Secret Intelligence Service

Room 15

Notes : Discussion on Naivete

naive

adj: **childlike, trusting**

Synonyms for naive

ignorant

innocent

simple

sincere

unsophisticated

artless

callous

candid

confiding

countrified

credulous

forthright

frank

fresh

green

guileless

gullible

harmless

impulsive

natural

open

original

patsy

plain

simple-minded

spontaneous

square

sucker

unaffected

unjaded

unpretentious

unschooled

unsuspecting

unsuspicious

untaught

unworldly

naïve or naïve

adjective

Naivete - lack of sophistication or worldliness

naiveness, naivety

quality - an essential and distinguishing attribute of something or someone; "the quality of mercy is not strained"--Shakespeare

artlessness, ingenuousness, innocence, naturalness - the quality of innocent naivete

credulousness, gullibility - tendency to believe too readily and therefore to be easily deceived

simple mindedness, simpleness, simplicity - a lack of penetration or subtlety; "they took advantage of her simplicity"

mundaneness, mundanity, worldliness, sophistication - the quality or character of being intellectually sophisticated and worldly through cultivation or experience or disillusionment

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Notes : Basic Philosophical Underpinnings

Naive Realism

Naive realism is the common sense theory of perception. Most people, until they starting thinking philosophically, are naive realists. This theory is also known as "direct realism" or "common sense realism".

Naive realism holds that the view of the world that we derive from our senses is to be taken at face value: there are objects out there in the world, and those objects have the properties that they appear to us to have. If I have an experience as of a large apple tree, then that's because there's a large apple tree in front of me. If the apples on the tree appear to me to be red, then that's because there are objects in front of me, apples, that have the property redness; simple.

Plausible though naive realism may be, it has serious problems, among which is the problem of the variability of perception. The same object may appear differently to different people, or to the same person at different times. The apples may appear to be red in the daytime, but at dusk they are a shade of grey. If naive realism is to be taken seriously, and colours are out

there in the world, then apples regularly change colour depending on how much light is around them. It is much more plausible, though, to think that the apples are the same as they ever were, that all that has changed is our experience of them

Epistemology

Epistemology, - study of the theory of knowledge, is among the most important areas of philosophy. The questions that it addresses include the following:

What is knowledge?

The first problem encountered in epistemology is that of defining knowledge. Much of the time, philosophers use the tripartite theory of knowledge, which analyses knowledge as justified true belief, as a working model. The tripartite theory has, however, been refuted: Gettier cases show that some justified true beliefs do not constitute knowledge. Rival analyses of knowledge have been proposed, but there is as yet no consensus on what knowledge is. This fundamental question of epistemology remains unsolved.

Though philosophers are unable to provide a generally accepted analysis of knowledge, we all understand roughly what we are talking about when we use words such as "knowledge". Thankfully, this means that it is possible to get on with epistemology, leaving unsolved the fundamental question as to what knowledge is.

From where does one obtain knowledge?

A second important issue in epistemology concerns the ultimate source of our knowledge. There are two traditions: empiricism, which holds that our knowledge is primarily based in experience, and rationalism, which holds that our knowledge is primarily based in reason. Although the modern scientific worldview borrows heavily from empiricism, there are reasons for thinking that a synthesis of the two traditions is more plausible than either of them individually.

How are one's beliefs justified?

There are better and worse ways to form beliefs. In general terms, it is important to consider evidence when deciding what to believe, because by doing so we are more likely to form beliefs that are true. Precisely how this should work, when we

are justified in believing something and when we are not, is another topic in the theory of knowledge. The three most prominent theories of epistemic justification are foundationalism, coherentism, and reliabilism.

How does one perceive the world?

Much of our knowledge, it seems, does come to us through our senses, through perception. Perception, though, is a complex process. The way that we experience the world may be determined in part by the world, but it is also determined in part by us. We do not passively receive information through our senses; arguably, we contribute just as much to our experiences as do the objects that they are experiences of. How we are to understand the process of perception, and how this should effect our understanding of the world that we inhabit, is therefore vital for epistemology.

Does one know anything at all?

The area of epistemology that has captured most imaginations is philosophical scepticism. Alongside the questions of what knowledge is and how we come to acquire it is the question whether we do in fact know anything at all. There is a long philosophical tradition that says that we do not, and the arguments in support of this position, though resisted by most, are remarkably difficult to refute. The most persistent problem in the theory of knowledge is not what knowledge is or what it comes from, but whether there is any such thing at all.

Theories of Perception

On a straightforward view, we directly perceive the world as it is. The way that things look, feel, smell, taste, and sound is the way that they are. We see colours, for example, because the world is coloured. This view of perception is called, somewhat dismissively, naive realism.

Plausibly, perception is a lot more complicated than this. Though things may appear to be coloured to us, our experiences of colour are merely representative of the surface properties of objects; the physical property of reflecting certain wavelengths of light and the colour red as we experience it are two quite different things.

This has led to representative realism, which suggests that perception is not the passive process that the naive realist

suggests, that we do not simply receive information about the world through our senses. Rather, we are actively involved in perception, supplying much of the content of our experiences, and must bear this in mind if we are to know what the world is really like in itself.

More extreme than either naive or representative realism is idealism. Idealists, persuaded by the thought that we have direct access only to our experiences of the world, and not to the world itself, have questioned whether there is anything beyond our experiences. A more recent theory that bears some similarities to idealism has also been proposed: phenomenalism.

Personal Knowledge

The first type of knowledge is personal knowledge, or knowledge by acquaintance.

Knowledge in this sense is to do with being familiar with something: in order to know Amy, one must have met her; in order to know fear, one must have experienced it. In each of these cases, the word "know" is being use to refer to knowledge by acquaintance.

