



**University of  
Zurich** <sup>UZH</sup>

**Institute of Philosophy**

**Doctoral Program "Philosophy – Language, Mind and Practice"**

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**Master Class with Prof. Ernest Sosa (Rutgers University)**

**in collaboration with Prof. Hans-Johann Glock (University of Zurich)**

# **Virtue Epistemology**

**24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

This course will introduce a virtue-theoretic approach to epistemology. Although virtue theory is found already in Aristotle, its full application to epistemology came only much later, in the writings of Descartes. The course will open with a close study of Descartes's epistemology. It will be argued that his epistemology is a full-fledged virtue reliabilism featuring a distinction between *cognitio* and *scientia* closely correlated with a contemporary distinction between animal and reflective knowledge.

The contemporary approach will be introduced by way of two Platonic problems concerning knowledge. One is the *Meno* problem as to the distinctive value of knowledge by comparison with mere true belief. The other, which will be our main concern, is the *Theaetetus* problem as to the nature of knowledge. On the contemporary scene both problems have come to the fore in epistemology, one as the Gettier problem, the other as the value problem. Later in the course the value problem will come up, but first we focus on the problem of analysis, as posed by Edmund Gettier fifty years ago this year. We shall consider the nature of the problem and also a virtue-theoretic solution for it.

Epistemic reliability will be invoked in the solution to the Gettier problem. This too goes back to Descartes, or so it will be argued. And it will also prove revealing to compare the analysis of knowledge with that of perception and of action. Disjunctivism is a prominent recent response to such analyses, whether of action, perception, or knowledge. We shall compare such approaches with that of competence virtue epistemology.

Among additional topics to be treated are some or all of the following: knowledge and action; epistemic normativity and social epistemology; animal knowledge vs. reflective knowledge; the value problem; and virtue responsibilism vs. virtue reliabilism. We shall take a virtue-theoretic approach to each of the topics treated. One issue to be highlighted is that of epistemic agency and the aim of belief. A rich literature has grown around questions of doxastic agency and voluntarism. These questions loom large for virtue epistemology and we shall take them up in depth.

**Venue: Philosophisches Seminar, Zürichbergstrasse 43, 8044 Zürich, Room: ZUP-U-8**

**Registration: [phd@philos.uzh.ch](mailto:phd@philos.uzh.ch).**

**No fees apply, but please note that participants are expected to have done the reading of the texts. PhD students at the UZH are required to book the module in order to get 3 or 5 credit points.**



## **Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

**Morning 9:30 – 13:15**

### **Descartes and Virtue Epistemology**

Descartes, R.: *Meditations*

**Afternoon 15:15 – 19:00**

### **The Analysis of Knowledge**

Sosa, E.: The Metaphysical Gettier Problem and the X-Phi Critique

Pritchard, D.: Anti-Luck Virtue Epistemology

Kornblith, H.: *On Reflection* (selections)

## **Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

**Morning 9:30 – 13:15**

### **Knowledge, Action, and Judgement**

Sosa, E.: Knowledge and Action

-- Knowledge and Judgement

**Afternoon 15:15 – 19:00**

### **Epistemic Agency, Wisdom, and Social Epistemology**

Sosa, E.: Epistemic Agency

-- The Social Roots of Epistemology

Baehr, J.: *The Inquiring Mind* (selections)

### **General Background Reading**

Sosa, E.: Knowing Full Well (chs. 1, 2, 3, and 4, pp. 1 – 96)

Glock, H.-J.: Non-Human Knowledge and Non-human Agency