Oscar A. Piedrahita

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Research

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

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)

> I defend, against philosophical orthodoxy, that (i) ignorance shouldn't be understood in terms of lack of knowledge or true belief, but rather in terms of the quality of the agency and practices that subjects engage in when forming their beliefs; and that (ii) the effects luck can have on our morally significant actions needn't entail pessimism about our capacity to be morally responsible for what we do.

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 ($^{\dagger} \equiv$ Invited)

2022   Epistemología de la ignorancia: normatividad y suerte epistémica†
VI Jornada de Filosofía de la Mente @ Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia

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, 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

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
Fall 2022   Truth, Lies, and Bullshit

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE
Su 2021   Contemporary Moral Problems

As Graduate Student Instructor

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE
2019–22   Introduction to Philosophy ($\times 4$)
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)

UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES
2016–18   History and Philosophy of Science ($\times 4$)

Other Teaching
2018–20   TH!NK: Philosophy for Early Adolescents (UC Irvine)
2016–18   Writing Center Consultant (Universidad de los Andes)

Awards and Scholarships

2018–22   PhD Fulbright Scholarship
2021   Miguel Velez Fellowship
2019–21   Project Fellow, LATAM Free Will, Agency, and Responsibility
2018   Graduate Dean's Recruitment Fellowship (UC Irvine)

DAAD Exchange Program Scholarship
Santander Bank Exchange Scholarship

Departmental Service

University of California, Irvine

2020–21 Organizer: Graduate Work in Progress Series
2020 Student Representative: Committee on Diversity and Inclusiveness

Graduate Coursework ($^* \equiv$ 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)*, Money* (James), 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), Rawls' *A Theory of Justice** (James)

Languages

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

References

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Dissertation Abstract

I defend two main claims about ignorance and moral responsibility, given their interplay with luck. The first is that ignorance shouldn't be understood in terms of lack of knowledge or true belief—pace mainstream views—but rather in terms of the quality of the agency and practices that subjects engage in when forming their beliefs. The second is that the effects luck can have in our morally significant actions needn't entail pessimism about our capacity to be morally responsible for what we do, contrary to what some philosophers argue. The two claims suggest a new framework for thinking about the role that ignorance and luck 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 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 forming 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. I argue that 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. I also show that these differences in epistemic luck *vis-à-vis* ignorance are significant in two ways: first, they allow me to argue that ignorance need not be the result of failing to know or believing truly—that is, ignorance is neither lack of knowledge nor of true belief. 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 the formation of 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 moral wrongdoing.

In exploring the ethical dimensions of luck, this dissertation challenges the common 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, some philosophers have proposed that luck should *not* affect moral responsibility. Given that luck seems ubiquitous, 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. For I argue in favor of what is called *the modal account of luck*, according to which lucky events are those that occur and yet could have easily not occurred. With this account of luck in place, 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 affects 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.