Personal knowledge does, arguably, involve possessing at least some propositional knowledge. If I have met Amy, but can't remember a single thing about her, then I probably wouldn't claim to know her. In fact, knowing a person (in the sense required for knowledge by acquaintance) does seem to involve knowing a significant number of propositions about them.

What is important is that personal knowledge involves more than knowledge of propositions. No matter how much you tell me about Amy, no matter how many facts about her I learn, if I haven't met her then I can't be said to know her in the sense required for personal knowledge.

Personal knowledge thus seems to involve coming to know a certain number of propositions *in a particular way*.

Procedural Knowledge

The second kind of knowledge is procedural knowledge, or knowledge how to do something. The claims to know how to juggle and how to drive are claims to have procedural knowledge.

Procedural knowledge clearly differs from propositional knowledge. It is possible to know all of the theory behind driving a car (i.e. to have all of the relevant propositional knowledge) without actually knowing how to drive a car (i.e. without having the procedural knowledge).

You may know which pedal is the accelerator and which is the brake. You may know where the handbrake is and what it does. You may know where your blind spots are are when you need to check them. But until you get behind the wheel and learn how to apply all this theory, you do not know how to drive.

Knowing how to drive involves possessing a skill, being

Propositional Knowledge

Although there are several different types of knowledge, the primary concern of epistemology is propositional knowledge. This is knowledge of facts, knowledge that such and such is the case.

The difference between the three types of knowledge is not as sharp as it might at first appear.

Personal knowledge does seem to involve knowledge of at least some propositions. Simply having met someone is not enough to know them (in the personal knowledge sense); you also have to know a few things about them (in the propositional knowledge sense).

Procedural knowledge also seems to involve some propositional knowledge. If you know how to drive a car (in the procedural knowledge sense) then you presumably know certain facts about driving (e.g. which way the car will go if you turn the steering wheel to the left).

What is important is that propositional knowledge is not enough to give you either personal knowledge or procedural knowledge. Personal knowledge involves acquiring propositional knowledge in a certain way, and procedural knowledge may entail propositional knowledge, but the same propositional knowledge certainly does not entail procedural knowledge.

Whatever the connections between the various types of knowledge there may be, however, it is propositional knowledge that is in view in most epistemology.

The Tripartite Theory of Knowledge

There is a tradition that goes back as far as Plato that holds that three conditions must be satisfied in order for one to possess knowledge. This account, known as the tripartite theory of knowledge, analyses knowledge as justified true belief. The tripartite theory says that if you believe something, with justification, and it is true, then you know it; otherwise, you do not.

Belief

The first condition for knowledge, according to the tripartite theory, is belief. Unless one believes a thing, one cannot know it. Even if something is true, and one has excellent reasons for believing that it is true, one cannot know it without believing it.

Truth

The second condition for knowledge, according to the tripartite theory, is truth. If one knows a thing then it must be true. No matter how well justified or sincere a belief, if it is not true that it cannot constitute knowledge. If a long-held belief is discovered to be false, then one must concede that what was thought to be known was in fact not known. What is false cannot be known; knowledge must be knowledge of the truth.

Justification

The third condition for knowledge is justification. In order to know a thing, it is not enough to merely correctly believe it to be true; one must also have a good reason for doing so. Lucky guesses cannot constitute knowledge; we can only know what we have good reason to believe.

The tripartite theory of knowledge is intuitively very plausible. Since Edmund Gettier's critique of it in the 60s, however, using thought-experiments now known as Gettier cases, it has been generally rejected. Nevertheless, it is still used as a working model by philosophers most of the time.

Gettier Cases

The tripartite theory of knowledge analyses knowledge as justified true belief. According to this analysis, if something is true, and we believe it to be true, and we are justified in believing it to be true, then we know it.

The tripartite theory, though it has been around since Plato, and though it is still widely used by many philosophers as a working model of knowledge, is false. This was shown to the satisfaction of most philosophers by Edmond Gettier, who developed what are now known as "Gettier cases".

Gettier cases are cases in which the tripartite theory's three conditions for knowledge are satisfied, i.e. in which a person does have a justified true belief, but in which there is no knowledge. The existence of such cases shows that there is something more to knowledge than justified true belief, and so that the tripartite theory of knowledge is false.

Suppose that two students, Mark and Sam, have taken a test. Mark is a straight A student, while Sam consistently fails any work he is set. Mark has attended the lessons in preparation for the test, while Sam has been absent due to illness. Mark revised hard for the test, while Sam stayed out all night at a party. Mark wrote furiously for the full duration of the test, while Sam wrote a few lines and then walked out in disgust. Mark says that the test went well, while Sam says that he didn't even understand the question.

Reflecting on the test, and on a book that he has recently been reading, Sam forms the following belief: the student that will get the highest grade on the test shares a name with the author of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." Sam clearly has excellent evidence for this belief, he is justified in believing it; he has excellent evidence that Mark will get the highest grade on the test, and can see from the cover of his copy of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn that it was written by Mark Twain. Furthermore, the belief is true; the student that will get the highest grade on the test does indeed share a name with the author of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." According to the tripartite theory of knowledge, therefore, Sam knows that the student that will get the highest grade on the test shares a name with the author of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."

Sam, however, does not know this. Mark, despite his excellent grades in the past, perfect attendance, hours of revision, furious writing, and confidence, failed the test. He did not appreciate the subtlety of the question, and so missed its point entirely. Sam, on the other hand, despite his previous poor grades, frequent absences, late night partying, and pessimism concerning his performance, did understand the question. In the few lines that he wrote he managed to scrape a passing grade.

Sam, therefore, rather than Mark, got the highest grade on the test.

Unknown to Sam, though, he does share a name with the author of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." Its author, who used the pseudonym Mark Twain, was in fact called Samuel Clemens. Sam, therefore, who is the student who will get the highest grade on the test, does share a name with the author of Huckleberry Finn.

