

Knowledge and Reality

A. Useful Recent Anthologies

I. Epistemology

Sven Bernecker and Fred Dretske, eds., *Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

Jonathan Dancy, ed., *Perceptual Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

John Greco and Ernest Sosa, eds., *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (Blackwell, 1999).

Jaegwon Kim and Ernest Sosa, eds., *Epistemology: An Anthology* (Blackwell, 2000).

Keith DeRose and Ted Warfield, eds., *Skepticism: A Contemporary Reader* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

II. Metaphysics

Jaegwon Kim and Ernest Sosa, eds., *Metaphysics: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

Stephen Laurence and Cynthia Macdonald, eds., *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are mandatory; others are optional.

1. Scepticism

- a) *Keith DeRose, "Introduction: Responding to Skepticism," in DeRose and Warfield.
An introductory survey, setting out the sceptical argument and the various standard ways of responding to it.
- b) G. E. Moore, "Four forms of scepticism," in Kim and Sosa.
A brief note, expounding Moore's famous reaction to scepticism.
- c) *Robert Nozick, "Knowledge and Skepticism", in his *Philosophical Explanations* (Clarendon Press, 1981), 167-247; reprinted in Kim and Sosa; in DeRose and Warfield; and in Bernecker and Dretske.
Proposes Nozick's "subjunctive conditionals" analysis of knowledge, and explains how an adherent of this analysis can meet the 'modest anti-skeptical challenge', i.e. can show how knowledge might be possible despite the possibility of sceptical scenarios (as opposed to the 'ambitious anti-skeptical challenge', viz. that of refuting the skeptic on his own terms).
- d) *David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74 (1996): 549-567; available online from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk/>; reprinted in David Lewis, *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); in DeRose and Warfield; in Bernecker and Dretske; and in Kim and Sosa.
Proposes a "contextualist" account of knowledge that has the consequence that scepticism is true in the context of epistemology discussions, but that in everyday contexts we do have the ordinary knowledge we take ourselves to have.
- e) *Christopher Hill, "Process reliabilism and Cartesian scepticism", in DeRose and Warfield.
Provides an exposition of Goldman's "process reliabilist" account of justification, and defends that account against the objection that it cannot account for the intuitive plausibility of the sceptical arguments.
- f) *Hilary Putnam, "Brains in a vat", in DeRose and Warfield.
Proposes a "semantic externalist" account of the contents of thoughts, according to which the BIV does not have the same beliefs as a normal person, and hence the sceptical argument fails.

- g) James Pryor, “The Skeptic and the Dogmatist”, *Noûs* 34 (2000), 517-49; available online from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk/>.
Proposes ‘dogmatism’ about perceptual justification, and shows how a dogmatist can meet the modest anti-skeptical challenge. (Section II of this paper also discusses the issue of which is the most compelling sceptical argument.)
- h) Keith DeRose, “Solving the Skeptical Problem”, *Philosophical Review* 104 (1995), 1-52; available online from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk/>; reprinted in DeRose and Warfield; and in Kim and Sosa.
Proposes a modified contextualist solution that is supposed to capture also what is correct about the subjunctive conditionals account, and gives reasons for thinking this solution superior to its various rivals.
- i) Crispin Wright, “Facts and Certainty”, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 71 (1985) 429-72.

Essay topic: What are the best (or most challenging) arguments for scepticism? What is the best way to respond to these arguments?

Past Finals questions:

(2000, q1) ‘Perhaps the best scepticism-rebutting argument in favour of the existence of body is the quasi-scientific argument... that the existence of a world of physical objects having more or less the properties which current science attributes to them provides the best available explanation of the phenomena of experience’ (STRAWSON). Discuss.

(2001, q1) Should philosophers try to prove the existence of external objects?

(2001, q3) I can conceive of a creature with radically false beliefs about its environment, so how can I know that I am not such a creature?

(2001, q4) ‘Our belief in the existence of other people cannot be anything like a scientific hypothesis, since scientific procedures presuppose the cooperation and hence the existence of other people.’ Discuss.

(2002, q1) Is it inconsistent for a sceptic to argue that reason is unreliable?

