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Contents

Contents	i
Introduction.....	1
What is it to know?	1
How do we know?	1
How much do we know?	2
General reading on epistemology	3
The analysis of knowledge: what is it to know?	4
1.1 Discussions of the sufficiency of the tripartite analysis	5
1.2 Other issues surrounding the tripartite analysis	6
1.2.1 Discussions of the necessity of the tripartite analysis	6
1.2.2 Responses to the apparent inadequacy of the analysis.....	6
1.2.3 The value of knowledge.....	6
1.3 The nature of justification or warrant	7
Sources and resources for knowledge: how do we know?	9
2.1 Perception	9
2.1.1 The nature of perception.....	9
2.1.2 Perception and knowledge	10
2.2 Testimony and memory	11
2.3 Introspection and self-knowledge	12
Scepticism: how much do we know?	14
3.1 The argument from sceptical hypothesis	14
3.2 The status of closure principles.....	15
3.3 Other responses to the argument from sceptical hypothesis	16
3.3.1 Moore's response to scepticism	16
3.3.2 Semantic responses to scepticism	16
3.3.3 Contextualist responses to scepticism	16
3.4 Foundationalism, Coherentism, Infitism and Agrippa's trilemma	17
3.4.1 General discussions of Foundationalism, Coherentism and Infitism	18
3.4.2 Agrippa's trilemma.....	19

Introduction

Epistemology is the study of **knowledge**. It aims to provide a systematic account of the following: **what it is** to know; **how** we know; and **how much** we know. Epistemology derives its importance to us from the value to us of its subject matter, knowledge.

We'll begin with a brief introduction to each of the three main questions of epistemology. We'll then look in some more detail at sub-questions and suggest some readings that will help you to pursue the sub-questions in more detail.

What is it to know?

We adopt various attitudes towards the world. For example, we might form the opinion that there is milk in the refrigerator, or form a desire to have a cup of tea. We thereby commit ourselves both to how the world is and also to how we would like it to be. In adopting the opinion that there is milk in the refrigerator, we commit ourselves to the world being a particular way: there is milk in the refrigerator. In adopting a desire to have a cup of tea, we commit ourselves to how we would like the world to be: we have a cup of tea. Some of the attitudes through which we commit ourselves to how the world is – most centrally, attitudes of **belief** – are attitudes that we could adopt even if the world was not the way we thereby took it to be. So, for example, it is possible to believe that there is milk in the refrigerator, even though there is no milk in the refrigerator. Attitudes of knowledge also embody commitments to how the world is. However, by contrast with attitudes of belief, it is not possible to **know** unless the way you thereby take the world to be is the way it is. If you **know** that there is milk in the refrigerator, then there is milk in the refrigerator.

Knowledge is more important to us than mere belief because, in possessing it, we take a view about the world that matches up with how the world is. Of course, to that extent, **true** belief is equally important to us. For if you believe that there is milk in the refrigerator and your belief is true, then there is milk in the refrigerator. To a first approximation, knowledge differs from true belief in that when you know, and don't merely have a belief that is true, your view about the world is appropriately grounded or anchored in how the world is. For instance, you might know that there is milk in the refrigerator, rather than merely believe that there is, because you've seen the milk in the refrigerator. Your seeing the milk would be what

grounds your view. One important task of epistemology is to develop an account of knowledge and its distinctive value that goes beyond that first approximation. That is, epistemology aims to provide an account of the nature of knowledge, to distinguish knowing from merely believing, and to explain why we sometimes value knowing over merely believing. In executing that task, a major sub-task is to study the types of grounding or anchoring that can distinguish knowledge from mere belief, the task of giving an account of the **justification** or **warrant** that our views can possess. (See Sections 1.1 and 1.2 for further discussion of the nature and value of knowledge. See Section 1.3 *The nature of justification or warrant* for further discussion of the nature of the grounding or anchoring of belief required for knowledge.)

How do we know?

We seem to be able to come to know things in a variety of ways, some of which correspond with answers to the question, 'How do you know?' For instance, it appears to be possible to come to know that there is milk in the refrigerator in any of the following ways: (i) by seeing the milk there (more generally, on the basis of **perception** or perceptual experience); (ii) by remembering that there is milk there (that is, on the basis of **memory**); (iii) by being told that there is milk there by someone who knows (more generally, on the basis of **testimony**); (iv) by reasoning from the fact that there has been milk there every day for the last ten years (more generally, on the basis of **inductive inference**, a topic in **methodology** rather than **epistemology**); or (v) by reasoning from the fact that the delivery person has been and the fact that, if the delivery person has been, then there is milk in the refrigerator (more generally, on the basis of **deductive inference** from other things that you know). (See Section 3.2 *The status of closure principles* for discussion of the question whether competent deductive inference from things you know is guaranteed to deliver knowledge.)

There are also things that we know when it is not entirely clear that there is any specific way in which we know them. For instance, it is not obvious that there is a good answer to the question 'How do you know that $5 + 7 = 12$?' One natural answer is that we were taught that $5 + 7 = 12$. But that answer brings in its train the further question: 'How did the person who taught you, or the person who taught that person... know that $5 + 7 = 12$?'

And it is not clear that there is a good answer to that question. We might suggest that we know that $5 + 7 = 12$ by **reflection**. But unless we can give some account of what the alleged way of knowing amounts to, talk of reflection appears to add nothing to our previous inability to answer the question, 'How do you know?' Similarly, it is not obvious that there is a good answer to the question 'How do you know that you believe that there is milk in the refrigerator?' We appear to be able to know what we believe without our having to make use of the sort of evidence that other people have to use in order to find out what we believe. That might suggest that we have access to a distinctive form of evidence about what we believe. However, unless we can give an account of that distinctive form of evidence, and our special access to it, our ability to know what we believe will remain mysterious. We might suggest that we know what we believe by **introspection**. But unless we can give some account of what the alleged way of knowing amounts to, talk of introspection appears to add nothing to our previous inability to answer the question, 'How do you know?' (See Section 2.3 *Introspection and self-knowledge* for further discussion.)

So, there appear to be ways of acquiring knowledge for the first time, like perception and introspection. In addition, there are ways for someone to know that appear to be ways of **retaining** or **transmitting** knowledge that was initially acquired in some other way. For instance, you might now know that there is milk in the refrigerator by remembering that there is milk in the refrigerator – that is, through the use of **memory** – having first acquired that knowledge by seeing the milk there. That would be a way of knowing by **retaining** knowledge that you had already acquired. Alternatively, you might know that there is milk in the refrigerator because you have been told that there is by someone who knows. Cases where you know things through being told – cases of **testimony** – are sometimes thought of as ways of **transmitting** knowledge from one person to another, rather than as ways in which knowledge can be acquired for the first time. In treating testimony in that way, we might think of the knowledge that one person acquires through testimony as having been transmitted from another person in something like the way in which your memory can transmit knowledge from your earlier self to your later self. Memory appears not to generate knowledge, but rather to depend on what is remembered being initially known in some other way. Similarly, it might seem that you can only acquire knowledge through testimony where the person who told you, or the person who told the person who told you, or... themselves acquired the knowledge by some non-testimonial means. (See Section 2.2 *Testimony and memory* for further discussion.)

How much do we know?

Our knowing in a particular case, rather than our merely believing, depends on at least two things. First, it depends on how the world is. We cannot know that there is milk in the refrigerator if there is no milk there. More generally, when we have a view about how the world is, we would fail to have knowledge if our view was false. Second, we would fail to have knowledge if our view was not appropriately grounded in how the world is. We would not know that there is milk in the refrigerator if, for example, our view was correct only by chance or was based on evidence that failed to decide the issue. For example, our belief that there was milk in the refrigerator would not amount to knowledge if we had formed it merely on the basis of seeing a white carton, in a situation where most white cartons in the refrigerator contain fruit juice. So, we have knowledge in a particular case only if certain conditions are met. If it could be shown that those conditions have not been met, or cannot be met, in some range of cases, then we would have reason to think that we do not, or cannot, know in those cases. A **sceptical** argument attempts to show that the conditions have not been, or cannot be, met in a wide range of cases.

For instance, one form of sceptical argument appeals to the following plausible condition on knowing that there is milk in the refrigerator on the basis of experience. Suppose that your belief that there is milk in the refrigerator is based on your experience of seeing milk in the refrigerator. In that case, your view can amount to knowledge only if you couldn't have had the same kind of experience and there not be milk in the refrigerator. The sceptic then considers what looks to be an optimal case for your knowing that there is milk in the refrigerator: you go to the refrigerator and it visually seems to you that there is milk there. According to the sceptic, you might have had the same kind of experience even though there is no milk in the refrigerator: for instance, you might have hallucinated seeing a milk carton; or you might have dreamt the whole episode. Since you would have had apparently the same experience in cases where there is no milk in the refrigerator, you fail to meet the condition on knowing that there is milk in the refrigerator. Hence, the sceptic argues, even in what looks to be an optimal case for your knowing that there is milk in the refrigerator – a case where you in fact see the milk carton – you do not know that there is milk in the refrigerator. Unless there is a possible case in which you have a kind of experience that you couldn't have had if there were no milk in the refrigerator, the sceptical conclusion is that you cannot know that there is milk in the refrigerator. The conclusion is sceptical since it denies that we can know something that we ordinarily think we can know. (Here, issues about scepticism intersect with issues about the nature of perception. See Section 2.1 *Perception* for relevant discussion.)

