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I'm Duncan Pritchard, philosopher working on knowledge, scepticism, applied epistemology and author of 'Epistemic Angst: Radical Skepticism and the Groundlessness of Our Believing'. AMA!

DUNCANPRITCHARD [R/SCIENCE](#)

I'm [Duncan Pritchard](#), Chancellor's Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Irvine, and [Professor of Philosophy](#) at the University of Edinburgh. I work mainly in epistemology. In my first book, [Epistemic Luck](#), (Oxford UP, 2005), I argued for a distinctive methodology that I call *anti-luck epistemology*, and along the way offered a *modal account of luck*. In my second book, [The Nature and Value of Knowledge: Three Investigations](#), (with A. Haddock & A. Millar), (Oxford UP, 2010), I expanded on anti-luck epistemology to offer a new theory of knowledge (*anti-luck virtue epistemology*), and also explained how knowledge relates to such cognate notions as understanding and cognitive achievement. I also discussed the topic of epistemic value. In my third book, [Epistemological Disjunctivism](#), (Oxford UP, 2012), I defended a radical conception of perceptual knowledge, one that treats such knowledge as paradigmatically supported by reasons that are both rational and reflectively accessible. In my most recent book, [Epistemic Angst: Radical Skepticism and the Groundlessness of Our Believing](#) (Princeton UP, 2015), I offer an innovative response to the problem of radical scepticism. This argues that what looks like a single problem is in fact two logically distinct problems in disguise. Accordingly, I argue that we need a 'biscopic' resolution to scepticism that is suitably sensitive to each aspect of the sceptical difficulty. To this end I bring together two approaches to radical scepticism that have hitherto been thought to be competing, but which I argue are in fact complementary—viz., epistemological disjunctivism and a Wittgensteinian hinge epistemology. Right now I'm working on a new book on scepticism as part of Oxford UP's 'a very short introduction to' series. I'm also developing my recent work on [risk](#) and luck, particularly with regard to [epistemic risk](#), and I'm interested in 'applied' topics in epistemology, such as the [epistemology of education](#), the [epistemology of law](#), the [epistemology of religious belief](#), and the [epistemological implications of extended cognition](#).

I'm the Editor-in-Chief of the online journal [Oxford Bibliographies: Philosophy](#), and co-Editor-in-Chief of the journal [International Journal for the Study of Skepticism](#). I am also the series editor of two book series, [Palgrave Innovations in Philosophy](#) and [Brill Studies in Skepticism](#). I've edited a lot of volumes, and also written/edited several textbooks. On the latter front, see especially [What is this Thing Called Philosophy?](#), (Routledge, 2015), [Epistemology](#), (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), and [What is this Thing Called Knowledge?](#), (Routledge, 4th ed. 2018). I've been involved with numerous [MOOCs](#) (= Massive Open Online Courses), including the 'Introduction to Philosophy' course which was for one time the world's most popular MOOC. I've also been involved with a successful [Philosophy in Prisons](#) programme.

I've led quite a few large externally funded projects, often of an interdisciplinary nature. Some highlights include a major AHRC-funded project (c. £510K) on [Extended Knowledge](#), and two Templeton-funded projects, [Philosophy, Science and Religion Online](#) (c. £1.5M), and [Intellectual Humility MOOC](#) (c. £400K). In 2007 I was awarded the Philip Leverhulme Prize and in 2011 I was elected to a Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. In 2013 I delivered the annual [Soochow Lectures in Philosophy](#) in Taiwan. My Google Scholar Profile is [here](#). If you want to know what will eventually cause my demise, click [here](#).

Links of Interest:

I was recently interviewed by [3AM: Magazine](#)

Another recent interview, this time with the Italian online journal, APhEx ([PDF](#))

The [Introduction to my latest monograph, Epistemic Angst: Radical Skepticism and the Groundlessness of Our Believing](#) (Princeton UP, 2015)

"[Epistemological Disjunctivism: A First Pass](#)", the opening chapter to [Epistemological Disjunctivism](#) (Oxford UP, 2012)

A fairly recent [video of a talk I gave at a conference in Bonn that gives an overview of my stance on radical scepticism](#)

A fairly recent [video of a talk on 'Faith and Reason'](#) that I gave to a conference (aimed at a general audience) organized by the Royal Institute of Philosophy

A ['research in a nutshell' video](#) that I recorded a few years ago

[A recent blog post on 'Intellectual Humility and Conviction', for the Open For Debate Blog](#)

[A recent blog post on 'Farewell to Epistemic Angst', for the Imperfect Cognitions Blog](#)

["The Value of Knowledge"](#), Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy article

EDIT: Thanks everyone for your questions! I apologise to all those I didn't get to, and thanks to everyone for having me.