2. Internalism and Externalism

- a) *Pappas, G., 'Externalist vs. Internalist Conceptions of Epistemic Justification', Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy
- b) *Bonjour, L., *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Solutions*, OUP (2002), chapter 10.
- c) *Goldman, A., 'Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge', *Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976), pp. 771-791. Reprinted in Brenecker, S., and Dretske, F., *Knowledge: readings in Contemporary Epistemology*, OUP (2000).
- d) *Chisholm, R., 'The indispensability of Internal Justification', *Synthese* 74 (1988), pp. 285-296. Reprinted in Brenecker and Dretske.
- e) *Bonjour, L., 'Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* (1980), pp.53-73. Reprinted in Brenecker and Dretske.
- f) Alston, W., 'Internalist Externalism', *Synthese* 74 (1988), pp. 265-283. Reprinted in Brenecker and Dretske.
- g) Williamson, T., 'On being justified in one's head', in Timmons, M., Greco, J., and Mele, A., (eds.), *Rationality and the Good: Critical Essays on the Ethics and Epistemology of Robert Audi*, OUP (2007).
- h) Armstrong, D., 'The Thermometer Model of Knowledge', in Brenecker and Dretske (eds.).
- i) Foley, R., 'What is wrong with reliabilism?', *Monist* 68 (1985), pp. 188-202.

Essay topic: What does externalism about justification amount to? How is it related to externalism about knowledge? Is either or both of these "externalist" views correct?

Past Finals questions:

(2002, q6) Can externalists account for knowledge that one knows?

(2004, q10) Can an externalist account of justification accommodate the fact that one's possession of counter-evidence can make one's beliefs unjustified?

3. A priori knowledge

- a) *Laurence Bonjour, *In Defense of Pure Reason* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). Ch. 1.
Introduction to the problem of a priori knowledge, and survey of three positions attempting to deal with the problem: 'rationalism', 'moderate empiricism' (which includes positivism), and 'radical empiricism'.
- b) *A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 2nd edition (Gollancz, 1946), Ch. 4.
Classic statement and defence of the positivist account.
- c) *Bonjour, Ch. 2.
Criticism of 'moderate empiricist' accounts.
- d) *W. V. Quine, "Two dogmas of empiricism", reprinted in his *From a Logical Point of View*, revised edition (Harvard University Press, 1961).
Classic statement and defence of the 'radical empiricist' account, including Quine's famous attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction and his defence of confirmational holism. Arguably, this is a view according to which there is no a priori knowledge.
- e) *Bonjour, Ch.3, sections 3.1-3.5 (pp.62-82). (The remainder of Ch. 3 is optional.)
Criticism of 'radical empiricist' accounts.
- f) Bonjour, Ch.6.
Statement of and replies to some objections to a 'rationalist' account. Includes connections to issues of the "language of thought" hypothesis, direct reference, and conceptual role semantics.
- g) H. P. Grice and P. F. Strawson, "In defense of a dogma", *Philosophical Review* 65 (1956), 141-158; available online from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk/>; reprinted in H. P. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Harvard University Press, 1989).
Defence of the concept of analyticity against Quine's attack in "Two dogmas...".
- h) Philip Kitcher, "A Priori Knowledge," *Philosophical Review* 89 (1980), 3-23; available online from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk/>; reprinted in Bernecker and Dretske.
Proposes and defends an analysis of "X knows a priori that p".

- i) George Bealer, “The A Priori”, in John Greco and Ernest Sosa, *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*.
Proposes an account according to which intuitions serve as evidence generating a priori knowledge in much the same way, and for much the same reasons, that perceptual experiences serve as evidence generating a posteriori knowledge.
- j) Paul Boghossian, “Analyticity”, in Bob Hale and Crispin Wright, eds., *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language* (Blackwell, 1997).
Argues that there is a notion of analyticity that is unscathed by (the correct part of) Quine’s critique, and that underwrites a coherent concept of a priori knowledge.

Essay topic: What is a priori knowledge? Is there any? Why or why not?

Past Finals questions:

(2000, q14) ‘A knows *a priori* that p if and only if A believes that p and it is necessarily true that p.’ Discuss.

(2002, q9) If I cannot know a priori that my brain isn’t malfunctioning, how can I know anything *a priori*?