Of course, the sceptical conclusion that we cannot know that there is milk in the refrigerator is not especially threatening. Sceptical arguments become more threatening when they are more general. The sceptic exploits a general version of the principle about matching experiences – one that applies much more widely than to questions about whether there is milk in the refrigerator. Consider any fact that you might take yourself to know on the basis of experience, for instance the fact that there is a page of writing before you. But what if you were suffering a hallucination of seeing a page, or if you were undergoing a vivid dream of seeing a page, or if an alien super-scientist were stimulating your brain so that you had the kind of experience you are now having? Surely, the sceptic argues, in any of those cases you might have had the same kind of experience and yet there be no page before you. According to the plausible general condition on knowing, you can only know something on the basis of experience if it is impossible for you to have the same kind of experience and for things not to be as they appear. Hence, according that condition, you cannot know that there is a page of writing before you, since it is possible for you to have a matching experience and there be no page before you. And now, since the argument doesn't appeal to anything special about your belief that there is a page of writing before you, as opposed to anything else that you believe on the basis of experience, it appears to generalise in order to show that you can't know **anything** on the basis of experience! (See Sections 3.2–3.4 for further discussion of scepticism.)

General reading on epistemology

(Further readings on more specific topics are listed below.)

A useful short introduction to epistemology is:

Sturgeon, S., M.G.F. Martin and A.C. Grayling 'Epistemology', in A.C. Grayling (ed.) *Philosophy 1: A Guide Through the Subject*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) [ISBN9780198752431].

The following introductory books are all helpful. (It is unlikely that you will need more than one of these introductory books, although it is worth buying at least one. I especially recommend Dancy, 1985.)

Audi, R. *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (London: Routledge, 2010) third edition [ISBN9780415879231].

Bernecker, S. *Reading Epistemology: Selected Texts with Interactive Commentary*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) [ISBN9781405127646].

Chisholm, R. *The Theory of Knowledge*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1989) third edition [ISBN 9780139141850].

Dancy, J. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) [ISBN 9780631136224].

Lemos, N. *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) [ISBN 9780521603096].

Pollock, J. and J. Cruz *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999) [ISBN 9780847689378].

Williams, M. *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction to Epistemology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) [ISBN 9780192892560].

The following are useful general collections of essays on epistemology. (If you decide to buy one of these collections, the most useful is Sosa et al., 2008.)

Bernecker, S. and F. Dretske (eds) *Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) [ISBN 9780198752615]. [Referred to below as B&D.]

Greco, J. and E. Sosa (eds) *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) [ISBN 9780631202912].

Huemer, M. and R. Audi (eds) *Epistemology: Contemporary Readings*. (London: Routledge, 2002) [ISBN 9780415259217].

Moser, P. K. (ed.) *Empirical Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1996) second edition [ISBN 9780847682041]. [Referred to below as Moser.]

Moser, P. K. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) [ISBN 9780195301700]. [Referred to below as OHE.]

Sosa, E., J. Kim, J. Fantl and M. McGrath (eds) *Epistemology: An Anthology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008) second edition [ISBN 9781405169660] [Referred to below as SKFM.]

Steup, M. and E. Sosa (eds) *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) [ISBN 9781405107396]. [Referred to below as S&S.]

Useful essays on various topics in epistemology can also be found online in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/contents.html [Referred to below as SEP].

Some of the Essential readings that appear in the chapters that follow are available through the Student Portal, either:

1. single chapters of books, which have been made available on the VLE, or
2. articles from different journals, which can be found in the Online Library (for the most part in JSTOR).

These have been marked with an * before the author's name. Most books recommended in this guide are widely available for purchase from online booksellers.

The analysis of knowledge: what is it to know?

The question – What is it to know something? – was raised by Plato in the *Theaetetus*. A standard starting point – one that Plato considers and rejects – is the so-called **tripartite analysis** (so-called because knowing is analysed into three components). According to the tripartite analysis, someone knows that *p* – e.g. someone, *S*, knows that there is milk in the refrigerator – if and only if *S* meets the following three conditions:

- i. *S* believes that *p* – e.g. *S* believes that there is milk in the refrigerator;
- ii. *S*'s belief is true – e.g. there is milk in the refrigerator; and
- iii. *S*'s belief is justified – e.g. *S* has a good reason to believe that there is milk in the refrigerator.

The tripartite analysis is initially plausible. We've already seen some reason to hold that someone who knows is someone who has a belief that is true, so someone who meets conditions (i) and (ii). We've also seen some reason to think that merely having a belief that is true is not enough. For example, someone might have come to believe that there is milk in the refrigerator by guessing, or flipping a coin. In that case, even if the belief is true, we think that it will not amount to knowledge. Condition (iii) adds a further requirement. If someone's belief is to amount to knowledge, then the believer must have a **justification** for adopting that belief. For instance, the belief must have been formed on the basis of evidence, rather than on the basis of a guess, or a coin flip. (For more general discussion of justification, see Section 1.3 *The nature of justification or warrant*.)

The tripartite analysis can be challenged in two main ways. First, you might attempt to show that the three conditions are not **sufficient** for knowledge: someone might meet the three conditions with respect to the fact that *p* and yet not know that *p*. Second, you might attempt to show that the three conditions are not **necessary** for knowledge: someone might know that *p* and yet not meet the three conditions with respect to the fact that *p*.

Suppose that it were shown that the tripartite analysis fails to provide sufficient conditions for knowledge. In that case, there would be three options: (1) we might consider adding a fourth condition; (2) we might consider replacing one of the conditions with a new, more informative condition; (3) we might deny that it is possible to provide such informative conditions, perhaps because we hold that knowledge is a primitive.

Alternatively, suppose that the tripartite analysis fails to provide necessary conditions for knowledge. In that case, there would again be three main options: (1) we might consider simply removing one or more of the conditions from the analysis in order to home in on conditions that are necessary for knowledge; (2) we might consider replacing one or more of the conditions in order to provide conditions that are necessary for knowledge; (3) we might deny that it is possible to provide informative necessary conditions, perhaps again because we hold that knowledge is a primitive.

Whenever we revise an analysis, it is important to check whether our revised account now provides necessary and sufficient conditions. For instance, we will need to check that, where we remove a condition because we think it is not necessary for knowledge, what we are left with is sufficient for knowledge. And similarly, we will need to check that, where we add a condition in order to provide conditions that are jointly sufficient, all the conditions in our new account are necessary for knowledge. Finally, whatever our ultimate account of the nature of knowledge, we will also want to provide an account of the **distinctive value** of knowledge, given that account. (For discussion see Section 1.2.3 *The value of knowledge*.)

Whether or not we think that justification plays a role in the proper analysis of knowledge, the distinction between justified and unjustified beliefs is important. It is an important task of epistemology to give an account of the justification of beliefs. (See Section 1.3 *The nature of justification or warrant*.)

Essential reading

For an excellent commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus* that is highly relevant to contemporary discussions, see:

Burnyeat, M. *The Theaetetus of Plato*. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990) [ISBN 9780915144815].

Two more recent proponents of the tripartite analysis are:

Ayer, A. J. *The Problem of Knowledge*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1955) see pp.31–35.

Chisholm, R. *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957) [ISBN 9780801400773] see p.16.

General discussions of the project of analysing knowledge can be found in any of these introductory texts:

Audi, R. *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (London: Routledge, 2010) third edition [ISBN 9780415879231] Chapter 10.

- Bernecker, S. *Reading Epistemology: Selected Texts with Interactive Commentary*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) [ISBN 9781405127646] Chapter 1.
- Dancy, J. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) [ISBN 9780631136224] Chapter 2.
- Lemos, N. *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) [ISBN 9780521603096] Chapters 2–3.
- Williams, M. *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction to Epistemology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) [ISBN 9780192892560] Chapter 1.

1.1 Discussions of the sufficiency of the tripartite analysis

The most famous challenge to the sufficiency of the tripartite analysis appears in a 1963 essay by Edmund Gettier. Gettier gives examples of people who have justified true beliefs even though many intuitively think that those people lack knowledge. Here is an example of the sort Gettier provides. Suppose that someone tells you a lie to the effect that there is milk in the refrigerator. Assuming that you have no reason to suspect that they are lying, their word justifies you in forming the belief that there is milk in the refrigerator. Your justified belief that there is milk in the refrigerator justifies you in believing that there is milk in the house. Now, although there is no milk in the refrigerator, it turns out that there is milk in the house. So, it appears that your belief that there is milk in the house is true and also justified. However, intuitively your belief does not amount to knowledge. Bertrand Russell had earlier provided a similar example. See:

Essential reading

- * Gettier, E. 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?', *Analysis* 23, 1963, pp.121–23. [Reprinted in Moser, S&K and B&D.]
- Russell, B. *The Problems of Philosophy*. (Oxford: OPUS, originally published 1912) [ISBN 9780192854230] Chapter 13. (Available online at Project Gutenberg.)

For discussion of Gettier's cases and attempts to fix the tripartite analysis in light of those cases, see the general discussions listed above and also the following:

- Dretske, F. 'Conclusive Reasons', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 49, 1971, pp.1–22. [Reprinted in B&D.] Available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00048407112341001
- * Goldman, A. 'A Causal Theory of Knowing', *Journal of Philosophy* 64, 1967, pp.357–72. [Reprinted in B&D.]
- * Harman, G. 'Thought', in Sosa, E., J. Kim, J. Fantl and M. McGrath (eds) *Epistemology: An Anthology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008) second edition [ISBN 9781405169660].

Further reading

- Craig, E. *Knowledge and the State of Nature: an Essay in Conceptual Synthesis*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) [ISBN 9780198238799].
- Feldman, R. 'An Alleged Defect in Gettier Counter-Examples', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 52, 1974, pp.68–69. [Reprinted in B&D.]