Although Sam clearly did have a justified true belief, he equally clearly did not have knowledge. His justification for his belief, far from helping him to discern the truth, threatened to lead him astray. The truth of his belief had nothing to with his reasons for holding it; it was nothing more than good luck that the belief that he formed was true.

This example, and other Gettier cases like it, show that it is possible to have justified true belief without having knowledge; the tripartite theory of knowledge, which holds that justified true belief and knowledge are precisely the same thing, is therefore false.

Knowledge Without Belief?

According to the tripartite theory of knowledge, knowledge is justified true belief. One proposed counter-example to this theory is the case of the nervous student. This is supposedly a case of knowledge without belief, thus showing that it is possible to have knowledge without satisfying all three of the tripartite theory's conditions for knowledge, that those conditions are not necessary conditions for knowledge.

The case of the nervous student is as follows: A student in a history class has been taught that the Battle of Hastings took place in 1066. The student, however, lacks confidence, and so when asked in a subsequent class when the Battle of Hastings occurred is convinced that he does not know. The date "1066" comes into his mind, but he does not give it any particular weight. However, absent any alternative ideas, this is the date that he gives in response to the question.

It seems that the student does know that the Battle of Hastings took place in 1066. He gave the correct answer to the question as to when it occurred, and he did so because he had been taught the correct date.

However, it also seems that the student does not believe that it occurred in 1066. If he were asked whether he believes that it occurred in 1066, he would dissent, and he of all people knows best what he believes and what he does not.

The nervous student thus appears to have knowledge without belief. The conditions for knowledge proposed by the tripartite theory therefore do not seem to be necessary; it seems to be possible to have knowledge without satisfying all three conditions.

Sources of Knowledge

Each of us possesses a great deal of knowledge. We know about ourselves; we know about the world around us; we know about abstract concepts and ideas. Philosophers have often wondered where this knowledge ultimately comes from.

Of course, we learn a lot of things from books, from the media, and from other people. To process information from these sources, however, we must already know many things: how to read, how to reason, who to trust. To learn these things requires yet more knowledge. What, then, is the most fundamental way of acquiring knowledge?

There are two competing traditions concerning the ultimate source of our knowledge: empiricism and rationalism.

Empiricism

Empiricists hold that all of our knowledge is ultimately derived from our senses or our experiences. They therefore deny the existence of innate knowledge, i.e. knowledge that we possess from birth. Empiricism fits well with the scientific world-view that places an emphasis on experimentation and observation. It struggles, however, to account for certain types of knowledge, e.g. knowledge of pure mathematics or ethics.

Rationalism

Rationalists hold that at least some of our knowledge is derived from reason alone, and that reason plays an important role in the acquisition of all of our knowledge. There is clearly a limit to what we can learn through abstract thought, but the rationalist's claim is that reason play a role in observation, and so that the mind is more fundamental than the senses in the process of knowledge-acquisition.

Rationalism

Rationalism holds, in contrast to empiricism, that it is reason, not experience, that is most important for our acquisition of knowledge. There are three distinct types of knowledge that the rationalist might put forward as supporting his view and undermining that of the empiricist.

First, the rationalist might argue that we possess at least some innate knowledge. We are not born, as the empiricist John Locke thought, with minds like blanks slates onto which experience writes items of knowledge. Rather, even before we experience the world there are some things that we know. We at least possess some basic instincts; arguably, we also possess some innate concepts, such as a faculty for language.

Second, the rationalist might argue that there are some truths that, though not known innately, can be worked out independent of experience of the world. These might be truths of logic or mathematics, or ethical truths. We can know the law of the excluded middle, answers to sums, and the difference between right and wrong, without having to base that knowledge in experience.

Third, the rationalist might argue that there are some truths that, though grounded in part in experience, cannot be derived from experience alone. Aesthetic truths, and truths about causation, for instance, seem to many to be of this kind. Two people may observe the same object, yet reach contradictory views as to its beauty or ugliness. This shows that aesthetic qualities are not presented to us by our senses, but rather are overlaid onto experience by reason. Similarly, we do not observe causation, we merely see one event followed by another; it is the mind, not the world, that provides us with the idea that the former event causes the latter.

Empiricism

Empiricism is the theory that experience is of primary importance in giving us knowledge of the world. Whatever we learn, according to empiricists, we learn through perception. Knowledge without experience, with the possible exception of trivial semantic and logical truths, is impossible.

Classical Empiricism

Classical empiricism is characterised by a rejection of innate, in-born knowledge or concepts. John Locke, well known as an empiricist, wrote of the mind being a tabula rasa, a "blank slate", when we enter the world. At birth we know nothing; it is only subsequently that the mind is furnished with information by experience.

Radical Empiricism

In its most radical forms, empiricism holds that all of our knowledge is derived from the senses. This position leads naturally to the verificationist principle that the meaning of statements is inextricably tied to the experiences that would confirm them. According to this principle, it is only if it is possible to empirically test a claim that the claim has meaning. As all of our information comes from our senses, it is impossible for us to talk about that which we have not experienced. Statements that are not tied to our experiences are therefore meaningless.

This principle, which was associated with a now unpopular position called logical positivism, renders religious and ethical claims literally nonsensical. No observations could confirm religious or ethical claims, therefore those claims are meaningless. Radical empiricism thus requires the abandonment of religious and ethical discourse and belief.

Moderate Empiricism

More moderate empiricists, however, allow that there may be some cases in which the senses do not ground our knowledge, but hold that these are exceptions to a general rule. Truths such as "there are no four-sided triangles" and "7+5=12" need not be investigated in order to be known, but all significant, interesting knowledge, the empiricist claims, comes to us from experience. This more moderate empiricism strikes many as more plausible than its radical alternative.

Epistemic Justification

Justification, according to the tripartite theory of knowledge, is the difference between merely believing something that is true, and knowing it. To have knowledge, on this account, we must have justification. How our beliefs are justified is among the central questions of epistemology.

