Andre LeBrun

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Research Interests

AOS: Kant; Early Modern Philosophy (esp. Cavendish & Hume); Epistemology

AOC: Ancient Philosophy; Mind; Metaphysics; Ethics; History of Analytic Phil.

Education

Ph.D., Philosophy, University of California, Irvine
Irvine, California
October 2018 – June 2025

- Dissertation: *The Proper Employment of Skepticism: Pyrrhonian Themes in Kant's Critical Philosophy*
- Committee: Sven Bernecker, Karl Schafer (UT Austin), Casey Perin, Jeremy Heis, Duncan Pritchard

M.A., Philosophy, University of California, Irvine
Irvine, California
October 2018 – March 2021

B.A., Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
August 2013 – December 2017

- *Magna cum laude* with Honors in Philosophy

Publications

"The Antinomies and Pyrrhonism," in *Kant's Project of Enlightenment: Proceedings of the 14th International Kant Congress*, De Gruyter (forthcoming).

Works in Progress

Title withheld (paper on Kant's Antinomies and Pyrrhonian skepticism) – *Under review*

"Margaret Cavendish on Skepticism and Probable Opinion" – *Draft available*

"The Skeptic and the Conspiracy Theorist" – *In preparation*

Conference Presentations

(† indicates peer-reviewed submission; * indicates invited talk)

North American Kant Society (NAKS) Biennial
McGill University (Montreal, Canada) – October 2025
Paper title: "Pyrrhonian Skepticism and Kant's Critical Method in the Antinomies" †

The 99th Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association
University of Glasgow (Glasgow, Scotland) – July 2025
Paper title: "Margaret Cavendish on Skepticism and Probable Opinion" †

The 14th International Kant Congress
University of Bonn (Bonn, Germany) – September 2024
Paper title: "The Antinomies and Pyrrhonism" †

Traveling Early Modern Philosophy Organization (TEMPO) Annual Conference
Metropolitan State University (Denver, Colorado) – April 2024
Paper title: "Margaret Cavendish on Skepticism and Probable Opinion" †

Australasian Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy
University of Otago (Dunedin, New Zealand) – November 2023
Paper title: "Kant's Antinomies and Pyrrhonian Skepticism" †

Nordic Workshop in Early Modern Philosophy
University of Jyväskylä (Jyväskylä, Finland) – August 2023
Paper title: "Kant's Antinomies and Pyrrhonian Skepticism" †

The Cavendish Collective Virtual Workshop
Online Conference – June 2023
Paper title: "Cavendish on Skepticism" †

Long Island Philosophical Society Annual Conference
St. John's University (Queens, New York) – April 2023
Paper title: "Kant on Pyrrhonism in the Logic Lectures" †

Digitales Kant-Zentrum Nordrhein-Westfalen (NRW) Opening Workshop
University of Siegen (Siegen, Germany) – September 2022
Paper title: "Testimony in Kant's Lectures on Logic" *

Teaching Experience

Lecturer – Loyola Marymount University
Department of Philosophy
Spring 2024

- Course: Philosophical Inquiry (x2)

Instructor of Record – University of California, Irvine
Department of Philosophy
Summer 2023

- Course: Puzzles & Paradoxes

Teaching Assistant – University of California, Irvine
Department of Philosophy
Fall 2019 – Present

- Courses: († indicates upper-division course)
  - Introduction to Philosophy (x3)
  - Puzzles & Paradoxes (x3)
  - Introduction to Ethics (x3)
  - Technology & Society (x2)
  - Ancient Philosophy (x2)
  - Modern Philosophy
  - Metaphysics†
  - Philosophy of Language†

Department of Classics
Fall 2021 – Spring 2024

- Courses:
  - The Greek Gods (x2)
  - History: Classical Greece
  - Classical Mythology

Guest Lecturer

January 2025 – University of California, Irvine

- Course: Metaphysics
- Lecture topic: Descartes & Elisabeth of Bohemia on the mind