- Goldman, A. 'Reliabilism' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/reliabilism/
- Lehrer, K. and T. Paxson Jr. 'Knowledge: Undefeated Justified True Belief', *Journal of Philosophy* 66, 1969, pp.225–37. [Reprinted in B&D.]
- Shope, R. 'Conditions and Analyses of Knowing' in OHE.
- Shope, R. *The Analysis of Knowing*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992) [ISBN 9780691020259].
- Sosa, E. 'The Analysis of "Knowledge that p"', *Analysis* 25, 1964, pp.1–8.
- Mathias Steup, 'The Analysis of Knowledge' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/knowledge-analysis/
- Zagzebski, L. 'The Inescapability of Gettier Problems', *Philosophical Quarterly* 44, 1994, pp.65–73.

Some of the responses to Gettier seek to replace, or supplement, condition (iii) with an account of how knowledgeable beliefs are **caused** or otherwise **sensitive** to relevant facts. Consider again the case where you formed the belief that there is milk in the house on the basis of the lie you were told about there being milk in the refrigerator. In that case, it appears that the fact that there is milk in the house (though not in the refrigerator) did not play a role in causing you to believe that there is. By contrast, suppose that your belief had amounted to knowledge because it was formed on the basis of seeing milk in the house, or on the basis of being told that there is milk in the house by someone who had seen the milk. In those cases, it is plausible that the fact that there is milk in the house would have played a role in causing you to believe that there is. An initially plausible idea, then, is that the causal difference between cases in which someone knows and the sorts of case that Gettier presents should be written into the analysis of knowledge. The idea would be to add a condition to this effect: in order for a belief to amount to knowledge it must be **caused** in the right way by the facts. Alternatively, we might think that the key difference here is that the beliefs in Gettier's cases are not suitably **sensitive** to whether or not a fact obtains. In our opening case, it appears that you would have believed that there is milk in the house because of the lie you were told, whether or not there is milk in the house. Again, we might add a condition to this effect: in order for a belief to amount to knowledge, one's having the belief must be appropriately sensitive to whether or not it would be true. An important response of this general type is Robert Nozick's account of knowledge as belief that **tracks the truth**. (A related approach is suggested by Fred Dretske, in 'Epistemic Operators' and 'Conclusive reasons', both listed in this guide.) See:

Essential reading

- * Nozick, R. *Philosophical Explanations*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) [ISBN 9780674664791] Chapter 3. [Relevant selections are reprinted in SKFM.]

For useful discussion of Nozick's account, see:

- Bernecker, S. *Reading Epistemology: Selected Texts with Interactive Commentary*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) [ISBN 9781405127646] Chapter 1.

* Craig, E. *Knowledge and the State of Nature: an Essay in Conceptual Synthesis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) [ISBN 9780198238799] Chapters 3–4. (Chapter 3 available on the VLE.)

Dancy, J. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) [ISBN 9780631136224] Chapter 3.

* Garrett, B 'Nozick on Knowledge', *Analysis* 43, 1983, pp.181–84.

* Peacocke, C. *Thoughts*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) [ISBN 9780631146742]. Chapter 9.

(Further work on Nozick's account, with particular reference to his response to scepticism, is discussed below, in Section 3.2 *The status of closure principles*.)

1.2 Other issues surrounding the tripartite analysis

The question of the sufficiency for knowledge of the tripartite analysis has been central to recent discussions. However, a number of other issues surrounding the tripartite analysis are also important. In this section, we'll consider three issues that concern, in various ways, the distinctiveness of knowledge.

1.2.1 Discussions of the necessity of the tripartite analysis

Some responses to Gettier involve replacing condition (iii) – the justification condition – with something else, for instance a causal condition or a truth-tracking condition. Such responses in effect question the necessity of condition (iii). The responses to Gettier's cases by Goldman and Nozick (listed above) take this form. The other major challenge has been to the necessity of condition (i) – the belief condition. Colin Radford presents the example of an unconfident examinee. Despite lacking confidence in his answers, the examinee is able to reliably answer questions about the dates of some important historical events. The examinee takes his answers to be no better than guesses, and so arguably doesn't believe the answers that he offers. However, it can also be argued that the examinee knows those answers, since he earlier learnt the dates he now recites and the reliability of his answers suggests that he remembers what he learned.

For discussion of the necessity of the belief condition, see the general discussions listed above and also the following.

Essential reading

* Radford, C. 'Knowledge—by Examples', *Analysis* 27, 1966, pp.1–11.

Further reading

Cohen, L.J. *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) [ISBN 9780198236047] Chapter 4.

Radford, C. 'Radford Revisited', *Philosophical Quarterly* 38, 1988, pp.496–99.

Ring, M. 'Knowledge: The Cessation of Belief', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 14, 1977, pp.51–59.

Shope, R. 'Conditions and Analyses of Knowing' in OHE.

Shope, R. *The Analysis of Knowing*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992) [ISBN 9780691020259]

1.2.2 Responses to the apparent inadequacy of the analysis

Some philosophers have thought that reflection on the difficulties that arise for the tripartite analysis, as well as for many other analyses, indicate that the attempted analysis of knowledge is bound to fail. Their idea is that analysis is the wrong approach to understanding knowledge, either because knowledge is a primitive, or because knowledge is better understood than the elements into which the tripartite analysis attempts to decompose it, or for other reasons. See:

Essential reading

Craig, E. 'The Practical Explication of Knowledge', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 87, 1987, pp.211–26.

Williamson, T. 'Is Knowing a State of Mind?', *Mind* 104, 1995, pp.533–65. Reprinted in *SKFM*.

Further reading

Craig, E. *Knowledge and the State of Nature: An Essay in Conceptual Synthesis*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) [ISBN 9780198238799].

Williamson, T. *Knowledge and its Limits*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) [ISBN 9780199256563] Chapters 1–3.

1.2.3 The value of knowledge

Why is it important to us that we have knowledge rather than remain in ignorance? Why is it important that we have knowledge rather than merely having opinions that might fall short of knowledge? In short, why do we value knowledge? The answer to that question will of course depend ultimately on the nature of knowledge, for it will presumably be something distinctive in that nature which makes knowledge valuable to us. We might try answering by appeal to the plausible idea that when we know we have beliefs that are true. True beliefs are valuable to us, for instance because they make it more likely that we will be successful in reaching our goals. Hence, knowledge might be of value because it brings in its train true beliefs. However, that attempt to answer the question raises a more specific question: Why do we value knowledge more than we value true beliefs that do not amount to knowledge? Plato's *Meno* raised this question, and sought to address it by appeal to the idea that knowledge, unlike other forms of true belief, is 'tied down'. The idea appears to be that knowledge, unlike other forms of true belief, is fixed in place by the distinctive form of grounding or justification that it possesses. This was the idea that the tripartite analysis attempted to capture through its condition (iii), and that alternative analyses try to capture through appeal to causation or to sensitivity to the obtaining of facts. But – as we saw above in discussion

of Gettier's cases – it remains an open question precisely how we should understand the distinctive way in which knowledge is 'tied down'. And it remains an open question how its being tied down in that way makes it valuable.

The following include extended discussions of the value of knowledge.

Essential reading

Pritchard, D. 'The Value of Knowledge' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/knowledge-value/

Sosa, E. *A Virtue Epistemology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) [ISBN 9780199568208] especially Chapters 4–5.

Further reading

Craig, E. *Knowledge and the State of Nature: an Essay in Conceptual Synthesis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) [ISBN 9780198238799].

Jones, W. 'Why do We Value Knowledge', *American Philosophy Quarterly* 34, 1997, pp.423–40.

Kvanvig, J. *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) [ISBN 9780521037860].

Pritchard, D., A. Millar and A. Haddock *The Nature and Value of Knowledge: Three Investigations*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) [ISBN 9780199586264].

Riggs, W.D. 'Reliability and the Value of Knowledge', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 65, 2002, pp.79–96. S&S. See Chapter 10.

Williamson, T. *Knowledge and its Limits*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) [ISBN 9780199256563] Chapters 1–4.

Zagzebski, L. 'The Search for the Source of Epistemic Good', *Metaphilosophy* 34, 2003, pp.12–28.

1.3 The nature of justification or warrant

We've already considered some questions that arise about the nature of justification in considering what role justification might play in the analysis of knowledge. In this section, we will look at the broader question of the nature of justification or warrant, and set to one side the issue of its role in the analysis of knowledge. We take it that some of our opinions are well grounded: we have solid evidence for them, or they are based on what we have seen and so forth. By contrast, some of our opinions are a matter of conjecture, or guesswork. An account of the nature of **justification** or **warrant** is an account of the distinction, or distinctions, between those two large classes of opinions. (Philosophers sometimes use 'justification' or 'warrant' interchangeably. However, 'justification' is sometimes restricted to those warrants that are available to the subject, leaving open that there may be warrants of which a subject is unaware.) Sometimes philosophers aim to give an account of justification or warrant suitable to function in a version of the tripartite analysis of knowledge, so that justification or warrant is required to be a property than can make the difference between true

belief and knowledge. More often, however, philosophers have aimed to give an account of those properties that distinguish justified and unjustified beliefs – or reasonable and unreasonable beliefs – and have left open whether those properties will be suitable to play a role in anything like an **analysis** of knowledge.

Aside from the question of the precise form that an account of justification or warrant should take, the two most general questions in this area concern **the structure of justification** and **the nature of justifiers** – the special features of beliefs that make them apt to justify other beliefs.

The question about **the structure of justification** is usually treated as the question how we should think about the relations among beliefs that enable some to be justified by others. One view here is that there is a range of **foundational** or basic beliefs that serve to justify the rest of our beliefs. These foundational or basic beliefs would have a privileged position in supporting everything else we believe – that is, in supporting our non-basic beliefs. An alternative view would be that none of our beliefs is privileged in that way: instead our beliefs are justified by virtue of their **coherence** with one another, and none of our beliefs is more important in this respect than any other. And there may be other possible positions on this question. (This question is discussed in more detail below, in Section 3.4 *Foundationalism, Coherentism, Infinitism and Agrippa's trilemma*, and a list of Further reading is provided.)