Inferential Justification

Having justification for our beliefs is, plausibly, about having good reasons to think that they are true. For a belief to be justified, it seems, it must be inferred from another belief. This type of justification is called inferential justification. It seems that three conditions must be met for a belief to be inferentially justified.

First, there must be some other idea that supports it. This other idea need not establish what is believed with absolute certainty, but it must lend some degree of support to it, it must render the belief probable. Without a supporting idea, there can be no inferential justification.

Second, we must believe that this other idea is true. It is not enough for justification that there be another idea that supports our belief; if we thought that that other idea were false then it could not possibly help to justify our belief. Inferential justification, therefore, requires the existence of a supporting idea that is believed to be true.

Third, we must have good reason for believing that this supporting idea is true. If we irrationally believe the supporting idea, then that irrationality will transfer to the belief that we base upon it; a belief can only be as justified as are the other beliefs on which it is based. For a belief to be inferentially justified, therefore it must be based in a supporting idea that is believed to be true with justification.

Three rival theories of justification are set out here: foundationalism, coherentism, and reliabilism.

Foundationalism

If we think of epistemic justification in inferential terms, i.e. in terms of a belief being justified by being inferred from other justified beliefs, then we face a problem: on this account, for every justified belief there must be at least one other justified belief on which it is based, which must in turn be based on at least one other justified belief, and so on. If all of our beliefs are justified in this way, therefore, then there must be an infinite regress of justified beliefs.

This implication of the idea that all of our beliefs are inferentially justified has struck many as implausible, if not incoherent. Clever though human beings may be, our intellects

are finite; we do not seem to have the capacity to execute an infinite chain of inferences. The problem of avoiding this implication has become known as the regress problem of justification.

Foundationalism is a response to this problem, an attempt to halt the regress of justification.

The foundationalist seeks avoid the regress problem by positing the existence of foundational or "basic" beliefs. Basic beliefs are non-inferentially justified, i.e. they are justified without being inferred from other beliefs. As basic beliefs are justified, they are able to confer justification onto other beliefs that can be inferred from them. As basic beliefs are justified non-inferentially, however, they halt the regress of justification; we need not posit an infinite series of justified beliefs on which basic beliefs are based, because basic beliefs are self-justifying, and so need no such series.

According to foundationalism, the justification for all of our beliefs is ultimately derived from the basic beliefs that act as the foundation for all that we know.

There are a number of criticisms of foundationalism, among them that the idea of a basic belief doesn't make sense, that basic beliefs can't support a useful belief set, and that the choice of basic beliefs is arbitrary.

Basic Beliefs Make No Sense

The concept of a basic belief is key to foundationalism. Foundationalists hold that there are basic beliefs that are non-inferentially justified. These beliefs are supposed to halt the regress of justification, and act as the ultimate source of justification for everything else that we believe. Some critics of foundationalism, however, have argued that the idea of a basic belief makes no sense.

For a belief to be justified, there must be some reason to think that it is true; this is what justification is all about. Basic beliefs, therefore, as they are justified, must possess some feature that makes them likely to be true.

For a person to be justified in accepting a belief, they must have access to this reason. It is not enough to justify a belief that there is a good reason for thinking it true; the believer must know that there is a good reason for thinking that the

belief is true. For a basic belief to be justified, therefore, the believer must know that the belief possesses this feature, and that this feature increases the likelihood that the belief is true.

In that case, though, the belief would not be basic, for it would be inferentially justified by the further beliefs that it possesses this feature and that beliefs that possess this feature are likely to be true. The regress of justification that basic beliefs were supposed to haly, then, would recommence.

If this is correct, and there can be no basic beliefs, then foundationalism must be rejected.

Basic Beliefs Can't Support a Useful Belief Set

Rationalist foundationalism suggests that all of our beliefs are ultimately justified by truths of logic and mathematics, such as "2+2=4" and "Nothing is both red and green all over".

Empiricist foundationalism suggests that all of our beliefs are ultimately justified by experience, such as patches of colour in our visual field, or immediate awareness of our own thoughts.

In either case, this is simply not enough of a foundation to support anything like the belief sets that most of us possess. In particular, this is not enough of a foundation to support our many empirical beliefs, our extensive account of how the external world is.

We have beliefs about the location of the Eiffel Tower, about the History of Britain, and about the structure of the atom; none of these follows from the foundationalist's basic beliefs. The fact that I have an experience of redness and all the truths of maths and logic put together do not entail that there is anything red in the world at all.

All that can be justified by the basic beliefs of the foundationalist are the very beliefs that are said to be basic

The Choice of Basic Beliefs is Arbitrary

According to foundationalism, there are some beliefs that do not need external justification. These beliefs are justified, even without any further reason for believing that they are true.

However, if we accept the idea that some beliefs are basic, needing no external justification in order to be justified, then there is a danger that anyone seeking to defend a contentious belief will be able do so by claiming that that belief is basic: Alvin Plantinga, a Christian philosopher, has suggested that belief in God is basic, denying that there is a need for rational argument to justify religious belief; discussions of ethics can often come down to appeals to ethical axioms, fundamental principles that are taken to be beyond criticism.

Foundationalism holds that all non-basic beliefs are ultimately justified by being inferred from basic beliefs. If we cannot criticise someone's choice of basic beliefs, therefore, then any world-view carefully inferred from them will appear to be justified. This could potentially let many world-views that we tend to think of as irrational qualify as epistemically justified, which would be an unwelcome conclusion.

We cannot avoid this conclusion, however, by offering reasons for preferring one choice of basic beliefs to another (e.g. for the principles of logic and mathematics in preference to the principles of astrology). The whole point of basic beliefs is that they are intrinsically justified, that we don't need to offer reasons for holding them. If we attempt to justify our basic beliefs, then we demonstrate that we don't really think that they are basic after all.

