

Knowledge and Reality, Lecture 01

Brian Weatherson

2022-08-29

Logistics

Pasnau

Siegel

Four Issues in Epistemology

Logistics ●○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○	Pasnau ○○○○○○○	Siegel ○○○○○○○○○○	Four Issues in Epistemology ○○○○○
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Hello World

- Welcome to **Philosophy** 383 - Knowledge and Reality

Logistics ●○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○	Pasnau ○○○○○○○	Siegel ○○○○○○○○○○	Four Issues in Epistemology ○○○○○
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Who We are

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Logistics

- Two 1.5 hour meetings like we're having now.
- One 1 hour discussion section per week.

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Interaction

- One hour out of four being interactive isn't enough.
- Feel free to put your hand up to ask questions a lot.
- I will be asking you some questions too.

How many people here are:

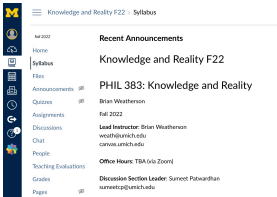
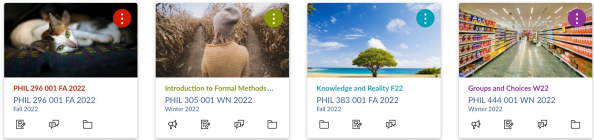
- Cog Sci majors?
- PPE majors?
- Philosophy majors?
- Some other major?

How many people here have previously taken:

- 0-1 philosophy classes?
- 2 philosophy classes?
- 3-4 philosophy classes?
- 5+ philosophy classes?

- What are you hoping to get out of the course? Why did you enroll in it?

Published Courses (10)



- All the slides are on Canvas.
- You don't need to copy down anything that's up here.

- Three essays
- Three quizzes
- Discussion section participation

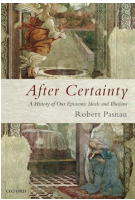
- Essays can be co-authored.
- At most one co-author per paper.
- Different co-authors for different papers.

Why are we going to read about what some 14th century dudes thought?

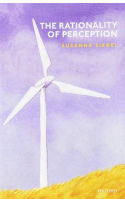
1. Intrinsically interesting.
2. Cultural history.
3. Thinking and writing clearly about hard subjects is valuable.

DO PHILOSOPHY MAJORS MAKE ANY MONEY?
Annual Salaries and Salary Growth by Undergraduate Major
Source: "Salary increase by major" and "Eenr journal" (http://www.bls.gov/publications/specialreports/03/sr309.pdf, Phil_You_Book.com/2008)

Annual Salary	Salary Growth
Median salary of mid-career graduates without higher degrees Data collected in 2008	Increase from starting to mid-career median salary of graduates without higher degrees Data collected in 2008
Economics \$106,600	Philosophy \$61,300
Engineering \$93,600	Mathematics \$62,500
Mathematics \$93,600	Economics \$64,800
Philosophy \$81,300	Political Science \$61,200
Chemistry \$79,500	Chemistry \$61,600
Political Science \$78,300	Art History \$61,300
Business \$73,100	History \$61,100
History \$71,600	English Literature \$60,800
Biology \$64,800	Engineering \$60,100
English Literature \$64,100	Psychology \$60,000
Art History \$63,600	Business \$60,000
Psychology \$60,400	Biology \$57,000
Sociology \$58,200	Sociology \$55,000



Pasnau, After certainty



Siegel, Rationality of Perception

- Logistics
- Pasnau
- Siegel
- Four Issues in Epistemology

Belief

Here are some things I believe:

- I have two hands.
- The Battle of Gettysburg was in 1863.
- Human action is causing global warming.

Two Questions

Two questions about each of these beliefs:

1. What would it take for these beliefs to be ideal, and how can we be more like that?
2. When is the belief good enough to assert/act on/hold?

Pasnau's Focus

One big theme of his book:

- Philosophers used to care more about the first question, but they came to care more about the second.
- This was a mistake.

The Ideal

If you like the first question, then some natural questions arise from it.

- Can we ever be epistemically ideal?
- If so, in what situations can we be ideal? Is it when thinking about mathematics, or our own minds, or, most optimistically, the external world.

Pasnau

The book is primarily about two time periods:

- Early 14th century; and
- Late 17th century.

Pasnau

- The body text, which we'll cover, is only about 1/3 of the book.
- The endnotes are fascinating, and while I encourage you to read them, they aren't required.

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Pasnau

- The book is very focussed on Western Europe; mostly France and England.
- It's a bit of a pity it didn't do more to connect the debates here to debates in Indian philosophy.

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An Example



I'm sick and tired
of hearing things
From uptight, short-sighted,
narrow-minded hypocritics
John Lennon,
"Gimme Some Truth"

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Two Epistemic Shortcomings

1. Short-sighted
2. Narrow-minded

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Epistemic Vices

If we treat these literally,
narrow-mindedness is a **vice**,
while short-sightedness is at worst a **misfortune**.

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A Simple Picture of Empirical Knowledge

1. We get inputs from reality via our perceptual system.
2. We use our minds to figure out more things about the world using these inputs.

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Philosophical Differences Between Stages

- If dualism is true, the first is carried out by our body, the second by our mind.

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Philosophical Differences Between Stages

- Even if that's not right, philosophy has something to say about the second, but not really about the first.

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Philosophical Differences Between Stages

- Relatedly, we criticise people for doing badly at the second, but not the first.

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Some Questions

1. Where is the perception/inference boundary?
2. What are the inputs that perception provides to inference?
3. Does the postulation of a boundary make sense given modern biological theories?
4. Does the two-stage, dualist, picture make sense?

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Two Radical Views

- Philosophical, evaluative, terms are appropriate either side of the boundary. We can talk about the **Rationality of Perception**.
- The boundary does not in fact make sense, and should be abandoned as pre-scientific.

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Motivation for Radicalism

Prejudiced seeing

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Four Issues in Epistemology

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Ways of Knowing

- How many distinct ways of knowing are there?
- Is testimony one of them?

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Justification

Is having a justified belief more a matter of:

- Having a well-ordered mind?; or
- Having a reliable connection to reality?

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Knowledge

- What is the difference between knowledge and lucky guesses?

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Scepticism

- Do we know anything about the external world?
- If so, how and why do sceptical arguments fail?

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For Next Time

- We will start a fair way back, with a (very quick!) survey of some issues that come up in Classical Indian Epistemology.

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