The second issue about justification concerns **the nature of justifiers**. The most pressing question here is: do subjects themselves have to be aware of all the features of belief that play a role in justifying or warranting them? **Internalists** about justification hold that we must be aware of, or have beliefs about, justifiers – justifiers must be in that sense internal to a subject's system of beliefs. By contrast, **Externalists** about justification hold that there can be justifiers of which we are unaware and about which have no beliefs. We've already come across some Externalist views, in the form of the **causal** and **truth-tracking** theories developed in response to Gettier's cases. Another important form of Externalist account is **reliabilism**. According to reliabilism, a belief is justified if and only if it is formed on the basis of a process (or by a mechanism) that reliably forms true beliefs.

There is an important alternative to standard forms of Internalism and Externalism. The alternative attempts to combine elements of those two views by arguing that some of the factors to which Externalism appeals play a role in constituting subjects' psychological states. On this type of view, it is allowed that whether someone's beliefs are justified can depend on whether those beliefs are caused in the right way, or on whether they are appropriately sensitive to the facts. Since a subject needn't have access to whether or not they meet those conditions, this type of view amounts to a form of Externalism.

However, unlike other forms of Externalism, the alternative view holds that when a subject meets those conditions, the fact that they do makes a difference to their overall psychology. To that extent, the alternative view is sensitive to one motivation for Internalism. One idea motivating Internalism is that if something makes a difference to whether or not a belief is justified, it ought to make a difference to the believer's psychology. Standard forms of Internalism respond to that motivation by requiring that subjects have access to such difference-making features, or have beliefs about them. The alternative view responds to the motivation by arguing that difference-making features can make the required sort of difference to subjects' overall psychologies even if those subjects aren't aware of those features and don't have beliefs about them. Thus, the alternative view aims to be sensitive to some of the motivations for both Externalism and Internalism. On one form of this type of view, the central claim is that knowledge itself is a psychological state. On that view, the difference between knowing something, and merely believing it, is a psychological difference. Accordingly, anything that makes a difference to whether or not a subject knows thereby makes a difference to how things are with the subject's mind. (This type of view bears comparison with **semantic** responses to scepticism and also **disjunctivist** theories of perception, both of which are discussed further below.)

Essential reading

Fumerton, R. 'Foundationalist Theories of Epistemic Justification' in SEP:

www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/justep-foundational/

Kvanvig, J. 'Coherentist Theories of Epistemic Justification' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/justep-coherence/

Pappas, G. 'Internalist vs. Externalist Theories of Epistemic Justification' in SEP:

www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/justep-intext/

BonJour, L. and E. Sosa *Epistemic Justification*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) [ISBN 9780631182849]

Further reading

Useful books

Alston, W. *Epistemic Justification*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) [ISBN 9780801495441].

Plantinga, A. *Warrant: The Current Debate*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) [ISBN 9780195078626].

Swinburne, R. *Epistemic Justification*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) [ISBN 9780199243792].

Useful essays and chapters

Audi, R. *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (London: Routledge, 2010) third edition [ISBN 9780415879231] Chapters 8–11.

BonJour, L. 'Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 5, 1980, pp.53–74.

Golman, A. 'What is Justified Belief' in G. Pappas (ed.) *Justification and Knowledge*. (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1979) [ISBN 9789027710246]. [Reprinted in SKFM.]

Goldman, Alvin 'The Internalist Conception of Justification', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 5, 1980, pp.27–52.

Goldman, A. 'Reliabilism' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/reliabilism/

Haack, S. *Evidence and Inquiry: Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) [ISBN 9780631196792] Chapter 4. [Reprinted in SKFM.]

Madison, B. 'Epistemic Internalism', *Philosophy Compass* 5, 2010, pp.840–53.

Pollock, J. and J. Cruz *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999) [ISBN 9780847689378] Chapter 3.

S&S. See Parts 2 and 3.

For development and defence of the type of alternative view described in the final paragraph above, that attempts to combine elements of Internalism and Externalism, see:

McDowell, J. 'Criteria, Defeasibility and Knowledge', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 68, 1982, pp.455–79. [Reprinted in Dancy (listed in the section below on perception) and in J. McDowell *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) [ISBN 9780674007123]. Relevant selections reprinted in B&L also listed below in the section on perception).]

McDowell, J. 'Knowledge and the Internal', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55, 1995, pp.877–893. [Reprinted in SKFM and in J. McDowell *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) [ISBN 9780674007123].]

Williamson, T. 'Is Knowing a State of Mind?', *Mind* 104, 1995, pp.533–65. [Reprinted in SKFM.]

Williamson, T. *Knowledge and its Limits*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) [ISBN 9780199256563].

Sources and resources for knowledge: how do we know?

The question 'How do you know?' is sometimes treated as a request for the **evidence** or **justification** for what you claim to know. However, it is more typically a question about the **way** in which you know. Is your knowledge based on **perception** (i.e. seeing, hearing, touching and the like)? Or is it based on **testimony** (i.e. what others have told you) or on **memory**? Or is it based on **introspection** (i.e. the special way, or ways, you have to know what you think, feel, etc.)? The request is for information about the **sources** or **resources** employed in arriving at what you claim to be knowledge. Note that perception is a **source** of knowledge, a way in which a piece of knowledge is first acquired. By contrast, memory is typically thought of as a **resource**, a way in which someone has knowledge now, however it was first acquired. Each of these ways of knowing raises a variety of questions, some apparently common to each way of knowing, and some more specific to particular ways of knowing.

2.1 Perception

We ordinarily allow that one way of coming to know things is by **perception**. We see, or feel, or hear, or smell, or taste various things – more generally, we perceive them – and, on the basis of perceiving them, we can come to know about them. For instance, by seeing milk in the refrigerator, you can come to know that there is milk in the refrigerator. Two central questions about perception are: (1) What is the nature of episodes or states of perception; and (2) How, if at all, can perception give rise to knowledge?

2.1.1 The nature of perception

A natural, pre-philosophical answer to **question (1)**, the question about the nature of episodes or states of perception, is that they involve a sort of immediate or direct link between a perceiver and the ordinary objects that they know about through perception. This is **naïve realism**, according to which we only have the perceptual experiences we have because we are related to objects, and those objects are ordinary, in the sense that their existence does not depend on their being perceived.

Naïve realism comes under pressure because of the existence of various sorts of illusion and hallucination. In some possible cases of illusion or hallucination, it seems that we can have experiences that strike us as the same as genuine perceptual experiences, even though we are not suitably related to any ordinary objects.

Because such illusory or hallucinatory experiences can be indistinguishable from genuine perceptual experiences, many philosophers argue that all such experiences must have the same nature. But now, since there are no ordinary objects in the illusory or hallucinatory cases, we appear forced to give up one or another component of naïve realism. Some philosophers retain the idea that we only have the perceptual experiences that we do because we are related to objects, and so give up the idea that the objects to which we are related are ordinary objects. Instead, they argue that we are related to a special range of objects that are guaranteed to be available even in cases of illusion or hallucination: these are often called **sense-data**. Philosophers who defend this **sense-datum theory of perception** are required to say that, even where suitable ordinary objects are available, our most immediate or direct perceptual connection is with sense-data that are distinct from those ordinary objects. Accordingly, their view is that our perceptual connection with ordinary objects is, at best, indirect or mediated.

Some other philosophers seek to retain the idea that direct or immediate objects of perceptual experience are ordinary objects. On their view, we can retain that idea if we give up the other component of naïve realism, the idea that we can only have the perceptual experiences that we do because we are suitably related to the objects that we experience. Such accounts typically model perceptual experience on belief: just as you can believe that there is milk before you even when there is no milk there, the proposal is that you can have a perceptual experience of there being milk before you, even though there is no milk there. States that are like belief in this respect are characterised in general as **intentional** states, so this type of view is known as the **intentional theory of perception**.

A third important approach to the nature of perceptual experience aims to retain both features of naïve realism: genuine perceptual experience requires a suitable relation with objects, and those objects are often ordinary objects. The proponent of this approach therefore denies that genuine perceptual experiences have precisely the same nature as cases of illusion or hallucination, even where the latter seem to be indistinguishable from cases of genuine perceptual experience. Because defenders of this position hold that apparent experiences have one **or** another of two distinct natures, this position is known as the **disjunctivist theory of perception**.

Essential reading

- BonJour, L. 'Epistemological Problems of Perception' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/perception-episprob/
- Crane, T. 'The Problem of Perception' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/perception-problem/
- Dancy, J. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) [ISBN 9780631136224] Chapters 10–11.

Further reading

The following are useful collections of essays on perception:

- Byrne, A. and H. Logue (eds) *Disjunctivism: Contemporary Readings*. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008) [ISBN 9780262524902]. [Referred to below as B&L.]
- Crane, T. (ed.) *The Contents of Experience: Essays on Perception*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) [ISBN 9780521173179].
- Dancy, J. (ed.) *Perceptual Knowledge*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [ISBN 9780198750741]. [Referred to below as Dancy.]
- Noe, A. (ed.) *Vision and Mind*. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002) [ISBN 9780262640473]. [Referred to below as Noe.]

The following are useful books about perception:

- Alston, W. *The Reliability of Sense Perception*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) [ISBN 9780801481017].
- Austin, J.L. *Sense and Sensibilia*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) [ISBN 9780195003079].
- Jackson, F. *Perception: A Representative Theory*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) [ISBN 9780521107945] especially Chapters 1–4.
- Robinson, H. *Perception*. (London: Routledge, 1994) [ISBN 9780415249935].