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CORRESPONDENCE:

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I'm writing an assignment on introduction of theoretical philosophy as we speak, and your book "What is this thing called knowledge?" is on the syllabus and my first part is about radical skepticism. I don't really have any questions for you as I have to do this assignment on my own, just wanted to stop by and tell you that your book is fantastic, easy to understand and read! Super helpful for a newbie like me, thank you!

[HotBloodBoy](#)

Thanks for the kind words about the book--glad you like it! (The fourth edition of this book is about to appear by the way, with new chapters on applied epistemology--we look at epistemic issues in the fields of technology, law, education and politics).

In the announcement thread [/u/TheGobblers](#) asked:

you seem to have written about 4564552 papers and several books in a relatively short career. What is your secret!?

[BernardJOrcutt](#)

Thanks for the kind words! I don't have a secret, this is rather a product of the way that I work. I think by writing, essentially, which means that if I want to straighten out my thoughts then I need to write them down. I'm also very much an incremental philosopher, in the sense that I inch forward, feeling my way through an area bit-by-bit. Both features lend themselves to writing a lot. I must say that I also love writing philosophy anyway--it's what I came into the job to do, and it's the one part of the job where I feel completely at home. There's nothing better than crafting ideas on a page and seeing everything slowly come together.

In the announcement thread [/u/ilikeplantinga](#) asked:

Duncan, do you think we can know that certain evils are gratuitous? What is your view on the response of skeptical theism to the problem of evil?

[BernardJOrcutt](#)

Sorry, but I've never formulated a position on skeptical theism.

In the announcement thread [/u/drrocket8775](#) asked:

Hi Dr. Pritchard!

I have two questions that kind of go together. So I'm starting a master's program in philosophy this next fall, and when I saw an epistemology class being offered I found myself shying away from it because I tend toward value theory, and my thought was I'd rather take a moral epistemology class than a survey epistemology class. Are those kind of attitudes epistemically justified-ish? Should value theory people care more about epistemology than whatever's in the moral epistemology class they took? It's just that if they really should, then it seems to imply that philosophers may need to be more well-rounded than current educational set-up allows them to be. If I'm a value theory person, but need to have all my area bases covered on at least a graduate level, then I don't know if I'll have enough time to develop my own specific thought well enough to get published and go to conferences. I guess I'm asking whether you think the choice to ignore some areas as a philosopher results in bad epistemic practices across the profession.

Thanks!

[BernardJOrcutt](#)

I don't think that one should have to decide between epistemology and value theory. There's a lot of axiology in epistemology after all, which is itself a normative domain akin to ethics in lots of ways. In fact, the work on virtue epistemology in the last 30 years or so has made these interconnections very clear. (Relatedly, the way some people do ethics often strips it of lots of value theory, so there's every chance that a contemporary epistemology course might have more value theory in it). You might find it helpful to look at the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on the value of knowledge that I co-wrote (linked above, and freely available online), since this explores and of the key points where epistemology and value theory intersect.

Hi Dr. Pritchard,

Do you think the Blackstone ratio can be applied to other domains where we want to assess risk? In the US, there's a live debate over the use of deadly force by the police, especially against minorities. If the Blackstone ratio about the legal system says that ten guilty men going free is preferable to one innocent man going to jail, could we say something similar about deadly force? Could we figure out a Blackstone ratio to determine what counts as justified use of a firearm?

[RaisinsAndPersons](#)

That's an interesting idea. I can see some merit in it, though I would argue that it's important to understand such a ratio modally rather than probabilistically, as otherwise we will tend to have some rather disturbing (lottery-style) cases on our hands whereby although the odds are low, someone (most likely someone in a disadvantaged social group) could nonetheless very easily be at risk in this way. See my paper, 'Legal Risk, Legal Evidence, and the Arithmetic of Criminal Justice', Jurisprudence (now out online, but I have a version posted here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/df6896t6oikwmec/LegalRisk.pdf?dl=0>)

Question:

I found myself extremely passionate about philosophy, but I'm from Malaysia which offers no degree in philosophy and studying abroad is under my financial comfort. I wish to study all the way to a doctorate for Philosophy and be in the research field and be a lecturer as well.