Foundationalists must accept, then, that our choice of basic beliefs is entirely arbitrary. As all of our beliefs are ultimately derived from our basic beliefs, though, this means not only that the foundation of our beliefs is arbitrary, but also that all of our beliefs are arbitrary.

Coherentism

Coherentism is a rival theory of justification to foundationalism. Unlike foundationalists, coherentists reject the idea that individual beliefs are justified by being inferred from other beliefs. Instead, according to coherentism, whole systems of beliefs are justified by their coherence.

What is Coherence?

Coherence consists of three elements. A belief-set is coherent to the extent that it is consistent, cohesive, and comprehensive.

Consistency

A belief-set is consistent to the extent that its members do not contradict each other. Clearly a belief-set full of contradictory beliefs is not coherent. Consistency, however, need not be an all or nothing affair; beliefs may be in tension with each other, without being strictly speaking contradictory. Tensions of this kind, like contradiction, reduces the coherence of a set of beliefs.

Cohesiveness

Mere consistency is not enough for coherence. For a belief-set to be coherent, the beliefs that it contains must not only be mutually consistent, but must also be mutually supportive. A set of beliefs that support each other, where one belief makes another more probable, is more coherent than a set of unrelated, but consistent beliefs.

Comprehensiveness

Finally, coherence involves comprehensiveness. Comprehensiveness, of course, is a not a part of the meaning of coherence in the ordinary sense. In the context of coherentist theories of justification, however, a belief-set increases in coherence as it increases in scope; the more a belief-set tells us about, the more coherent it is.

Coherent Alternatives

Coherentism holds that beliefs are justified by belonging to coherent belief sets. There are many possible coherent beliefs sets, however, and coherentism provides no way of deciding between them. Fictional worlds such as Narnia, the Matrix, and the Discworld are as coherent (or at least could be made as coherent) as the actual world. If coherence is the standard of justification, therefore, then we are as justified in believing in the Discworld as we are in believing in Earth, so long as we are willing to make the necessary adjustments to our other beliefs. This, though, is absurd.

Moreover, many of these belief sets contradict each other; there are coherent belief sets that contain the belief that the world is round, and there are other equally coherent belief sets that contain the belief that the world is flat. In order to decide whether the world is round or flat, therefore, I must use some other standard of justification than coherence. In fact, for

every belief there is a coherent belief set that contains it, and so coherentism fails to recommend any belief over any other. It can't help us at all in deciding what to believe.

Coherence and Truth

A belief-set can be coherent even if all of its members are false. The belief that your parents are aliens coheres very well with the belief that they keep a flying saucer in the garage, which coheres very well with the belief that the FBI have dispatched agents to investigate, etc. Despite the coherence of this belief set, however, none of these beliefs is true.

Justified beliefs, because they are justified, are more likely to be true; the whole point of seeking justification for our beliefs is that justification is truth-conducive. The mere fact that a set of beliefs is coherent does not imply that its members are true. In fact, there are more false coherent belief sets than there are true coherent belief sets. As justification is truth-conducive, though, while coherence is not, justification and coherence must be two separate matters. Coherentism is false.

Reliabilism

Reliabilism is an alternative theory of justification to foundationalism and coherentism. According to reliabilism, whether or not a belief is justified is not determined by whether or not it is appropriately related to other beliefs. Rather, according to reliabilism, a belief is justified based on how it is formed.

There are good and bad ways to go about forming beliefs. Beliefs based on reliable belief-forming mechanisms are likely to be true. Beliefs based on unreliable belief-forming mechanism are not. The reliabilist holds that a belief's justification depends on whether it is formed using a reliable or an unreliable method: If perception is a reliable method for forming beliefs, then beliefs based on perception are justified. If wishful thinking is a reliable method for forming beliefs, then beliefs based on wishful thinking are justified. Conversely, if either of these methods of belief-formation is unreliable, then beliefs based on them will be unjustified.

Reliabilism is an externalist theory of justification. Whereas internalist theories hold that justification is determined by states internal to the believer, states to which the believer

has infallible access, externalism holds that it is not. If we cannot know whether a belief-forming method is reliable, then we cannot know whether our beliefs formed in that way are justified; nevertheless, on reliabilism, if it is then they are justified, and if it is not, then they are not.

Multiple Methods of Belief-Formation

Reliabilism holds that a belief is justified if and only if it is formed using a reliable method. For each belief that is formed, however, there seem to be multiple methods used to form it, and it may be that some of these methods are reliable but others are not.

Suppose, for example, that you are walking home at dusk. As you approach your house, you see a distant figure walking towards you. Recognising who it is, you form the belief that your father has come to meet you. By what method did you arrive at this belief?

On one level, the method that you used was sense-perception. On another level, the method used was sight. On yet another, it was night-vision, or night-vision at a distance. Factor in your use of memory, and it is clear that there are many different processes by which you arrived at your belief.

Some of these methods may be reliable, but others are not: perhaps night-vision is reliable, but not at a distance; perhaps vision is reliable, but not at night; or perhaps sense-perception is reliable, but vision is the least reliable of our senses.

So was the belief formed using a reliable method? Yes and no. Is the belief justified? The reliabilist answer, it seems, must be the same: "Yes and no".

If reliabilism cannot provide a definitive answer to the question as to whether or not a belief is justified, in such a wide range of cases as those in which the above problem arises, then it fails as a theory of justification.

Reliabilism is Unfair

Reliabilism holds that a belief is justified if and only if it is formed using a reliable method. Because reliabilism is an externalist theory of justification, i.e. a theory that says that whether or not a belief is justified depends on factors

external to the understanding of the believer, it is open to criticism on the ground that it is unfair.

When we are deciding what to believe, we can only be expected to take into account evidence to which we have access. This includes our own experiences and background beliefs, for example, but does not include the reliability or otherwise of the various belief-forming methods available to us.