The following are general essays or chapters on the nature of perception and its role in the acquisition of knowledge:

- Audi, R. *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (London: Routledge, 2010) third edition [ISBN 9780415879231] Chapters 1–2.
- Martin, M.G.F. 'Perception' in F. Jackson and M. Smith (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) [ISBN 9780199234769].
- Martin, M.G.F. 'Beyond Dispute: Sense-data, Intentionality and the Mind-body Problem', in T. Crane and S. Patterson (eds) *History of the Mind-Body Problem*. (London: Routledge, 2000) [ISBN 9780415408318].
- P. F. Strawson 'Perception and its Objects' in G. Macdonald (ed.) *Perception and Identity: Essays Presented to A. J. Ayer with his Replies to Them*. (London: Macmillan, 1979) [ISBN 9780333271827]. [Reprinted in Noe.]
- Williams, M. *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction to Epistemology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) [ISBN 9780192892560] Chapter 15.

Defences of **sense-datum theory of perception** can be found in:

- Jackson, F. *Perception: A Representative Theory*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) [ISBN 9780521107945] especially Chapters 1–4.

- Robinson, H. *Perception*. (London: Routledge, 1994) [ISBN 9780415249935].

A classic attack on an early form of that theory is:

- Austin, J.L. *Sense and Sensibilia*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) [ISBN 9780195003079].

Three useful discussions of the **intentional theory of perception** that also provide objections to **sense-datum theory** are:

- Armstrong, D.M. *A Materialist Theory of the Mind*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968) [ISBN 9780415100311] Chapter 10. [Reprinted in Dancy.]
- Harman, G. 'The Intrinsic Quality of Experience' in J.E. Tomberlin (ed.) *Philosophical Perspectives 4: Action Theory and Philosophy of Mind*. (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 1990) [ISBN 9780917930898].
- Searle, J. *Intentionality: an Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) [ISBN 9780521273022] Chapter 2.

The following are especially useful discussions of the **disjunctivist theory of perception**:

- Martin, M.G.F. 'The Limits of Self-Awareness', *Philosophical Studies* 120, 2004, pp.37–89. [Reprinted in B&L.]
- McDowell, J. 'Criteria, Defeasibility and Knowledge', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 68, 1982, pp.455–79. [Reprinted in Dancy and in J. McDowell *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998) [ISBN 9780674007123]. Relevant selections reprinted in B&L.]
- Snowdon, P. 'Perception, Vision and Causation', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 81, 1981, pp.175–92. [Reprinted in B&L, Dancy and Noe.]
- Snowdon, P. 'The Objects of Perceptual Experience', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Supplementary Volume 64, 1990, pp.121–50. [Reprinted in B&L.]
- Soteriou, M. 'The Disjunctive Theory of Perception' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/perception-disjunctive/

2.1.2 Perception and knowledge

Accounts of the nature of perception are sometimes shaped by the need to address **question (2)**, the question whether perception can give rise to knowledge and, if it can, how it does so. For example, some philosophers have been inclined to reject the sense-datum theory on the grounds that it renders mysterious how perceptual experience can give rise to knowledge about ordinary objects. And whatever your favoured account of the nature of perception, you will anyway need an answer to question (2).

The role of perception in knowledge and justification is addressed in some of the general texts on perception listed above (see especially the book by Alston) and also in many discussions of **Foundationalism** and **Coherentism** (For more on the latter, see Section 3.4 *Foundationalism, Coherentism, Infinitism and Agrippa's trilemma*).

Essential reading

* BonJour, L. and E. Sosa *Epistemic Justification*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) [ISBN 9780631182849] especially Chapters 4 and 5. (Chapter 4 available on the VLE.)

Further reading

Brewer, B. *Perception and Reason*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) [ISBN 9780199250455].

Burge, T. 'Perceptual Entitlement', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 67, 2003, pp.503–48.

McDowell, J. 'Knowledge and the Internal', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55, 1995, pp.877–93. [Reprinted in SKFM and in J. McDowell *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998) [ISBN 9780674007123]].

Pryor, P. 'The Sceptic and the Dogmatist', *Noûs* 34, 2000, pp.517–49.

Reynolds, S.L. 'Knowing How to Believe With Justification', *Philosophical Studies* 64, 1991, pp.273–92. [Reprinted in SKFM.]

Williams, M. *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction to Epistemology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) [ISBN 9780192892560] Chapter 15.

2.2 Testimony and memory

Perception is typically thought of as a way in which things are discovered – a way in which knowledge is first acquired. By contrast, memory and testimony are typically thought of as ways in which knowledge that has already been acquired in some other way by an individual can be retained by the individual – by means of **memory** – or passed on to others – by means of **testimony**. (Philosophers typically use 'testimony' as a general label for ways in which people can transmit knowledge to others by telling them things, though some philosophers restrict the label to a specific range of such ways.)

One important question about both testimony and memory concerns the conditions in which we can retain or transmit knowledge by their use and, more generally, the conditions in which we are entitled to rely on their proper operation. Do we need special reasons to trust either our memories or people who tell us things, if we are to come to have knowledge through memory or testimony? Or is it rather that we are entitled to rely on these resources unless there is special reason to think they are malfunctioning? If we need reason to trust these potential resources, that might mean that there are far fewer opportunities to come to know things through remembering them, or through being told them, than we ordinarily take there to be. Alternatively, if it is held that we are entitled in general to rely on memory and testimony, doesn't that invite the charge that we are simply gullible?

Another important question is whether memory and testimony are invariably resources by which knowledge can be retained or transmitted and, if they are, how we should understand their functioning in that way.

Essential readings on memory

* Huemer, M. 'The Problem of Memory Knowledge', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 80(4), 1999, pp.346–57. [Reprinted in SKFM.]

Senor, T. 'Epistemological Problems of Memory' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/memory-episprob/

Further reading on memory

Bernecker, S. *Memory: A Philosophical Study*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) [ISBN 9780199577569].

Audi, R. *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (London: Routledge, 2010) third edition [ISBN 9780415879231] Chapter 3.

Audi, R. 'Memorial Justification', *Philosophical Topics* 23, 1995, pp.251–72.

Craig, E. *Knowledge and the State of Nature: an Essay in Conceptual Synthesis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) [ISBN 9780198238799] Chapter 15.

Dancy, J. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) [ISBN 9780631136224] Chapter 12.

Dummett, M. 'Testimony and Memory' in M&C and M. Dummett *The Seas of Language*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) [ISBN 9780198236214].

Malcolm, N. 'Three Lectures on Memory' in his *Knowledge and Certainty: Essays and Lectures*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963) [ISBN 9780135167403].

Martin, C.B. and M. Deutscher 'Remembering', *Philosophical Review* 75, 1966, pp.161–96.

Essential readings on testimony

Adler, J. 'Epistemological Problems of Testimony' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/testimony-episprob/

* Coady, C.A.J. 'Testimony and Observation', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 10, 1973, pp.149–55.

Further reading on testimony

Useful books

Coady, C.A.J. *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) [ISBN 9780198235514].

Faulkner, P. *Knowledge on Trust*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) [ISBN 9780199589784].

Haddock, A., A. Millar and D. Pritchard *Social Epistemology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) [ISBN 9780199577477].

Lackey, J. and E. Sosa (eds) *The Epistemology of Testimony*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) [ISBN 9780199276011]. [Referred to below as L&S.]

Lackey, J. *Learning from Words*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) [ISBN 9780199575619].

Matilal, B.K. and A. Chakrabarti (eds) *Knowing from Words*. (Boston: Kluwer, 1994) [ISBN 9789048142873]. [Referred to below as M&C.]

Useful essays and chapters

Adler, J. 'Testimony, Trust, Knowing', *Journal of Philosophy* 91, 1994, pp.264–75.

Audi, R. *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (London: Routledge, 2010) third edition [ISBN 9780415879231] Chapter 7.

- Bernecker, S. *Reading Epistemology: Selected Texts with Interactive Commentary*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) [ISBN 9781405127646] Chapter 4.
- Burge, T. 'Content Preservation', *Philosophical Review* 102, 1993, pp.457–88. [Reprinted in SKFM.]
- Dummett, M. 'Testimony and Memory' in M&C and M. Dummett *The Seas of Language*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) [ISBN 9780198236214].
- Fricker, E. 'Against Gullibility' in M&C. [Reprinted in SKFM.]
- Fricker, E. 'Critical Notice: Telling and Trusting: Reductionism and Anti-Reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony', *Mind* 104, 1995, pp.393–411.
- Lackey, J. 'Memory as an Epistemically Generative Source', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 70, 2005, pp.636–58.
- McDowell, J. 'Knowledge by Hearsay' in M&C. [Reprinted in J. McDowell *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998) [ISBN 9780674007123].
- Moran, R. 'Getting Told and Being Believed', *Philosophers' Imprint* 5, 2005, pp.1–29. Available at: www.philosophersimprint.org/005005/ [Reprinted in L&S.]
- Ross, A. 'Why do we believe what we are told?', *Ratio* 27, 1986, pp.69–88.