In this senario, should I a) study psychology/sosiology locally instead, or b) work until I can afford to study overseas? I'm genuinely passionate for Philosophy but I find myself challenged in all angles especially in terms of job prospects?

[zyea89](#)

I can see that this would be a difficult position to be in. I guess one option is to find a subject where some philosophy is taught as part of that other subject (the two you mention are good prospects on this score). There are also a lot of philosophy courses available online too now, many of them free, like MOOCs (indeed, I've run a few of the latter myself). A good undergraduate degree, and evidence of other independent study in Philosophy may be enough to get you onto an online masters program in Philosophy--there are a few of the latter around just now, and they may be ideal for someone in your situation. If you did well on such a program, then it could be the gateway to a funded position on a PhD program overseas. Good luck with your studies--I hope you succeed in your goal of doing teaching and research in philosophy. We especially need new blood from areas of the world where philosophy is under-represented.

Are there any philosophers that you think analytic philosophers should pay more attention to? I know that you've spent quite a bit of time looking at John Henry Newman, who isn't exactly standard reading in analytic philosophy. Anyone else you want to give a shoutout to?

[ADefiniteDescription](#)

Yes, Newman is fascinating (but also quite boring in places, so I have some sympathy with those who neglect his work). Cavell is unjustly neglected in my opinion. His work on doubt in Shakespeare is amazing (as his wonderful book on the screwball movies of the 30s and 40s). I find it incredible that Davidson and Dretske are starting to disappear from view already--our obsession with the 'current' is not healthy. I also think that analytical philosophers should read more novels!

What are your views on the intersection of epistemic analysis and scientific observation? Does the former contribute to the development and application of the latter? I guess, in a universal sense, what I am trying to ask is: do you view your work as having practical application beyond being a theory of knowledge? In what ways?

I have a fond appreciation of philosophical analyses from all areas but have always struggled to bridge theory with lived experience. Thank you for taking time to mingle with us happy pigs!

[cogitoesum2](#)

I certainly think that epistemology has practical application. As I mentioned in one of my previous replies here, the new edition of my textbook, *What is this Thing Called Knowledge?* (Routledge), has a new section (four chapters) that explores the application of epistemological ideas to particular domains.

Hi Duncan. Love your work. In your books about disjunctivism you assume a traditional analytical approach to knowledge (sometimes also called belief first epistemology). What are your thoughts on knowledge first epistemology, specially in relation to disjunctivism?

[eutonachama](#)

Glad you like the work! I don't see my approach as in conflict with K-first epistemology, at least in the general sense that one could recast a lot of what I say with knowledge as the basic notion. Proponents of K-first epistemology often are opposed to all analyses of K, however, whether reductive or otherwise, and here I would diverge. I think my anti-luck virtue epistemology is a complete account of knowledge. (But I don't claim that it's reductive--I'm open about that. Plus, I don't think that a good analysis of K

needs to be reductive, so I don't think this is a big issue. If it's non-reductive, then in principle it could be compatible with K-first in some form).

In the announcement thread [/u/ubercactuar](#) asked:

Hello Prof. Pritchard.

Do you think we can adopt a Hinge Epistemology without also adopting some form of epistemological consequentialism (as in Crispin Wright's take on entitlements).

[BernardJOrcutt](#)

Yes, absolutely. I think Wright's consequentialism is pretty sophisticated--in that it offers a kind of quasi-epistemic warrant rather than a prudential one (the latter is one of the dangers of the consequentialist approach applied to hinges). But my worry about it is that it delivers the wrong propositional attitude. Our hinge commitments are like beliefs in being all-out commitments to the target propositions. In particular, they are incompatible with agnosticism about the truth of these propositions. But Wright's strategy only gets you something like reasonable trust or acceptance, propositional attitudes that are compatible with agnosticism about the target propositions. The key thing, as I explain in the latest book *Epistemic Angst*, is to take seriously what Wittgenstein says about our hinge commitments being both animal (visceral, non-optional) certainties and also completely arational. As I explain in the book, if we get hinge commitments right, then we don't need an epistemic story about our 'acceptance' of them, or anything like that, so the need for anything consequentialist, with all its attendant problems, disappears.

Have you ever talked to a presuppositionalist? What would you say to such people?