Whether or not a given method of forming beliefs is reliable is not necessarily something that we know. It may be that although all of our evidence suggests that perception is reliable, it isn't, and in such circumstances, it would be unfair to say that we aren't justified in our beliefs based on perception. Similarly, it may be that although all of our evidence suggests that astrology is unreliable, it's actually an excellent guide to truth, and in such circumstances, again, it would be a mistake to say that beliefs based on astrology are justified.

Justification involves doing our epistemic duty, forming beliefs in the way that we ought to form them. Reliabilism suggests that justification depends on factors beyond our understanding, and so asks far too much of us. We can't be expected to take such factors into account when deciding what to believe. Epistemic justification must therefore depend on factors internal to the understanding of the believer, and these do not include the reliability or otherwise of belief-forming methods.

Theories of Perception

On a straightforward view, we directly perceive the world as it is. The way that things look, feel, smell, taste, and sound is the way that they are. We see colours, for example, because the world is coloured. This view of perception is called, somewhat dismissively, naive realism.

Plausibly, perception is a lot more complicated than this. Though things may appear to be coloured to us, our experiences of colour are merely representative of the surface properties of objects; the physical property of reflecting certain wavelengths of light and the colour red as we experience it are two quite different things.

This has led to representative realism, which suggests that perception is not the passive process that the naive realist suggests, that we do not simply receive information about the world through our senses. Rather, we are actively involved in

perception, supplying much of the content of our experiences, and must bear this in mind if we are to know what the world is really like in itself.

More extreme than either naive or representative realism is idealism. Idealists, persuaded by the thought that we have direct access only to our experiences of the world, and not to the world itself, have questioned whether there is anything beyond our experiences. A more recent theory that bears some similarities to idealism has also been proposed: phenomenalism.

Naive Realism

Naive realism is the common sense theory of perception. Most people, until they starting thinking philosophically, are naive realists. This theory is also known as "direct realism" or "common sense realism".

Naive realism holds that the view of the world that we derive from our senses is to be taken at face value: there are objects out there in the world, and those objects have the properties that they appear to us to have. If I have an experience as of a large apple tree, then that's because there's a large apple tree in front of me. If the apples on the tree appear to me to be red, then that's because there are objects in front of me, apples, that have the property redness; simple.

Plausible though naive realism may be, it has serious problems, among which is the problem of the variability of perception. The same object may appear differently to different people, or to the same person at different times. The apples may appear to be red in the daytime, but at dusk they are a shade of grey. If naive realism is to be taken seriously, and colours are out there in the world, then apples regularly change colour depending on how much light is around them. It is much more plausible, though, to think that the apples are the same as they ever were, that all that has changed is our experience of them.

Representative Realism

According to representative realism, we do not perceive objects directly. Rather, objects cause us to have certain experiences, sense-data, and it is these to which we have direct access. Representative realism thus introduces a distinction, not present in naive realism, between our experiences of objects and the objects themselves. John Locke was a leading advocate of this theory.

Consider colour properties. There are two different ways of thinking about colour. The first is in scientific terms: colour is to with reflecting certain wavelengths of light. The second is in experiential terms: colour is a subjective experience that a normal observer has when they look at a coloured object.

Primary and Secondary Qualities

Representative realism holds that there are two completely different types of property, corresponding to this distinction.

First, there are primary qualities, which objects have independent of any observer. An object is square, or heavy, for instance, irrespective of whether anyone is perceiving it to be such. Shape and weight are therefore primary qualities.

Second, there are secondary qualities, which objects only have because they are perceived. Secondary qualities, like colour, are projected onto the world by perceivers. The apple isn't really that shade of red, it just appears that way to me; I project redness onto the apple in the act of perceiving it. Colour, then, is a secondary quality.

We tend to use secondary qualities to represent primary qualities. Thus the red appearance of the apple, which is a secondary quality that I project onto it, represents the fact that it reflects certain wavelengths of light, which is a primary quality that it has irrespective of whether I am looking at it or not.

Idealism

Idealism denies the existence of mind-independent objects. For the idealist, "to be is to be perceived"; objects are nothing more than our experiences of them.

The attraction of idealism is its economy. We don't have direct access to the external world, it is generally agreed; all we can access directly are our experiences. Why, then, postulate the existence of anything beyond our experiences? The idealist refuses to do so, holding that our experiences don't represent objects, but rather constitute them, that there is nothing beyond them.

For the idealist, then, objects only exist insofar as they are perceived. If I shut my eyes, then unless there is someone else perceiving the objects that surround me, those objects will

cease to exist, at least until I reopen my eyes and perceive them once more.

Setting aside its initial implausibility, the main difficulty with this view is that it cannot explain the consistency of our experiences of the world. Why, when I reopen my eyes, do I see the same objects that I saw before? What causes me to perceive those objects rather than any others? Why, if two observers look in a single cupboard, and then compare what they saw, will both observers' reports tally?

Berkeley, the most famous idealist, had both an answer to this problem and a way of avoiding the absurd suggestion that every time I blink my study passes out of and back into existence in a fraction of a second: this answer is God.

God, according to Berkeley, is constantly perceiving everything. Though I may blink, and so stop perceiving my study, God continues to perceive it whether my eyes are open or shut. My study, therefore, never passes out of existence, for it is always perceived by God.

What is more, God explains the consistency in our perceptions. Though there may be no mind-independent objects causing our experiences, and so ensuring that our various experiences are mutually consistent, there is nevertheless something outside us causing our experiences and ensuring that they are consistent: God. God thus plays a central role in Berkeley's idealism.

Phenomenalism

Phenomenalism is best thought of as a secular idealism. Like idealism, it holds (roughly) that objects are dependent upon our perceptions of them. Unlike idealism, however, it is not committed to the existence of a supposed God constantly perceiving everything.