4. Perception

- a) *Jonathan Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (Oxford UP, 1988) chapters 10-11.
An introductory survey, describing various positions in the philosophy of perception (direct and indirect realism, phenomenalism, and types thereof), and sketching the main arguments for and against each.
- b) *A. J. Ayer, *The Central Questions of Philosophy* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), chapters 4-5.
Sketches an “indirect realist” account, according to which ordinary perceptual judgments outrun the perceptual evidence for them.
- c) *P. F. Strawson, “Perception and its objects” (esp. Part I), in G. F. Macdonald, ed., *Perception and Identity* (Macmillan, 1979); reprinted in Dancy, *Perceptual Knowledge*; and in Bernecker and Dretske.
Critical reply to Ayer.
- d) *Fred Dretske, *Knowledge and the Flow of Information* (Blackwell, 1981), chapter 6.
Develops an account of what perceptual experience is according to which perceptual experience is to be sharply distinguished from perceptual judgment.
- e) *H. P. Grice, “The Causal Theory of Perception”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Suppl. Vol.* (1961); reprinted in abridged form in Dancy, *Perceptual Knowledge*.
Proposes and defends a causal analysis of “S sees O”, and argues that this analysis does not entail that ordinary material objects are unobservable.
- f) Tim Crane, “The problem of perception”, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.
Available online via <http://plato.stanford.edu>.
An introductory survey, covering the arguments from illusion and hallucination, and the “sense-datum”, “adverbial”, “intentionalist” and “disjunctivist” theories of perception.
- g) T. W. Child, *Causality, Interpretation and the Mind* (Clarendon Press, 1994), chapter 5.
Defends a “disjunctivist” account of experience, and argues that it is compatible with causal accounts.

h) Frank Jackson, *Perception: a representative theory* (Cambridge UP, 1977), esp. Chapter 6.

Defends indirect realism.

Essay topic: ‘When I see a tomato before me, and on that basis judge that there is a tomato before me, the content of my judgment outruns my evidence for it.’ Does it? Does it matter whether it does or not?

Past Finals questions:

(2000, q4) ‘The key to understanding perception is not sensation but discrimination.’ Discuss.

(2001, q9) Is seeing believing?

(2002, q8) Have sense data an important role to play in the analysis of perception?

5. Necessity and Possible Worlds

- a) *Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford UP, 1974), chapters 12; reprinted as “Modalities: Basic Concepts and Distinctions” in Kim and Sosa, *Metaphysics*
An introductory article that (i) distinguishes the “broad logical necessity” that the author is interested in from narrow logical necessity, causal necessity, a prioricity, etc., and (ii) explicates the de dicto/de re distinction.
- b) *David Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Blackwell, 1973) §4.1 (“Possible Worlds”), pp. 84-91; reprinted in Stephen Laurence and Cynthia Macdonald, eds., *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics* (Blackwell, 1998), chapter 7; and in Michael Loux, ed., *The Possible and the Actual: readings in the metaphysics of modality* (Cornell UP, 1979).
Compact explanation of what Lewis takes a “possible world” to be.
- c) *David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Blackwell, 1986), especially chapter 1 (Chapter 4 is reprinted as “Counterparts or Double Lives?” in Kim and Sosa, *Metaphysics*).
Classic extended exposition and defence of realism about possible worlds. Chapter 1 motivates modal realism by exhibiting various uses of possible-worlds talk. Chapter 2 defends modal realism against common objections. Chapter 3 gives objections to several would-be alternative ways of making sense of possible-worlds talk. Lewis’ conclusion is that modal realism should be accepted because (i) possible-worlds talk is too useful to be eschewed and (ii) no alternative way of making sense of it is viable.
- d) *Kit Fine, “Essence and Modality”, *Philosophical Perspectives* 8 (1994), 1-16; available from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk/>.
Argues against the idea that essence can be reduced to (de re) necessity, and proposed an alternative account according to which essence is to necessity as meaning is to analyticity.
- e) Robert Stalnaker, “Possible Worlds”, *Noûs* 10 (1976), pp. 65-75; available from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk/>; reprinted in Myles Burnyeat and Ted Honderich, eds., *Philosophy As It Is* (Penguin, 1979), pp. 447-465; and in Stalnaker, *Ways a World Might Be* (Oxford UP, 2003).

Argues that an account that analyses propositions in terms of possible worlds is preferable to one that analyses possible worlds in terms of propositions, and that the former does not commit us to Lewis's unpalatable "extreme realism" about possible worlds.

- f) Frank Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics* (Oxford UP, 1998), chapter 3 ("Conceptual Analysis and Metaphysical Necessity").