[ISometimesEatPie](#)

Forgive my ignorance, but what's a presuppositionalist?

Prof Pritchard -

I'm curious if you feel there are political consequences to the attitude of radical doubt that seems to have undermined trust in institutions and experts in the public sphere, and if so, how you might see a path to repairing that trust.

[Finagles_Law](#)

Absolutely! Indeed, this is something that I'm writing more and more about. Right now, for example, I've been commissioned to write a book on skepticism for Oxford UP's 'very short introductions to' series, and this book will explore how skepticism can have pernicious political consequences. The challenge is to show how a healthy skepticism, which is vital to a well-functioning democracy, is kept apart in a principled way from the kind of skepticism that undermines democratic institutions (sometimes intentionally so). Part of the solution to this is to understand why some forms of scepticism are ill-founded, self-serving, and even self-defeating if treated consistently.

Prof. Pritchard,

With regard to your paper on the epistemology of education in particular, three questions:

1. You claim in the article that neuromedia (or perhaps, more broadly, bio-technological enhancements to intellectual ability) cannot enhance intellectual virtue, at least not directly. Would the putative 'app' considered nearer the end of the article plausibly address this gap, especially given advances in AI involving deep learning (where technology could perhaps 'learn' the virtuous mode of behaviour over time)?
2. One core assumption of your thought experiment is that of extended cognition via neuromedia, to distinguish it conceptually from the use of external tools where subject and instrument are clearly distinct. What happens though when this assumption of purity is abandoned? That is, if we consider just the actual widespread practice of relying on tools such as smartphones and laptops to look up information, to what extent has this extension of our knowledge via the ubiquity of this easily accessible information already changed or challenged traditional epistemological models?
3. Finally, in terms of education, the basic assumption here appears to be in line with that of virtue epistemology: that intellectual virtue is preferable. From certain pragmatic perspectives, though, education can often be seen as primarily about achieving economic goals of basic competency in terms of skills instead, especially when this is considered from the point of view of a government investing money into an education budget. How can this seemingly idealistic view of producing intellectually virtuous students be defended in the face of such utilitarian viewpoints?

[oklos](#)

The idea is that the app in question is enabling/assisting intellectual virtue, rather than being a replacement of it (in the way that other cognitive skills can be completely off-loaded onto technology). It's an interesting question whether AI could develop intellectual virtues, though it wasn't the one I was asking in the paper (this was rather the question of whether our intellectual virtues could be off-loaded onto technology). My hunch about AI is that we shouldn't expect it's intelligence to function like ours.

Thanks for doing this AMA Dr. Pritchard. I enjoyed the video of your talk on Wittgenstein's On Certainty, and I find the riverbed metaphor very helpful.

My question is this:

Is it not helpful for us to simply view all forms of belief and knowledge, from the religious and imaginative to the rigorously scientific (with the exclusion of deception for deception's sake), as a manifestation of a common Aristotelian *desire to know* type of faculty?

edit: e.g., positioning this faculty as a *desire* seems to help explain the pre-rational intractability of hinge commitments?

[optimister](#)

Maybe, although if one looks closely at what Aristotle actually says it isn't a general form of knowledge that he has in mind. Remember that the word he uses (eidanein) is a kind of seeing, which is why he goes on to say that this is why we delight in the senses. I think what he has in mind is a kind of seeing things for oneself, where this also includes an intellectual seeing for oneself (as when one understands causes). See, for example, my paper, 'Seeing It For Oneself: Perceptual Knowledge, Understanding, and Intellectual Autonomy', *Episteme* 13 (2016), 29-42 (available on my homepage: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/lm7129s5mpxwk91/SeeingItForOneself.pdf?dl=0>)

Hi Duncan. I recently became interested in your work on epistemological disjunctivism - through your 3am interview - as it to some extent represents a reconstruction and defence of a McDowellian account of the relationship between perception and knowledge. I haven't had the chance to get through enough

of your *Epistemological Disjunctivism* to ask a properly technical question, but I thought I should take up the opportunity to at least ask a broader question! Although you state that the book is inspired by the work of McDowell, you obviously stay away from an extended interpretive engagement with McDowell's body of work. I am interested in how you currently judge McDowell's wider project in light of your work on epistemological disjunctivism. Perhaps I can narrow this down to a couple of related questions: Do you think that the "holy grail" of resolving the internalist/externalist debate to their mutual satisfaction is synonymous with dissolving the philosophically broader, pervasive anxiety that McDowell identifies in *Mind and World*? Further, to what extent are the epistemological considerations McDowell makes in *Mind and World* isolable from his Aristotelian account of second nature and the accompanying revised conception of naturalism he offers? Thanks.