Idealism holds that objects exist only insofar as they are perceived. It therefore faces the dual problem of explaining what happens to objects when we cease to perceive them, and why different people's experiences are consistent. To solve both of these problems, idealism invokes 'God'.

Phenomenalism differs from idealism in that it holds that objects exist insofar either as they are perceived or as it is possible to perceive them. Phenomenalism is thus a weaker theory than idealism. Whereas idealists are committed to the idea that

an object that is not perceived does not exist, phenomalists can allow that such objects exist insofar as it is possible to perceive them. They therefore have no need to invoke God to explain objects disappearing and reappearing when people cease and recommence perceiving them, as the idealist does.

Scepticism

There is much in life that is open to doubt. Ordinarily, we confine our doubts to specific questions; though we may doubt particular beliefs and ideas, we generally take it for granted that the majority of our beliefs are accurate.

Philosophical scepticism, unlike ordinary scepticism, doubts whole categories of beliefs. Most influential has been external-world scepticism, which doubts the existence of the physical world around us.

There are several different sceptical arguments, and a number of responses to scepticism, available. The problem of dismissing scepticism and vindicating common beliefs remains a live issue in philosophy, however.

Sceptical Arguments

The philosopher best known for his scepticism is Rene Descartes. Descartes' main legacy to philosophy was doubt. Ironically, Descartes himself was not a sceptic; though he proposed various sceptical arguments that have subsequently proved difficult to refute, Descartes offered responses to each of them. These responses, however, have convinced few; it is his sceptical arguments that have had the greatest impact on philosophy.

Descartes' doubt, set out in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, comes in three waves. In the first wave of doubt, Descartes advances the argument from error, arguing that as our senses have led us astray before we should not trust them in future. In the second wave, he advances the argument from dreaming, arguing that all of our experiences are as consistent with the hypothesis that we are dreaming as they are with the hypothesis that we are awake, and so we cannot know which hypothesis is true. In the third wave, he advances the argument from deception, invoking the idea of an evil demon constantly deceiving us as a troubling hypothesis that cannot easily be dismissed.

The Argument from Error

Descartes' first sceptical argument is the argument from error. In the First Meditation of his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, he writes:

"Whatever I have up till now accepted as most true I have acquired either from the senses or through the senses. But from time to time I have found that the senses deceive, and it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once."

The argument rests on the principle that what has once deceived us cannot be completely trustworthy. Our senses, argues Descartes, have deceived us in the past. Square towers appear round when distant; straight sticks may appear bent when in water; coloured objects appear in shades of grey in darkness.

If our senses have proved fallible in the past, though, then why think that we can trust them now? If we want to avoid error, then we must be cautious, and so ought to withhold our assent from beliefs based on perception. This, though, means that we must doubt much of what we usually take ourselves to know.

Descartes entertains this argument only briefly. Though our senses may sometimes err, he suggests, they only do so in unusual circumstances. What we clearly and distinctly perceive, he suggests, we can trust is so. He therefore sets aside the argument from error, and moves on to the argument from dreaming.

The Argument from Dreaming

The second sceptical argument put forward by Descartes is the argument from dreaming:

"How often, asleep at night, am I convinced of just such familiar events—that I am here in my dressing-gown, sitting by the fire—when in fact I am lying undressed in bed! … As I think about this more carefully, I see plainly that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep. The result is that I begin to feel dazed, and this very feeling only reinforces the notion that I may be asleep."

It is impossible, Descartes argues here, to distinguish waking experiences from those in dreams. Dreams can be vivid and convincing. Often, we do not realise that the experiences that

we took to be real were dreamed until we wake up. Whatever experiences we are now having, then, might turn out to be dreams; we could wake up at any second.

This argument, unlike the argument from error, threatens to shake our confidence in our senses on a deep level. Whereas the argument from error suggested that our senses might sometimes deceive us, that some of our beliefs based on perception might turn out to be false, the argument from dreaming suggests that our senses might systematically deceive us, that all of our beliefs based on perception might be dreamed and turn out to be false. The scepticism engendered by the argument from dreaming is thus much more thoroughgoing than that engendered by the argument from error.

There are still, however, limits to the argument from dreaming, as Descartes immediately identifies:

"Suppose then that I am dreaming, and that these particulars—that my eyes are open, that I am moving my head and stretching out my hands—are not true. Perhaps, indeed, I do not even have such hands or such a body at all. Nonetheless, it must surely be admitted that the visions which come in sleep are like paintings, which must have been fashioned in the likeness of things that are real, and hence that at least these general kinds of things—eyes, head, hands and the body as a whole—are things which are not imaginary but are real and exist."

Although dreams may mislead us in some ways, convincing us that we are doing or seeing things that we actually are not, they cannot mislead us in all ways. Dreams, though they may be fictions, must borrow from the real world. Though it may be that we are only dreaming that we have eyes, heads, and hands, and so that we do not know this about ourselves, there must be some real eyes, heads, and hands on which our dreams are based. Our dreams may deceive us, but not completely.

Descartes continues to propose a slightly more modest, but similar defence:

"… although these general kinds of things—eyes, head, hands and so on—could be imaginary, it must at least be admitted that certain other even simpler and more universal things are real… This class appears to include corporeal nature in general, and its extension; the shape of extended things; the quantity, or size and number of these things; the place in which they may exist, the time through which they may endure, and so on."

On consideration, Descartes decides that it may be that our dreams of our bodies are not based on real eyes, heads, hands, and so on. Those dreams must nevertheless, he insists, contain some elements that are real: substance, shape, number, and time, for example. The argument from dreaming, though it may cause us to have extensive doubts about the reliability of perception and about our view of the world, should not lead us to doubt the world itself. In this, Descartes proposes an early version of Ryle's counterfeit coinage argument.

There is another limit to the argument from dreaming: there are certain truths, it seems, that are learned by reason rather than through the senses. Whatever problems the argument from dreaming may cause for our trust in sense-perception, it does not touch our trust in reason. As Descartes notes, "whether I am awake or asleep, two and three added together are five, and a square has no more than four sides."