Argues that conceptual possibility and metaphysical possibilities should not be distinguished, because a single class of possibilities suffices (via a "two-dimensionalist" account) for theorizing about the phenomena that have sometimes been thought to require the distinction.

- g) Stephen Yablo, "Is Conceivability a Guide to Possibility?" *Philosophy & Phenomenological Research* 53 (1993), pp. 1-42; available from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk/>.

Essay topic: What does it mean to claim that it is "metaphysically necessary" that all uncles are male? Can this claim be analysed in terms of all uncles' being male "in every possible world"? If so, what exactly are these "possible worlds"?

Past finals questions:

(2000, q10) 'The trouble with explaining necessity in terms of possible worlds is that no-one knows which worlds are possible.' Discuss.

(2002, q21) Is saying that X is necessarily necessary equivalent to saying merely that X is necessary?

6. Persistence

- a) *Lowe, E.J. A survey of metaphysics, OUP (2002), chapter 3 (“Qualitative change and the doctrine of temporal parts”).
- b) *Hawley, K., ‘Temporal Parts’, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
- c) *Hawthorne, J., ‘Three dimensionalism vs. four dimensionalism’, in Hawthorne, J., Sider, T., and Zimmerman, D., Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics, Blackwell (2007).
- d) *Jarvis Thompson, J., ‘Parthood and Identity Across Time’, Journal of Philosophy, 80 (1983), pp. 201–20.
- e) *Sider, T., ‘All the world’s a stage’, Australasian Journal of Philosophy 74 (1996) pp. 433-453.
- f) Oslon, E., ‘The paradox of increase’, Monist 89 (2006).
- g) van Inwagen, P., ‘Four dimensional objects’, Nous 24 (1990), pp. 245-255.
- h) Heller, M., ‘Temporal parts of four-dimensional objects’, Philosophical Studies 46 (1984), pp. 323-34.
- i) Merricks, T., ‘Endurance and Indiscernibility’, Journal of Philosophy 91 (1994), pp. 165-184.
- j) Lewis, D., ‘Survival and Identity’, in Philosophical Papers vol. 1, OUP (1983). (especially postscript B).
- k) Sider, T., ‘Four-Dimensionalism’, Philosophical Review 106, pp.197–231 (1997).
- l) Sider, T., Four Dimensionalism, OUP (2001).
- m) Zimmerman, D., ‘Temporary Intrinsic and Presentism’, in van Inwagen P., and Zimmerman, D. (eds.), Metaphysics: The Big Questions, Blackwell (1998), pp. 206-19.

Essay topic: Is there a real puzzle about how objects can persist over time and yet change? If not, what mistake is being made by those who think there is? If so, what exactly is the puzzle, and how should it be resolved?

Past Finals questions:

(2005, q13) “Two things are the same only if they have all their properties in common. Whenever anything changes, it loses or gains a property. So, nothing persists through change.” Assess this argument.

7. Primary and secondary qualities

- a) *Colin McGinn, *The Subjective View* (Oxford UP, 1983), pp.5-15.
An introductory sketch, stating the primary-secondary distinction and the claim that colours, tastes and smells are secondary while shape and size are primary, and drawing out several consequences from the claim that (e.g.) colours are secondary in the stated sense.
- b) *David Smith, "Of primary and secondary qualities", *Philosophical Review* 99 (1990): 221-254; available from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk/>
Gives a historical account of the primary-secondary distinction, and defends the view that (according to the distinction that is closest in line with its historical origins but is also of contemporary theoretical importance) we can know a priori that colours, smells etc are secondary, but must look to science to tell us what the primary qualities are.
- c) *David Lewis, "Naming the Colours", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 75 (1997): 325-342; reprinted in his *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology*.
Argues that certain platitudes about colour (including the claims that colours exist and that material objects are coloured), as part of a "folk theory" about colour, are in effect non-negotiable, and that a standard methodology of philosophy, in conjunction with this "folk theory", permits us (post-science) to identify colours with particular properties described in the language of physics (e.g. spectral reflectance properties).
- d) *Alex Byrne and David Hilbert, "Introduction", in Byrne and Hilbert, ed., *Readings on Color, Vol. 1: The Philosophy of Color* (MIT Press, 1997).
Surveys rival views of the existence and/or nature of colour properties ("eliminativism", "dispositionalism", "physicalism", "primitivism").
- e) *Paul Boghossian and David Velleman, "Colour as a Secondary Quality", *Mind* 98 (1989): 81-103; available from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk/>; reprinted in Steven D. Hales, ed., *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings* (Wadsworth, 1999); and in Byrne and Hilbert, *Readings on Color, Vol. 1*.
Objects to physicalism and dispositionalism. Defends a "projectivist" account, according to which material objects are not really coloured and hence ordinary discourse about colour involves widespread systematic falsehood.

