • Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics* (Barrett, LPS) • Money* (James) • Rawls' *A Theory of Justice** (James)

Languages

Spanish (Native) • English (Fluent) • Portuguese (Fluent)

References

Duncan Pritchard

Distinguished Professor of Philosophy

University of California, Irvine

dhpritch@uci.edu

Sven Bernecker

Professor of Philosophy (University of California, Irvine)

Humboldt Chair in Philosophy (University of Cologne, Germany)

s.bernecker@uci.edu

Aaron James

Professor of Philosophy

University of California, Irvine

aaron.james@uci.edu

Dana Nelkin

Professor of Philosophy

University of California, San Diego

dnelkin@ucsd.edu

Dissertation Abstract

The dissertation is about luck and ignorance as they relate to various issues in epistemology and ethics—whether and how epistemic luck leads to ignorance and whether moral luck is incompatible with moral responsibility. It challenges mainstream positions in the literature in order to advance a new framework for thinking about the role that ignorance plays in our epistemic and ethical lives.

Philosophy orthodoxy has it that luck is incompatible with knowledge—a guess, even if true, doesn't amount to knowledge. Now, when it comes to ignorance, orthodoxy also has it that ignorance is equivalent either to (i) lack of knowledge or (ii) lack of true belief. If (i), the luck incompatible with knowledge *always* makes one ignorant; if (ii), the luck that leads to form a true belief *never* makes one ignorant. But these two mainstream positions have failed to distinguish different ways in which luck undermines knowledge and is concomitant to forming a true belief. As luck would have it, *not all* forms of luck are ignorance entailing. Whereas epistemic luck that permeates the environment doesn't yield ignorance because it allows the agent to retain epistemic access to the world, epistemic luck that intervenes on the agent's basis for belief is ignorance entailing, since the agent doesn't retain any epistemic access. These differences in epistemic luck vis-à-vis ignorance are significant in two ways: first, they show that ignorance need not be the result of failing to know or believing truly—pace mainstream views; and second, they suggest an alternative view that understands ignorance in terms of the epistemic access that an agent has to the world, given the quality of one's epistemic agency in forming a belief. On this view—what I call the Access View—epistemic access is irreducible to either knowledge or true belief. The Access View has the virtues of being sensitive to the different ways in which luck undermines knowledge and leads to form true beliefs, allowing us to bring together discussions of ignorance both in traditional and social epistemology, and to make sense of the idea that blameless ignorance excuses for moral wrongdoing.

In exploring the ethical dimensions of luck, this dissertation challenges the idea that luck in one's morally relevant actions is incompatible with the fairness of evaluations of moral responsibility, since moral worth should be open to anyone, anywhere, anytime, which allegedly isn't the case if luck is allowed to influence the morally relevant aspects of our actions. By granting this incompatibility, philosophers have proposed that luck should *not* affect moral responsibility evaluations. Given that luck seems ubiquitous, however, this incompatibility threatens to lead to skepticism about moral responsibility: no one is ever morally responsible (blameworthy or praiseworthy) for anything—we're all just lucky or unlucky to act as we do. This conundrum, known as the moral luck problem, is grounded on a conception of luck as lack of control. But, again, as luck would have it, luck neither makes moral responsibility unfair nor undermines it. Once we understand luck modally, i.e., as what happens and yet could have easily not happened, we can not only avoid skepticism, but also dissolve the tension between luck and the fairness of morality. Part of this dissolution means accepting that luck in fact affects moral responsibility, and yet this doesn't mean that evaluations of moral responsibility are inherently unfair: that luck can affect moral responsibility means that the grounds for those evaluations could have easily been other than what they are in actuality (e.g., one's moral character traits, one's morally relevant circumstances, etc.), which is compatible with morality being open to anyone, anywhere, anytime.