

Workshop: Empirical Data and Philosophical Theorizing (EDPT)
Barcelona, 6 - 7 October 2012

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Title: The Psychology of Philosophy

Abstract: I discuss the psychology of consciousness studies, ethics, and metaphysics. In each case, on psychological and empirical grounds, I favor somewhat pessimistic conclusions about professional philosophers' epistemic condition. In consciousness studies, I argue that we have no trustworthy means to settle one of the most basic questions about the stream of experience and consequently no good grounds for choosing among a variety of radically different theories of consciousness. In ethics, I present evidence that professional ethicists' opinions about well-known moral principles, rather than being secure and stable, vary considerably depending on the order in which hypothetical scenarios are presented. In metaphysics, I present reasons, partly based in an empirical examination of the history of philosophy, to think that broad-ranging theories will inevitably be bizarre and unconvincing of belief.