2.3 Introspection and self-knowledge

How do you know what you believe, what you can see, or how you feel? In order to find out what other people believe, or what they can see, or how they feel, we typically have to observe how they act, including what they say. But we appear to be able to know about our own minds in ways that do not depend on observing our behaviour. In that sense, we appear to have a form of **privileged access** to our own minds. Moreover, it has seemed to many philosophers that our views about our own minds are especially **authoritative**: our own view of what we believe, feel, or see typically trumps any view that others might take of our states of mind. Indeed, some philosophers have taken the view that our minds are **transparent** to us. Their idea has two components, which might be separated. The first component is the claim that, where we take a view about our own minds, our view is guaranteed to be correct: we are **infallible**. The second component is the claim that we are bound to have a view about anything that goes on in our minds, that our minds are **self-intimating**. Many philosophers now reject the claim that minds are transparent to their possessors. They think that there are cases in which one's view about one's own mind is incorrect; and they think that there are cases in which things go on in one's mind without one being aware of them. However, it remains an open question to what extent either component of transparency fails, and precisely what view we should take about the privilege and authority of our knowledge of ourselves in light of its failure.

There are therefore two related questions in this area of epistemology. First, to what extent do we have knowledge about our own minds, rather than mere belief, or no view at all? Second, how should we explain the knowledge we do have, given our special privilege and authority?

One way of seeing the connections between these questions, stressed especially in the work of Sydney Shoemaker, is by considering the view that our knowledge of our own minds is based on a form of inner perception. According to such a view, we each possess an ability to perceive features of our own minds. The fact that our abilities are self-directed, so that no one has such an ability to perceive features of other peoples' minds, is supposed to help explain the special privilege that attached to views formed on the basis of exercises of the ability. And the fact that the ability is especially reliable is supposed to help explain the special authority accorded to views that are so based. One proponent of such a view is David Armstrong (in work listed below). Shoemaker argues that, if that were the correct account of self-knowledge, then it ought to be possible for someone to be perfectly rational and yet to lack the self-monitoring ability. That is, it ought to be possible for someone to be self-blind, to lack a specially privileged and authoritative view of their own minds. Shoemaker goes on to argue that such a form of self-blindness is not really possible and so we should reject the 'inner perception' model of self-knowledge. Whether or not he is right about that, reflecting on the issue – and on Shoemaker's work in particular – is a good way of beginning to engage with questions about the epistemology of self-knowledge.

Essential reading

Gertler, B. 'Self-Knowledge' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/self-knowledge/

A very useful book about introspection and self-knowledge, collecting a number of Sydney Shoemaker's important essays on the topic, is:

Shoemaker, S. *The First-Person Perspective and Other Essays*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) [ISBN 9780521568715] especially essays 10–12. [Referred to below as Shoemaker.]

Further reading

Useful books

Gertler, B. *Self-Knowledge*. (London: Routledge, 2010) [ISBN 9780415405263].

Moran, R. *Authority and Estrangement: An Essay on Self-Knowledge*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press) [ISBN 9780691089454].

Cassam, Q. (ed.) *Self Knowledge*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) [ISBN 9780198751168]. [Referred to below as Cassam.]

Useful essays and chapters

Armstrong, D.M. *A Materialist Theory of the Mind*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968) [ISBN 9780415100311] Chapter 15. [Selections reprinted in Cassam.]

- Burge, T. 'Individualism and Self Knowledge', *Journal of Philosophy* 85, 1988, pp.649–63. [Reprinted in Cassam.]
- Davidson, D. 'First-Person Authority', *Dialectica* 38, 1984, pp.101–12.
- Davidson, D. 'Knowing One's Own Mind', *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 60, 1987, pp.441–58. [Reprinted in Cassam.]
- Evans, G. *The Varieties of Reference*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) [ISBN 9780198246862] Chapter 7. [Reprinted in Cassam.]
- Heil, J. 'Privileged Access', *Mind* 97, 1988, pp.238–51.
- Ryle, G. *The Concept of Mind*. (London: Penguin Classics, originally published 1949) [ISBN 9780141182179] Chapter 6. [Selections reprinted in Cassam.]
- Shoemaker, S. 'Introspection and the Self', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 10, 1986, pp.101–20. [Reprinted in Shoemaker and Cassam.]
- Shoemaker, S. 'On Knowing One's Own Mind', *Philosophical Perspectives 2: Epistemology* 1988, pp.183–209. [Reprinted in Shoemaker.]
- Shoemaker, S. 'First Person Access', *Philosophical Perspectives 4: Action Theory and Philosophy of Mind* 1990, pp.187–214. [Reprinted in Shoemaker.]
- Shoemaker, S. 'Moore's Paradox and Self-Knowledge', *Philosophical Studies* 77, 1995, pp.211–28. [Reprinted in Shoemaker.]
- Shoemaker, S. 'Self-Knowledge and "Inner Sense"', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54, 1994, pp.249–314. [Reprinted in Shoemaker.]

Scepticism: how much do we know?

There are two main forms of sceptical arguments, what I'll call **the argument from sceptical hypothesis** and **the argument from Agrippa's trilemma**. I will deal with the first form of sceptical argument in Sections 3.1 to 3.3. Agrippa's trilemma is discussed in Section 3.4, especially in 3.4.2.

3.1 The argument from sceptical hypothesis

The best-known form of sceptical argument begins from consideration of one or another type of scenario in which our views are radically disconnected from the external world. In one such scenario, our views are disconnected from the external world because we are dreaming. In this scenario, everything we have experienced has been part of a very vivid dream. We take ourselves to have gone to the refrigerator to get some milk, seen the milk, and retrieved it. In the first sceptical scenario, none of this happened: we merely dreamed that we went to the refrigerator, dreamed that it contained milk and dreamed that we picked up the milk. Instead of our experiences revealing to us how things are in the external world, they are generated independently of how things are by the operations of our own minds. In a second type of scenario, we are cut off from the external world because we are nothing but a brain in a vat, whose experiences are all the result of electronic intervention by an evil super-scientist. The super-scientist controls our experience so that, for example, if we decide to go to the refrigerator, we have the kind of experience we would have if we went to the refrigerator. And the same goes for the rest of our experiences.

It seems obvious that, if we were in fact in such a scenario, we wouldn't know anything about the external world. The question naturally arises whether we can know that we are not in such a scenario. In what follows I'll focus on the second scenario. Can you know that you are not a brain in a vat? Having raised this question, it seems very difficult to answer. If you consider anything that you might take to be evidence that you are not a brain in a vat, it seems obvious that the super-scientist could make it appear to you that you had that evidence. Unless we can find a way out of that bind, it appears that we should accept (i):

- i. I do not know that I am not a brain in a vat.

The difficulty now is that it is apt to seem plausible that, if you don't know that you are not a brain in a vat, then

you don't know perfectly ordinary things, like whether or not you have hands, or are reading this text. For it seems obvious that brains in vats don't have hands, so that I know that if I have hands, I am not a brain in a vat. So, if I know that I have hands, I can reason deductively as follows: I have hands; if I have hands, I'm not a brain in a vat; therefore, I'm not a brain in a vat. If we allow that competent deduction of that sort preserves knowledge, it follows that if I know that I have hands, I can know that I'm not a brain in a vat. (The claim that competent deduction preserves knowledge is known as the **closure principle**, because it says that knowledge is closed under known entailment.) So, the following is apt to look plausible.

- ii. If I know that I have hands, I know that I am not a brain in a vat.

But now (i) and (ii) conflict with something that appears obviously true:

- iii. I know that I have hands.

If (iii) – if I did know that I have hands – then (ii) tells me that I'd be in a position to know that I am not a brain in a vat. But (i) tells me that I do not know that I am not brain in a vat. So, reasoning by modus tollens tells us that (iii) is false: I do not know that I have hands. The challenge posed by the first sceptical argument is to find a way of defending ordinary claims to know, like (iii). The main options are the following. We might attempt to argue that (i) is false, by explaining how we can know that we are not in a sceptical scenario. Alternatively, we might try to show that so-called **closure principles**, like that driving (ii), are false. Taking that line, we would try to argue that we do know that we have hands even though we don't know that we are not brains in vats.

Essential reading

DeRose, K and T. Warfield (eds) *Skepticism: A Contemporary Reader*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) [ISBN 9780195118261]. [Referred to below as Sk: the introduction here is especially helpful.]

* Stroud, B. *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) [ISBN 9780198247616] especially Chapter 1, which is reprinted in SKFM.

Further reading

Two classic discussions of the argument from sceptical hypotheses are on dreaming:

Descartes, R. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. (First published in 1641, this is available in a number of forms.) See especially the First Meditation.

And on brains in vats, see:

Putnam, H. *Reason, Truth, and History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) [ISBN 9780521297769] Chapter 1. [Reprinted in B&D, Sk.]

Useful books, essays and chapters

Audi, R. *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (London: Routledge, 2010) third edition [ISBN 9780415879231] Chapters 13–14.

Bernecker, S. *Reading Epistemology: Selected Texts with Interactive Commentary*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) [ISBN 9781405127646] Chapter 6.

Brueckner, A. 'Brains in a Vat' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/brain-vat/

Dancy, J. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) [ISBN 9780631136224] Chapter 1.

Greco, J. 'External World Skepticism', *Philosophy Compass* 2/4, 2007, pp.625–49.

* Klein, P. 'Skepticism' in OHE.

Greco, J. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Skepticism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) [ISBN 9780199836802]. [Referred to below as OHS.]

Lemos, N. *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) [ISBN 9780521603096] Chapter 7.

S&S. See especially Part 1.

Williams, B. *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry*. (London: Routledge, 2005) revised edition [ISBN 9780415356275] Chapter 2 and Appendix 3.

Williamson, T. 'Knowledge and Scepticism' in F. Jackson and M. Smith (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) [ISBN 9780199234769].

3.2 The status of closure principles

Robert Nozick is especially associated with a response to the sceptical challenge that seeks to accept both (i) and (iii) by denying (ii). That is, Nozick allows that I don't know that I am not a brain in a vat, but wants to argue that that is consistent with my knowing that I have hands. According to Nozick, a subject's knowledgeable beliefs are their true beliefs that also meet the following conditions (where 'p' is replaced by a declarative sentence of English, for instance the sentence 'I have hands'):

(N1) If p were not true, then the subject would not believe that p.