Guest Lecturer

February 2022 – Chapman University

- Course: Introduction to Ethics
- Lecture topic: Hume's ethics in Book 3 of the *Treatise of Human Nature*

Service & Pedagogy

Workshop Co-Organizer – April 2025
University of California SoCal Kant Work-In-Progress Group (UCSKWIP)
Host Institution: University of California, Riverside

Invited Speaker, Pedagogy Workshop – November 2023
Pedagogical Humanities Certificate Workshop, Humanities Center
University of California, Irvine (Irvine, California)

Certificate in Pedagogy & Inclusivity – June 2023
Center for Canon Expansion and Change (CCEC)
University of Minnesota (Minneapolis, Minnesota)

PhilPapers Category Editor – 2023–Present
Category: Margaret Cavendish

Session Chair – May 2023
Traveling Early Modern Philosophy Organization (TEMPO) Annual Conference
Washington University in St. Louis (St. Louis, Missouri)

Guest Teacher – 2019–2024
TH!NK: Philosophy for Early Adolescents (via UC Irvine Department of Philosophy)
Teaching basic philosophical concepts to students at local elementary schools

Awards and Scholarships

Professional Development Award, University of California, Irvine, Fall 2024
Professional Development Award, University of California, Irvine, Spring 2024
School of Humanities Travel Grant, University of California, Irvine, Fall 2023
Professional Development Award, University of California, Irvine, Fall 2023
Mirasol Travel Study Award, University of California, Irvine, 2023–24
Professional Development Award, University of California, Irvine, Spring 2023
School of Humanities Travel Grant, University of California, Irvine, Spring 2023
Regents' Fellowship, University of California, Irvine, 2018–19
Phi Beta Kappa, University of Pittsburgh, Spring 2018
Brackenridge Research Fellowship, University of Pittsburgh, 2017
Merit Scholarship, University of Pittsburgh, 2013–17

Graduate Coursework

(* indicates that a course was audited)

History of Philosophy: Ancient & Medieval
Plato's *Gorgias* (Casey Perin)
Plato's *Republic** (Casey Perin)
Augustine's *Confessions** (Peter King; taught at UCLA)

History of Philosophy: 17th & 18th Centuries
Reason in Kant (Karl Schafer)
Independent Study: Hume & Kant (Karl Schafer)
Kant's Philosophy of Science (Jeremy Heis)
Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason** (Jeremy Heis)
Early Modern Views on the Self (John Carriero & Edwin McCann; taught at UCLA)
Kant's First *Critique* (Stephen Engstrom; taught at the University of Pittsburgh)
Kantian Aesthetics (Georges Van Den Abbeele)
Hume's Epistemology* (Sean Greenberg)
Locke & Reid* (Jeffrey Schatz)

History of Philosophy: 19th & 20th Centuries
History of Analytic Philosophy I* (Jeremy Heis)
History of Analytic Philosophy II (Jeremy Heis)
Independent Study: J.L. Austin (Allison Koslow)

Epistemology & Metaphysics
Epistemic Relativism (Annalisa Coliva)
Contemporary Epistemology* (Annalisa Coliva)
Hinge Epistemology* (Annalisa Coliva)
First-Year Seminar (Duncan Pritchard)
Emergence, Supervenience, Fundamentality (Marcello Fiocco)

Logic & Philosophy of Science
Set Theory (Toby Meadows)
The Evolution of Cognition: What Is Thinking For? (Kyle Stanford)
Scientific Realism and Anti-Realism* (Kyle Stanford)

Ethics & Value Theory
Contemporary Metaethics* (Karl Schafer)
Anti-Racism in Philosophy Workshop (J.B. Manchak & Karl Schafer)
Topics in Ethics* (Jeffrey Helmreich)

Professional References

Karl Schafer
Professor of Philosophy
University of Texas at Austin
karl.schafer@austin.utexas.edu