[soakedinmud](#)

That's a *big* question (/set of questions)! I think that the McD of *Mind and World* is really engaging with a Kantian skeptical problem rather than the Cartesian skeptical problem that ED is a solution to (in part, anyway). That is, roughly, while the latter takes it as given that we can think contentful thoughts about the world, but asks how we know such contents, the former asks how it is even possible to think contentful thoughts about an external world. I think we need both metaphysical and epistemological disjunctivism in order to answer both problems, though I haven't defended this in print. (I used to think that this was McD's line, but more recent work of his has made me doubt that, as he doesn't seem to clearly endorse metaphysical disjunctivism any more). I also think that the stuff on second nature is crucial--this also fits in with the Wittgensteinian element of McD's views. Again, though, I haven't written on this.

Hello Prof. Pritchard, thank you for answering our questions here. I've read quite a few of your papers over the years and I was actually going to write my dissertation on epistemic luck and understanding, although I ended up going in a different direction.

I wanted to ask: What traits, if any, do you look for in students that want to work under your supervision?

[Isakandri](#)

That's a great dissertation topic! I guess I look for someone who has original ideas, is committed to philosophy, and is self-motivated. These are the sorts of traits one needs to get a PhD, and are vital if one wants to go onto academia afterwards. Good luck with your studies!

In the announcement thread [/u/duckrabb1t](#) asked:

Thanks for doing this AMA! Now for the question: As part of your response to the problem of radical skepticism (in Epistemic Angst), you invoke a Wittgenstein-inspired notion of hinge commitments. The idea of a hinge commitment is meant to capture a sort of propositional attitude that is not directly responsive to reasons, but nevertheless stands as the foundation for our practices of rational evaluation. As I understand it, ordinarily, our hinge commitments are supposed to involve everyday sorts of things we don't usually pay attention to, such as one's having hands. I'm curious, though, whether you see this notion of hinge commitment as having relevance for, say, the current political climate in the United States? That is, might we see political divides in the U.S. (and elsewhere) as the result of a disagreement at the level of the hinge commitments held between different groups of people? I suggest this because it seems the dialectic is at a point where we can't even agree on very basic facts, and one explanation might be that we have very different epistemological bedrocks, so to speak. If so, how might we bridge this gap (or should we even want to)? And what role does reason play in all of this, granting that hinge commitments are not directly responsive to reasons?

[BernardJOrtcutt](#)

I think that this is absolutely right. Indeed, I think that understanding this fact helps us to resolve such disagreements. The point is that if we think of fundamental disagreements this way then there is little point in engaging with one's opponent 'head-on'. One advantage of my way of understanding hinge commitments in Epistemic Angst, however, is that there is a rational way to change someone's hinge commitments, albeit an indirect one. Thus, there can be rational ways to resolve disagreements of this kind, albeit indirect ones (roughly, one needs to change their wider set of beliefs, so that this set of beliefs generates different hinge commitments). I have a paper coming out on this in a special issue of TOPOI ('Wittgensteinian Hinge Epistemology and Deep Disagreement'). I don't have a final version yet, or I'd post a link here, but if anyone is interested, then drop me an e-mail and I'll send you the latest draft.

Hello there, Prof. Pritchard! I'm a Brazilian aspiring philosopher, and I've taken the introduction to philosophy course at the University of Edinburg through the online program, when I had your module for Epistemology.

I'm trying to engage in the project of the analysis of Knowledge, as I was really intrigued by the Gettier problem presented in your classes. I was drawn to it particularly by how such a short and precise article could present a structural weakness of the most accepted account of knowledge.

Moreover, I've read your paper on the anti-luck virtue approach, "Knowledge, Virtue and Luck: Resolving the Gettier Problem", listed as a key article of yours in the Edinburgh University website, and it really made it clear for me to understand the parameters involved into what it really matter for us when acquiring knowledge.

However, from what I've read on your paper, and from the other approaches which we're presented in your work as being currently developed by the philosopher's community, I thought that maybe we are still too attached to the classical account of justified true beliefs.