- f) Alex Byrne and David Hilbert, “Colors and Reflectances”, in Byrne and Hilbert, ed., *Readings on Color, Vol. 1: The Philosophy of Color* (MIT Press, 1997).
States a particular version of physicalism (according to which color properties are identified with “types of surface spectral reflectances”, and defends it against common objections.
- g) Paul Boghossian and David Velleman, “Physicalist Theories of Color”. *Philosophical Review* 100 (1991): 67-106; available from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk>/reprinted in Byrne and Hilbert, ed., *Readings on Color, Vol. 1*.
Criticism of physicalist accounts.
- h) Justin Broackes, “The autonomy of colour”, in David Charles and Kathleen Lennon, ed., *Reduction, Explanation and Realism* (Oxford UP, 1992); reprinted in Byrne and Hilbert, *Readings on Color, vol. 1*.
Defends the explanatory status of colour ascriptions.

Essays topic: Are lemons really yellow? If so, what does their yellowness consist in?

Past Finals questions:

(2005, q3) A subject, taking one hand from a bucket of icy water and the other from a bucket of warm water, places them simultaneously into a bucket of lukewarm water. She reports that the water feels both warm and cool. What does this show?

8. Causation

Two useful collections of articles specifically for this topic:

- i.) Ernest Sosa and Michael Tooley, ed., *Causation* (Oxford UP, 1993)
 - ii.) Ernest Sosa, ed., *Causation and Conditionals* (Oxford UP, 1975)
- a) ***Either:**
- iii.) J. L. Mackie, *The Cement of the Universe*, corrected edition (Oxford UP, 1980), **or:**
 - iv.) J. L. Mackie, "Causes and Conditions", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2/4 (October 1965), 245-264; relevant extracts in Sosa, *Causation and Conditionals*; in Sosa and Tooley, *Causation*; and in Kim and Sosa, *Metaphysics*.
Outlines Mackie's 'INUS condition' account of what it is for something to be a cause.
- b) *David Lewis, "Causation", *Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973), 556-67; available from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk>; reprinted in Lewis, *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. II (Oxford UP, 1986); in Sosa, *Causation and Conditionals*; in Sosa and Tooley, *Causation*; and in Kim and Sosa, *Metaphysics*.
Proposes a counterfactual analysis of causation.
- c) *Donald Davidson, "Causal Relations", *Journal of Philosophy* 64 (1967), 691-703; available from <http://tdnet.bodley.ox.ac.uk>; reprinted in Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford UP, 1980); in Sosa, *Causation and Conditionals*; in Sosa and Tooley, *Causation*; and in Kim and Sosa, *Metaphysics*.
Argues that the "logical form" of "singular causal statements" renders the causal relation as a (particular) relation between events, rather than as any relation between facts/propositions/sentences.
- d) *Stephen Yablo, "Cause and Essence", *Synthese* 93 (1992), 403-49.
Proposes a finer-grained individuation of events than that insisted on by Davidson, using the notion of an event's essence, and an analysis of causation based thereon.
- e) D. H. Mellor, *The Facts of Causation* (Routledge, 1995).
A full-length monograph on causation. Optional!

Essay topic: What is it for one thing to *cause* another?

Past Finals questions:

(2000, q5) 'If I see someone else peel a potato, ... I don't *see* the knife *making* the peel come up. And what I most obviously fail to *see*, though I do *judge*, is that each bit of the peel would not have come up if the knife had not moved in there' (MACKIE). Is it correct to say that causation is not observable?

(2001, q5) 'If time-travel is possible, then it is possible for an effect to precede its cause.'
Does this refute the possibility of time-travel?

(2001, q13) Is causality the cement of the universe?

(2002, q16) Julia caused a fire. A lightning strike caused a fire. Are these different types of causation?

(2002, q17) Could an effect cause its cause?