

About

This international workshop wants to explore multiple relations between epistemic (in)justice, public participation and criticism in the field of medicine and public health. Moral and sociopolitical rejection of medicine and biotechnology is often evoked by concepts of the body, critique in response to power asymmetries, and distrust in the responsible actors. Discourses at the intersection of academia and public institutions tend to render these aspects as 'irrational' or 'personal' attitudes, countering them with facts and statistics. Involving the public is a current strategy to convey respective information. Whether this involvement leads to participation and deliberation, however, is as controversial as the question of how to deal with moral dissent.

Concepts of the body, multiple uncertainties, and 'gut feelings' of skeptics might cause conceptual gaps within individual self-understanding and foster the tendency to underestimate the reliability of one's personal judgments. It is precisely these conceptual gaps that often give rise to the exclusion of skeptics. Moreover, the exclusion risks fostering bad epistemic conduct or even epistemic injustice within the academic discourse. Starting from these debates, the workshop examines conceptual and methodological relations between epistemic injustice, critique, and moral discourses.



UNIVERSITÄTSMEDIZIN
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Organizers

Dr. Solveig Lena Hansen
Prof. Dr. Silke Schicktanz

University Medical Centre Göttingen
Department of Medical Ethics and
the History of Medicine

Contact

solveig-lena.hansen@medizin.uni-goettingen.de
Tel.: (+49) 551-399316

Registration until February 25

Venue

Department of Medical Ethics and
the History of Medicine
Humboldtallee 36, 37073 Göttingen

Apex
Burgstraße 46, 37073 Göttingen



Engaging the Skeptics?!

Epistemic (In)justice, Public Participation, and Moral Expertise in Health Discourses



International Workshop

March 4/5, 2019
Göttingen

DFG

Monday, March 4, 2019

- 13.15 - 13.30 Opening Remarks
- 13.30 - 14.30 Emotional Underpinnings of Constructive Engagement. Rereading Deliberative Theory.
Hartmut Wessler (Mannheim)
- 14.30 - 15.00 Break
- 15.00 - 16.00 The Role of Art for Involving the Public in Emotional Moral Reflection.
Sabine Roeser (Delft)
- 16.00 - 17.00 Distrust in Health Information? Ethical Reflections in Times of Digital Communication.
Solveig Lena Hansen (Göttingen)
- 19.00 Dinner at the „Apex“

Tuesday, March 5, 2019

- 09.30 - 10.30 Epistemic (In)justice, Counter Publics and Sceptics in Bioethical Conflicts.
Silke Schicktanz (Göttingen)
- 10.30 - 11.30 Winning Hearts and Minds in a Post-Scientific Zeitgeist: Lessons from Social Psychological Research.
Robbie Sutton (Kent)
- 11.30 - 12.00 Break
- 12.00 - 12.30 Summary of Workshop Discussions
Iris Hilbrich (Hamburg)
- 12.30 - 12.45 Concluding Remarks
- 13.00 End of the Workshop and Optional Lunch

Abstracts

Emotional Underpinnings of Constructive Engagement. Rereading Deliberative Theory.

Hartmut Wessler (Mannheim)

Conventional wisdom has it that there is no room for emotions in deliberative theory. But, as Michael Neble has aptly remarked, for deliberativists the antonym of reason is not emotion, but power. Thus, instead of denying the importance of emotion, deliberative theory asks which emotions support deliberative qualities of debate that reign in the unabashed exercise of power, and which emotions do not. In this talk I reconstruct three complementary entry points for a nascent deliberative theory of emotions. First, in "The inclusion of the other" (1998) Habermas himself grants moral feelings like abhorrence, contempt, shame or guilt the function of justifications in situations of perceived moral transgression. Second, self-transcending emotions like pity, gratitude, respect, and elevation open discussions to the concerns and feelings of formerly neglected others and can thus support more deliberative orientations. Positive self-centered emotions like amazement and hope, finally, can also open up discursive spaces as they mark an acceleration of societal learning. I call for more sophisticated analysis of the emotional basis of deliberative qualities in mediated discourse and offer some suggestions on how to rethink mediated communication in relation to organ donations.

The Role of Art for Involving the Public in Emotional Moral Reflection.

Sabine Roeser (Delft)

In my contribution I will discuss how art can contribute to what I call 'emotional-moral reflection', in public deliberation on risky technologies and other public controversies. I argue that art that engages for example with technological developments and other societal challenges can help us to reflect on important moral and societal values, by enticing our imagination and compassion. I will also discuss how this can contribute to reflection on public health controversies, specifically concerning organ donation.

Distrust in Health Information? Ethical Reflection in Times of Digital Communication.

Solveig Lena Hansen (Göttingen)

Current views refer to different moral obligations when health information is produced and conveyed. Leading principles that regulate and justify health promotion are doing no harm, justice and equity, and effectiveness. I will try to enrich this debate with a special focus on digital health information in organ donation. In times of digital communication, public discussions evolve about trustworthiness and reliance of information. With philosophical approaches to distrust as unfulfilled commitment (Hawley), I will ask how distrust in contested health issues is different from distrust

in other fields of information. This leads to a new interpretation of what skeptics actually mean when arguing that they mistrust health information, and to ameliorative strategies in the field of communication.

Epistemic (In)Justice, Counter Publics and Sceptics in Bioethical Conflicts.

Silke Schicktanz (Göttingen)

Bioethical conflicts can originate from epistemic, moral, or social divergence – or also from all of these. In my contribution, I will argue, first, that the epistemic dimension has been overlooked for a long time. Therefore, epistemic justice must be explicitly addressed to enable constructive ways of bioethical discourses. Second, skepticism constitutes a specific form of counter public (Fraser). Thus, skepticism should not only be addressed and scrutinized along the underlying divergent dimensions; the underlying power relations of existing bioethical discourses related to these dimensions must also be considered in this context. Third, I will address specifically the perspective of 'being affected' as a hybrid form of the epistemic, social, and moral dimensions. Hence, we can acquire specific meta-ethical insights by integrating affected perspectives and especially affected skeptics into bioethical conversations.

Winning Hearts and Minds in a Post-Scientific Zeitgeist: Lessons from Social Psychological Research.

Robbie Sutton (Kent)

People use the Internet to read about three times as much conspiracy theorizing about science than coverage of science. An increasing number of Internet users exploit its unprecedented connectivity and startling speed to spread flat-earth theories across the globe. I shall argue that these are symptoms of a truly dialectical, post-scientific Zeitgeist. Science has effected profound cultural, social, and material transformations, and so (ironically) motivates and enables radical new doubts and new challenges to its value and veracity. Recent social psychological research, including research by my colleagues and I, has uncovered specific motivational factors that underlie adverse reactions to specific areas of scientific inquiry (e.g., genetic modification, vaccination, and climate science). These motivational factors include social and political conservatism (concerns with authority, tradition, and identity), religious orthodoxy, and moral intuitions about harm and bodily purity. Although discernibly different from each other, each generally reflects concern about the disruption of the old by the new. Each motivational factor also represents a challenge but not, if sensitively considered, an obstacle to the acceptance of science.