The way I see it, the JTB is not vulnerable only to Gettier style cases, but to the issue as a whole. Any knowledge about any proposition will always be haunted by Gettier in the same way it is haunted by hardcore skepticism, and for me it must have something to do with both considering that without some perspective, we are unable to be really sure about what we know, limited by our individual perspective.

The questions I wanted to pose are: Can we hold on to the classical account even though we've spotted it's structural fragilities? Shouldn't we focus on building a new approach considering our current state of affairs in the 21st century world? We are on the verge of being unable to distinguish real and fake news, as world citizens, so is there a way to add any requirement for perspective as an indispensable factor in order to obtain knowledge?

[stoner_woodcrafter](#)

Glad to hear that you have found my work useful! I think it is very important to keep the skeptical question apart from issues surrounding Gettier. One could answer the latter problem (and so offer a Gettier-proof account of knowledge), after all, while nonetheless being a skeptic who holds that there is no knowledge. In any case, if you've read that paper, then you will know that I think I have solved the Gettier problem. Indeed, I offer what I claim is a completely theory of knowledge, immune not only to Gettier-style cases but also other problem cases too. This is my anti-luck virtue epistemology. If that's right then the Gettier problem is far from being inevitable as you suggest.

Did you love St. Andrews (the town) as much as I did? Received my MA and PhD from there over the course the 1980s and 1990s.

[shylocxs](#)

Oh yes, what a beautiful place! Most people I know who lived there went a bit stir-crazy after a while, given how small it is, but I think it's testament to what a dull person I am that I never got tired of it! In fact, like most people I know who studied there, I met my (the future) wife there. We also go back there for short holiday breaks when we can.

Lets say you have a friend from your childhood that just suffered a psychotic break and now is convinced he is a brain in a vat, or in a simulation ala the matrix. He is lucid and can be reasoned with logically and emotionally as he normally would, but convinced of this specific delusion. How would you try to convince him that he is not existing in an illusion?

Given the situation of this individual that is experiencing a new found exestential dread, a long epistemic monologue detailing various solutions and problems would be less than ideal. We could even say he isnt well-versed in either epistemology or philosophy at all. Just a friend in a tricky situation asking for help.

We often experience philosophers through a lens of detailed work with carefully thought out sentences resting on a foundation of already established epistemic concepts. I would love to hear how one of the best modern epistemologists would relay his knowlegde in a non academic situation. Especially to such a difficult epistemic dead end.

Also, given the choice as in Matrix, would you take the blue pill or the red pill? Continue with your life as is, or experience the cold, depressing "real" world.

[MinorModalityMusic](#)

I'd rather be in the real world than a fake one anyway! If someone actually believes that they are in the matrix, then I'm not sure there is anything you can do to persuade them, or even what 'persuade' means in this context. I think it's unlikely that they do really believe this, though that brings in complex issues about belief-individuation that I can't really explain properly in a short post. Essentially, I don't think we should take people's belief-reports at face-value, particularly when they involve attributing massive error to themselves, as in this case. In any case, as Wittgenstein would say, anyone who really does believe such a thing needs psychological, not philosophical, help!

What are your thoughts on Susan Haack's foundherentism? Do you think that it is on the right track to a compatible view or does it just regress in your view?

[Aberu1337](#)

I think that before we can deal with the regress problem we need to understand the role that arational hinge commitments play in our structures of justification. This is why traditional attempts to deal with this problem, such as Haack's, don't get to the source of the problem, in my view anyway.

Hello Dr. Pritchard. Im a first year Philosophy Student from the Netherlands. Your book "What Is This Thing Called Knowledge" is our guide book to Epistemology. What do you think of the fact that your books are being used as guides to train the next generation of philosophers. Since, it is hard to choose the perfect guide book to something so relative as Philosophy.

[Lexotic](#)

I'd delighted that my textbooks get used in this way! This is the main motivation for me when it comes

to writing textbooks, in that I want to influence the discipline. I don't think that philosophy is a 'relative' discipline, by the way. In fact, there are quite a lot of things that most philosophers agree about, and where we disagree it's usually clear what we are disagreeing about. That's why a good textbook needn't be tendentious--done properly, it can give full expression to both sides (/all sides) of the debate.

In the announcement thread [/u/Mauss22](#) asked:

Re skepticism 1: You note that under-determination arguments for radical skepticism are false. Could you elaborate? Does your response change at all if we swap simulation-style *skepticism* with simulation-style *metaphysical hypotheses*? This re-framing of our epistemic situation can be found among physicists, AI-folk and philosophers. For example, Chalmers [offers](#) a metaphysical hypothesis for the Matrix-scenario.