(N2) If p were true, then the subject would believe that p.

For example, Nozick's account would count your true belief that you have hands as a case of knowledge just in case you meet the following additional conditions:

(Ex1) If it were not the case that you have hands, then you would not believe that you have hands.

(Roughly, we are to consider merely possible, or imaginable situations that are as similar as possible to how things in fact are, except that you do not have hands. If those are cases in which the fact that you have no hands means that you do not believe that you do, then your belief about your hands meets (Ex1).)

(Ex2) If it were the case that you have hands, then you would believe that you have hands.

(Roughly, we are to consider a range of merely possible, or imaginable situations that are as similar as possible to how things in fact are and in which you have hands. If those are cases in which the fact that you have hands means that you believe that you do, then your belief about your hands meets (Ex2).)

It seems obvious that your ordinary belief that you have hands meets these conditions, so Nozick would count it as a case of knowledge. However, Nozick's verdict about your belief that you are not a brain in a vat is different. If we think about cases in which that belief would be false – possible situations in which you are a brain in a vat, being fed information electronically by evil super-scientists – then it seems that they will be cases in which you would still believe that you are not a brain in a vat. So, it appears that you fail (N2) and, according to Nozick, do not know that you are not a brain in a vat. So, Nozick's account of knowledge supports our accepting (i) and (iii), by rejecting (ii).

Essential reading

Nozick, R. *Philosophical Explanations*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) [ISBN 9780674664791] Chapter 3, Section 2. [Relevant selections are reprinted in SKFM and Sk.]

Further reading

Wright, C. 'Keeping Track of Nozick', *Analysis* 43, 1983, pp.134–40.

Craig, E. 'Nozick and the Sceptic: The Thumbnail Version', *Analysis* 49, 1989, pp.161–62.

Brueckner, A. 'Unfair to Nozick', *Analysis* 51, 1991, pp.61–64.

(Further readings on Nozick's account of knowledge can be found in Section 1.1 *Discussions of the sufficiency of the tripartite analysis*.)

Another important defender of this style of response to the argument by sceptical hypothesis is Fred Dretske, whose view of knowledge has important affinities with Nozick's. Dretske's discussions of the topic, as well as other important discussions of the status of the closure principle, can be found in the following list.

Essential reading

- * Dretske, F. 'Epistemic Operators', *Journal of Philosophy* 67, 1970, pp.1007–023. [Reprinted in SKFM and Sk.]
- Vogel, J. 'Are there counter-examples to the closure principle?' in M. D. Roth and G. Ross (eds) *Doubting: Contemporary Perspectives on Skepticism*. (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990) [ISBN 9780792305767]. [Reprinted in SKFM.]

Further reading

- Kvanvig, J. L. 'Closure Principles', *Philosophy Compass* 1/3, 2006, pp.256–67.
- Luper, S. 'The Epistemic Closure Principle' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/closure-epistemic/
- S&S. See Part 1, Chapter 1.
- Stine, G. 'Skepticism, Relevant Alternatives and Deductive Closure', *Philosophical Studies* 29, 1976, pp.249–61. [Reprinted in SKFM and Sk.]

3.3 Other responses to the argument from sceptical hypothesis

In this section, we'll consider three other types of response to the argument from sceptical hypothesis.

3.3.1 Moore's response to scepticism

One seemingly straightforward response to scepticism is presented by G. E. Moore. He can be read as attempting to argue from the obviousness of the truth of (iii) – the claim that we know we have hands – to the falsity of (i) – the claim that we do not know we are in a sceptical scenario. One worry that has been raised about this approach to the argument is that it appears to beg the question against the sceptic: it appears to assume that we have knowledge, when that was supposed to be the claim to be defended.

Essential reading

- Moore, G. E. 'Proof of an external world', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 25, 1939, pp.273–300. [Reprinted in SKFM.] Available at: http://web.mac.com/cludwig/Site/Philosophie_de_la_connaissance_files/moore.pdf

Further reading

- Lemos, N. 'Moore and Skepticism' in OHS.
- Nuccetelli, S. and G. Seay *Themes from G. E. Moore: New Essays in Epistemology and Ethics*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007) [ISBN 9780199281725] especially Chapter 2, but see also Chapters 3–5.
- Pryor, J. 'The Sceptic and the Dogmatist', *Nous* 34, 2004, pp.517–49.
- Sosa, E. 'How to Defeat Opposition to Moore', *Philosophical Perspectives* 13, 1999, pp.141–53. [Reprinted in SKFM.]

3.3.2 Semantic responses to scepticism

In addition to presenting the argument from sceptical hypothesis in an especially compelling way, Hilary Putnam offers an important response to the argument. On Putnam's view, what we mean and what we believe are determined in part by the way we are causally connected with our environments. For instance, it is because of the way my use of the word 'water' and my thoughts about water are connected with H₂O in my environment that that word and those thoughts are both about that particular substance. Putnam argues that, because of the role of my connection with my environment in determining what I mean and what I think, I can't be radically mistaken about how things are in my environment. For my being radically mistaken depends on a radical mismatch between what I say or believe and the condition of my environment. And that sort of mismatch is ruled out by the way that the content of what I say and believe depends upon my links with my environment.

Essential reading

Putnam's main discussion of this response to scepticism is:

- Putnam, H. *Reason, Truth, and History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) [ISBN 9780521297769] Chapter 1. [Reprinted in B&D, Sk.]

- Brueckner, A. 'Semantic Answers to Skepticism', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 73, 1992, pp.200–219. [Reprinted in Sk.]

- Brueckner, A. 'Brains in a Vat' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/brain-vat/

Further reading

- Forbes, G. 'Realism and Skepticism: Brains in a Vat Revisited', *Journal of Philosophy* 92, 1995, pp.205–22. [Reprinted in Sk.]
- Greco, J. 'External World Skepticism', *Philosophy Compass* 2, 2007, pp.625–49.
- Warfield, T. 'A Priori Knowledge of the World: Knowing the World by Knowing Our Minds', *Philosophical Studies* 60, 1998, pp.127–47. [Reprinted in Sk.]
- Wright, C. 'On Putnam's Proof That We Are Not Brains-in-a-Vat', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 92, 1992, pp.67–94.

3.3.3 Contextualist responses to scepticism

A different response to scepticism appeals to the idea that we might not know something in one context, or by one standard, and yet we could still know it in another context, or by another standard.

One way of beginning to think about this type of position is to consider what you might say about the following pair of situations. In the first situation, you are away from home and idly come to consider the question whether you locked your front door this morning. You seem to remember locking your front door in the morning, and

have no special reason to doubt your seeming memory, and anyway you have never failed to lock the front door when leaving home. Moreover, you live in a very safe neighbourhood, and possess nothing of much value. You believe that you locked the door this morning. Would you say that you **know** that you locked the front door this morning? Plausibly, you would be happy to say that.

Now consider the second situation. Again, you are away from home and consider the question whether you locked the door this morning. Again, you seem to remember locking the door and this is something you have never failed to do. However, in the second situation, there is some enormously expensive computer equipment just inside your front door, equipment that you cannot afford to lose. And there has recently been a spate of thefts in your neighbourhood, apparently due to your neighbours failing to lock their front doors. So, there appears to be a significant danger that, if you didn't lock the door, something bad will happen. Moreover, you have been thinking about the reliability of memory and about the possibility of appearing to remember something that did not in fact happen. Nonetheless, you believe that you locked the door this morning. Would you say that you **know** that you locked the front door this morning? When considering the second situation, some people would not be prepared to say that you know that you locked the door; rather, they think that this is a situation in which you do not know and would be well advised to check that you have locked the door. On this view, the importance of the answer to the question whether you know, together with the salience of possible reasons for doubting that you know, mean that in the second situation the answer to the question is that you do not know.

Contextualists about knowledge hold that the correct answer to the question whether you know can depend in this way on the context in which we consider that question. On this view, (iii) can be true in ordinary contexts, where the question at issue is of limited importance and no special reasons for doubting that you know have been raised. However, the extraordinary context created by reflection on possibilities of radical disconnection is one in which we cannot even know that we have hands. So, in the ordinary context, (iii) is true and (i) is false, while in the extraordinary context, (i) is true and (iii) is false. One benefit of this view is therefore that it preserves (ii), and thereby allows that competent deductive inference is a way of acquiring knowledge.

Essential reading

* DeRose, K. 'Solving the Skeptical Problem', *Philosophical Review* 104, 1995, pp.1–52. [Reprinted in SKFM and Sk.]

* Lewis, D. K. 'Elusive Knowledge', in Schiffer, S. 'Contextualist solutions to scepticism', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 96 (1996), pp.317–33. [Reprinted in D. K. Lewis *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1999) [ISBN 9780521587877] and in B&D, SKFM and Sk.]

Further reading

S&S. See Part 1, Chapter 2.

Cohen, S. 'Contextualist Solutions to Epistemological Problems: Scepticism, Gettier, and the Lottery', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 76, 1998, pp.289–306. [Reprinted in SKFM.]

Schiffer, S. 'Contextualist Solutions to Scepticism', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 96, 1996, pp.317–33.