Sven Bernecker
Chancellor's Professor of Philosophy
University of California, Irvine
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Duncan Pritchard
Distinguished Professor of Philosophy
University of California, Irvine
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John Carriero
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Jeremy Heis
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Dissertation Abstract

Readers of Kant's logic lectures will be familiar with their surprisingly sympathetic portrayal of Pyrrhonian skepticism: In the *Blomberg Logic*, Kant says that Pyrrho was "a very wise man," and describes the Pyrrhonian skeptic as someone who suspends judgment not in order to call the possibility of knowledge into question, but rather "in order to discover by this means the path to truth" (*BL* 24:211-4). The Pyrrhonist, we are told, "did not really doubt all truths," but rather postponed judgment in the face of inadequate grounds for belief, thus leading the dogmatists "to the path of caution" (*BL* 24:213). This portrayal is surprising, of course, because of Kant's reputed hostility to all forms of skepticism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Moreover, the view attributed to Pyrrho here closely mirrors what Kant calls the "skeptical method" in the Antinomy of Pure Reason, which is in turn closely associated with Kant's own "critical method" and his solution to the Antinomies. Given that many scholars interpret the Antinomies as a refutation of Pyrrhonian arguments from equipollence, we should find it puzzling that Kant harbored such admiration for the main proponent of this form of skeptical argument.

My dissertation aims to make sense of these remarks by offering a comprehensive account of Kant's interpretation of Pyrrhonian skepticism, examining the role which he assigns to it in the Antinomies, and working out how we should understand the broader relationship between the Pyrrhonist's skeptical method and Kant's own critical method. I begin by laying out Kant's interpretation of Pyrrhonism, which diverges considerably from standard interpretations. By Kant's lights, the Pyrrhonist's skeptical method does not aim to undermine the possibility of knowledge in general and allows that there are many cases in which we have sufficient reason to endorse some belief over another incompatible belief. Thus, the Pyrrhonism which Kant endorses comes out to be a "mitigated" form of skepticism. This "skeptical method" is contrasted with mere "skepticism," a distinct response to equipollence arguments which Kant criticizes for its dogmatic denial of the possibility of knowledge and its refusal to limit the scope of its doubt to matters of pure reason.

I then show that Kant's critical solution to the Antinomies, far from aiming to refute Pyrrhonian skepticism, uses the Pyrrhonist's skeptical solution to particular antinomic disputes as a model. As I understand Kant in the Antinomies, the main difference between the two solutions is meant to be that Kant's own critical method, by introducing the doctrine of transcendental idealism, can offer a generalized version of the Pyrrhonist's skeptical method. By offering a solution which can dissolve every possible iteration of the antinomic disputes, the critical method does away with the transcendental illusion which otherwise tempts pure reason, but also gives us principled grounds for affirming the limits which the Pyrrhonian skeptic places on human cognition.

Next, I examine passages in the Discipline of Pure Reason which are sometimes taken to show that Kant rejected Pyrrhonian skepticism and conclude that they are not a problem for my reading. Central to my argument here is the claim that the structure of the Discipline of Pure Reason forces Kant to run together Pyrrhonian and Humean forms of skepticism which are elsewhere kept distinct, and that passages signaling a break with Hume on matters of the understanding should not be misinterpreted as also representing a break with Pyrrho on matters of pure reason.

In the last chapter of the dissertation, I suggest that the critical method which Kant employs in the Antinomies in fact simply collapses into the skeptical method which he attributes to the Pyrrhonist. Given the many places where Kant carefully draws a distinction between the two, we have good reason to think that he did not anticipate this possibility. However, I contend that it fits comfortably with his quasi-Pyrrhonian solution to the Antinomies, and moreover, that he might have been amenable to this suggestion. I conclude by discussing the principal benefits of this outcome for Kant, situating Hume's skepticism in relation to the project, and laying out the broader consequences for Kant's critical philosophy.