Re skepticism 2: How do you address those radical skeptics that invert the Cartesian problem--treating our own minds or their contents or their properties as unreliable, unknowable, etc.?

[BernardJOrcutt](#)

My problem with underdetermination-based radical skepticism is that it presupposes a conception of rational support that I think is false. This is what I call the insularity of reasons: the idea that even in the best epistemic conditions our beliefs about the external world could be massively false. I oppose this idea with epistemological disjunctivism. See Epistemic Angst for the details.

Curious what led you to this specialty?

Is this anything like the "street epistemology" practiced by Anthony Magnabosco in his YouTube series?

What's "radical scepticism" in a nutshell?

Thanks!

[chevymonza](#)

I got into epistemology via the problem of radical skepticism, which still fascinates me. In a nutshell, this is the problem of showing that we have much of the knowledge that we take ourselves to have, as there are various considerations which seem to show that such knowledge is impossible. I'm afraid I don't know Magnabosco's videos, but I will be sure to check them out!

Hi Professor Pritchard - thanks for joining us today, it's great to have you.

I have a couple quick questions about your Philosophy in Prisons programme. What led you to start a programme like this, as opposed to some other type of philosophy outreach? Is there something specific about prisoners such that you think philosophy would be particularly beneficial to their lives, or that teaching them philosophy may be beneficial to society (or maybe both)?

And a related question: what time of philosophy outreach would you personally like to see more of in the future? We already have philosophy in prisons, and for children, and in secondary schools and the like. What is next on the horizon, if you had to guess?

[ADefiniteDescription](#)

I was led into this by finding out the woeful nature of 'prison education' in Scottish prisons (I gather the same situation also applies in England and Wales, though I don't have first-hand knowledge in this regard). Basically, all they get is a few art classes and some cognitive behavioural therapy. With that in mind, the prospect of doing something that might actually benefit their lives was very attractive, and might also convince policy makers to offer more educational opportunities to prisoners. Although I only found this out subsequently, prisoners are also ideal for philosophy, as they tend to be alienated not just from society but from what we might call the realm of reasons. What I mean by this is that they don't see the point in offering reasons, engaging in constructive argument, and so forth, as they haven't seen how this might be helpful in their lives. With this in mind, once they start to do philosophy they find it eye-opening--the transformation is quite incredible.

Hi, Pritchard! Thanks for answering our questions.

My question is the following: do you think that the epistemic situationism (ES) poses a big problem for virtue epistemology or ES is easily solved?

Thanks a lot!

[VVSRL](#)

I basically think that the problem is over-stated. Once the results are properly understood, then I think that one can be a virtue epistemologist and still allow that there are some kinds of pervasive cognitive bias. I've a few papers on this, such as this one (though I kind of feel that I haven't formulated my final word on this topic yet): 'Re-evaluating the Epistemic Situationist Challenge to Virtue Epistemology', *Naturalizing Epistemic Virtue*, (eds.) A. Fairweather & O. Flanagan, 143-54, (Cambridge UP, 2014). (Available on my homepage: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/qbhid9g9bio3mar/SituationismVE.pdf?dl=0>)

I have two questions for you. First and most importantly, what advice about possible career options for someone who is more interested in the actual practice and application of philosophy and not as much the style of most major universities who teach it more like a literature class where you mostly study memorize and recite the works of past philosophers.

Secondly, just from random curiosity do you know of or would you be interested in a purely audio form of an academic journal?

[Ber-Z-erK](#)

I'm not sure where you are studying philosophy, but I don't recognize your characterization of it here (I've certainly never been asked to memorize and recite past philosophers). It sounds like you need to study philosophy elsewhere! I wouldn't find an audio journal helpful myself, as I like to read articles, but I know lots of people do like to listen to them instead. (Though isn't an audio journal redundant, given that there is now software that can read out papers anyway?)

Pineapple on pizza or no?

[drchopsalot](#)

Pineapple!

Pancakes or Waffles?

[BurgundyMuffin](#)

Neither--I have the unusual trait of finding all sweet foods disgusting. (And I know you can get savory versions of each, but in my experience they are also quite sweet for some reason, just like savory scones). If only I could develop an aversion to cheese-on-toast!