3.4 Foundationalism, Coherentism, Infitism and Agrippa's trilemma

Consider something that you take yourself to know, for instance that you have hands. Suppose that someone challenged this and requested your grounds, or evidence, or justification for taking yourself to know that you have hands. There appear to be two possible responses: First, you might refuse to provide any justification and appeal instead to the idea that what you claim to know doesn't require evidence, perhaps because it is self-evident. Second, you might provide grounds or evidence for what you claim to know, by appeal to something else that you claim to know which counts as such evidence or grounds. Now suppose that you are challenged to provide grounds or evidence for the new claim to know. Again, you might either appeal to self-evidence, or make appeal to something else you claim to know. Again, if you appeal to something else you claim to know, you can be challenged to defend that claim. And so forth. In that case, you will ultimately end up in one of the following three positions:

Foundationalism: your responses terminate in appeal to what you take to be a range of foundational claims to knowledge that (a) require no evidence, perhaps because they are self-evident and (b) can provide grounds or evidence for everything else you take yourself to know.

Coherentism: your attempt to provide grounds or evidence eventually leads you in a circle. In order to provide grounds for the opening range of things you take yourself to know, you were forced to make appeal to other things you take yourself to know. But in order to provide grounds for those other things you take yourselves to know, you are eventually forced to appeal to the opening range.

Infitism: your attempt to provide grounds never terminates, because everything you take yourself to know is required to be grounded in a distinct piece of knowledge.

Each of the three responses gives rise to a particular view about the structure of reasons for belief, or justification. And each view has been defended. However, some philosophers believe that none of the three views is ultimately acceptable. If they are right, then the forced choice among

the three views presents us with a **trilemma**. (It is known as **Agrippa's trilemma** after its original source, in the work of the ancient sceptic Agrippa.) On the latter, sceptical view, we are forced to accept that some of our beliefs are ungrounded and so do not amount to knowledge.

3.4.1 General discussions of Foundationalism, Coherentism and Infitism

All forms of **Foundationalism** draw a distinction between basic beliefs and non-basic beliefs. Basic beliefs are warranted independently of other beliefs and provide warrant for non-basic beliefs. Forms of Foundationalism differ over their accounts of the nature of basic beliefs. One natural motivation for Foundationalism is a wish to explain how our beliefs come to be responsive to how things are in the external world. From that perspective, it would be natural to include perceptual beliefs among the basis beliefs, since such beliefs are especially responsive to specific features of the external world. However, perceptual beliefs can be false: we can be mistaken about whether there is milk in the refrigerator, even if we seem to see milk there. It therefore seems reasonable to ask of any particular perceptual belief whether it is really justified. That is, it seems reasonable to challenge the believer to provide reason to believe that this perceptual belief is correct given that not all such beliefs are. A second source of motivation for Foundationalism is to provide basic beliefs that can serve to terminate challenges of that sort: basic beliefs that are self-evident, or otherwise not open to challenge. One proposal that aims to respond to the second source of motivation is that basic beliefs are beliefs about our own experiences, or our own mental states more generally. That type of proposal faces two main challenges. First, the claim that beliefs about one's own states of mind are not open to challenge – for example, that they are guaranteed to be correct – requires defence. As noted above (in Section 2.3 *Introspection and self-knowledge*), many philosophers now deny that our views about our own minds are guaranteed to be correct, or to amount to knowledge. So, it is not obvious that such beliefs can serve to prevent further requests for justification. Second, even if such basic beliefs can be found, it is difficult to see how they can be used to support all our non-basic beliefs. One reason for retreating from regarding as basic the perceptual belief that there is milk in the refrigerator to treating as basic only the belief that **it seems to me** that there is milk in the refrigerator was that the latter belief might be correct even though the former isn't. But in that case, it's hard to see how the latter belief can warrant the former.

Coherentism is often motivated by the difficulty of finding basic beliefs of the sort required by Foundationalism. Coherentists make no distinction between basic and non-basic beliefs: all beliefs are non-basic, since they are all warranted on the basis of relations

with other beliefs. Forms of Coherentism differ over the types of relations among beliefs that are required for them to warrant one another. According to one form of Coherentism, beliefs can justify one another if they are consistent with one another – that is, if it is possible for them all to be true. According to a more demanding form, beliefs can justify one another only if there are explanatory connections among them, so that for example one belief's being true would help to explain another belief's being true. One basic challenge facing all forms of Coherentism is to explain how the obtaining of the relations among beliefs to which they appeal can make it more likely that those beliefs are true. For it is a natural thought that the elements of a piece of fiction might meet whatever demands the Coherentist imposes. In that case, someone who believed those elements could have a maximally coherent set of beliefs, despite most of those beliefs being false. If that is right, then someone with a maximally coherent set of beliefs would be open to the challenge of justifying their view that the set of beliefs as a whole is correct. A related challenge is to explain how one set of beliefs can warrant a second set of beliefs when the only warrant for the first set of beliefs is provided by the second set. This is the problem of **circularity**: we would normally find it unacceptable if someone attempted to support their belief that *p* by appeal to their belief that *q*, and then attempted to defend their belief that *q* by circular appeal to their belief that *p*. The difficulty of meeting these challenges in turn provides a motivation for Foundationalism. For, as we've seen, a central role for basic beliefs is to address challenges of these sorts.

A third and less popular view is **Infitism**. This view attempts to combine features of the other two views. First, the Infitist accepts the Foundationalist idea that beliefs that are in need of justification must be justified by independently justified beliefs. Hence, the Infitist denies that beliefs can be justified circularly in the way proposed by Coherentism. Second, the Infitist rejects the Foundationalist distinction between basic and non-basic beliefs and thus denies that there are any beliefs that do not require justification by appeal to distinct beliefs. That combination of views leads to the idea that the justification of any belief fails to terminate: in order for a belief to be justified, there must be distinct justified beliefs able to justify it; in order for those beliefs to be justified, there must be distinct justified beliefs able to justify them; and so on, without end. One challenge facing this view is to explain how any of our beliefs can be justified, given the apparent requirement that, in order for any beliefs to be justified, infinitely many must be justified. A second challenge arises even if the first challenge can be met. The second challenge is to explain how we can be justified in holding that any of our beliefs are justified, given the apparent requirement that the process of providing a satisfactory justification for any belief is bound to be endless.

Essential reading

- Dancy, J. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) [ISBN 9780631136224] Chapters 4–9.
- Fumerton, R. 'Foundationalist Theories of Epistemic Justification' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/justep-foundational/
- Kvanvig, J. 'Coherentist Theories of Epistemic Justification' in SEP: www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/justep-coherence/

Further reading

- Alston, W.P. 'Two Types of Foundationalism', *Journal of Philosophy* 85, 1976, pp.165–85.
- Audi, R. *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (London: Routledge, 2010) third edition [ISBN 9780415879231] Chapters 8–9.
- Bernecker, S. *Reading Epistemology: Selected Texts with Interactive Commentary*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) [ISBN 9781405127646] Chapter 5.
- BonJour, L. 'Can Empirical Knowledge have a Foundation?', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15, 1978, pp.1–13. [Reprinted in SKFM.]
- BonJour, L. *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985) [ISBN 9780674843813].
- Davidson, D. 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge' in E. Lepore (ed.) *Truth and Interpretation*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) [ISBN 9780631169482]. [Reprinted in B&D and SKFM.]
- Dretske, F. 'Entitlement: Epistemic Rights without Epistemic Duties', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60, 2000, pp.591–606.
- Haack, S. *Evidence and Inquiry: Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) [ISBN 9780631196792] Chapter 4. [Reprinted in SKFM.]
- Klein, P. 'Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons', *Philosophical Issues* 13, 1999, pp.297–325. [Reprinted in SKFM.]
- Lemos, N. *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) [ISBN 9780521603096] Chapters 3–4.
- S&S. See Part 2.
- Plantinga, A. *Warrant: the Current Debate*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) [ISBN 9780195078626] Chapter 4.
- Pollock, J. and J. Cruz *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999) [ISBN 9780847689378] Chapter 3.
- Sosa, E. 'The Raft and the Pyramid' in P. A. French, T. E. Uehling, Jr. and H. K. Wettstein (eds) *Studies in Epistemology, Midwest Studies in Philosophy Volume 5* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980) [ISBN 9780816609444]. [Reprinted in SKFM.]
- Williams, M. *Groundless Belief*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999) second edition [ISBN 9780691009070].
- Williams, M. *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction to Epistemology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) [ISBN 9780192892560].

3.4.2 Agrippa's trilemma

The challenges that face each of the three views about the structure of justification we've just considered – **Foundationalism, Coherentism, and Infitism** – can play a role in generating an especially powerful form of scepticism. The challenge to justify any of our particular claims to know things appears reasonable. But it appears that the only candidate ways of addressing that challenge are the three that we've considered. According to the proponent of Agrippa's trilemma, those are the only possible candidates for addressing the challenge. Hence, unless one of those candidates is successful, it is not possible to justify any claim to knowledge. The proponent of Agrippa's trilemma seeks to show that that is our position. As we've seen, each of the three candidate accounts of justification faces challenges. The proponent of Agrippa's trilemma thinks that those challenges are insurmountable. The forced choice between the three positions presents a trilemma, for taking any of the three horns leads to disaster. Foundationalism flounders because there are no basic beliefs that are able to prevent new justificatory challenges from arising. Coherentism collapses because of the problem of circularity. And Infitism provides an account of justification according to which none of our beliefs is justified. Hence, the proponent of Agrippa's trilemma holds that none of our beliefs is justified. If we think that in order to know we must have justification, an immediate consequence would be that we don't know anything. And even if we find a way of avoiding that consequence, perhaps by denying that knowledge requires justification, still the claim that none of our beliefs is justified clashes with our ordinary view that some of our beliefs are better justified than others.

Essential reading

- * Klein, P. 'Skepticism' in OHE.
- * Williams, M. *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction to Epistemology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) [ISBN 9780192892560] Chapter 5.

Further reading

- Williams, M. *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995) [ISBN 9780691011158].