Descartes next proceeds to an argument more extensive in scope even than the argument from dreaming: the argument from deception.

The Argument from Deception

Having introduced the argument from dreaming, Descartes now goes a step further, with the argument from deception. Descartes first considers the possibility that God might have perpetrated an elaborate hoax, giving him experiences that bear no relation whatsoever to reality:

A Deceiving God

"… firmly rooted in my mind is the long-standing opinion that there is an omnipotent God who made me the kind of creature that I am. How do I know that he has not brought it about that there is no earth, no sky, no extended thing, no shape, no size, no place, while at the same time ensuring that all these things appear to me to exist just as they do now? What is more, just as I consider that others sometimes go astray in cases where they think they have the most perfect knowledge, how do I know that God has not brought it about that I too go wrong every time I add two and three or count the sides of a square, or in some even simpler matter, if that is imaginable?"

This hypothesis, however, portrays God in terms unacceptable to theists; God, being good, would never do such a thing. Descartes therefore reformulates his concern as the evil demon hypothesis:

The Evil Demon Hypothesis

"I will suppose therefore that not God, who is supremely good and the source of truth, but rather some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me. I shall think that the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds and all external things are merely the delusions of dreams which he has devised to ensnare my judgement."

Now, we have a sceptical concern that is far-reaching and difficult to dismiss. According to the evil demon hypothesis, our experiences of the world around us are not produced in the way that we think, by us perceiving reality. Rather, all of our experiences are produced by a powerful and evil demon, bent on our deception. This demon creates in us the impression that we inhabit a physical world, and experiences that appear to represent it. This appearance, though, is false; in fact, there is no external world.

The Brain-in-a-Vat Hypothesis

The modern counterpart of the evil demon hypothesis is the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis. In this scenario, the evil demon is replaced by a mad scientist, in whose laboratory are stored any number of brains in vats of liquid, each hooked up to a computer. Using this computer, the scientist is able to stimulate activity in the brains, causing them to have experiences as of an external world. The world that the brains experience, however, exists only in their imaginations and in that of the scientist. None of the brains' beliefs about the external world are true. According to the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis, we are among the scientist's collection of brains.

If either the evil demon hypothesis or the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis were true, then our experiences would be precisely as they are. There is nothing, therefore, in our experiences to disprove these hypotheses; for all we know, one of them is true. All of our evidence is consistent with our being deceived by an evil demon, or being a brain-in-a-vat.

In order to know anything about the world around us, though, we would have to know that these sceptical hypotheses are false. If I know that I am awake, then I know that I am not asleep. If I know that I am perceiving the world around me, then I know that I am not a brain-in-a-vat. As we cannot know these latter claims, neither can we know the former; we know nothing of

physical reality. As Descartes confesses (though he later retracts this view):

"I have no answer to these arguments, but am finally compelled to admit that there is not one of my former beliefs about which a doubt may not properly be raised; and this is not a flippant or ill-considered conclusion, but is based on powerful and well thought-out reasons."

These arguments have proved difficult to refute, but there are several responses to scepticism available.

Responses to Scepticism

Though sceptical arguments are very rarely judged to be persuasive, they are notoriously difficult to refute.

Perhaps the most straightforward attempt to refute philosophical scepticism is GE Moore's appeal to common sense. Moore's attempt begins with a simple argument: (1) Here is a hand, (2) Here is another, therefore (3) External objects exist. This argument may appear to be question-begging, but there is more to it than meets the eye.

Gilbert Ryle's counterfeit coinage argument offers an alternative solution to the problem of scepticism. Ryle argues that scepticism, at least in its strongest forms, is incoherent. We can only make sense of the idea of false experience if there are also some true experiences to which they can be compared.

JL Austin's linguistic argument is a response specifically to the argument from dreaming. That argument assumes that we cannot tell the difference between dreaming experiences and waking experiences. Austin argues that the fact that we use the phrase "a dream-like quality" shows that this assumption is false.

David Lewis's contextualism makes a partial concession to scepticism. Contextualism suggests that the quality of evidence required for knowledge vary with context. Once sceptical doubts have been raised, it concedes, and the context changed, those doubts cannot be answered. This, however, doesn't change the fact that in normal circumstances and by normal standards we do have knowledge.

G.E. Moore's Appeal to Common Sense

GE Moore's response to external world scepticism is, at least superficially, about as straightforward as philosophy gets. He argues from the existence of his own hands to the existence of an external world, reasoning as follows:

Here is a cat.
Here is another.
Therefore:
External objects exist.

Of all the possible refutations of external world scepticism, this may appear to be not only the simplest but also the most inept. The sceptic, of course, will attempt to undermine Moore's argument by questioning his entitlement to his premises; those who doubt the existence of the external world doubt the existence of hands, so Moore's argument won't be acceptable to any sceptic. It looks of though Moore has simply missed the point of the various sceptical arguments. There is a lot more, however, to Moore's argument, than simple question-begging.

Given two apparently solid arguments leading to contradictory conclusions, what are we to do? If we are presented with two arguments, one for a claim and one against it, which argument ought we to accept?

One way of deciding between the arguments would be to examine their logical structures looking for points of weakness. If there are no points of weakness, though, then how are we to decide between them?

The answer to this question seems to be quite straightforward: we ought to reject the argument with the most questionable premises. Given two arguments with impeccable logic but contradictory conclusions, we ought to reject that which has the premises about which there is most doubt.

This, argues Moore, is the situation in which we find outselves. We are faced with two arguments: one a sceptical argument for the conclusion that we do not know whether there is an external world; the other an argument that appears to establish that there is an external world.

Whatever the logic of the sceptical argument, it cannot be superior to that of Moore's argument for an external world, and so cannot be preferred on that ground. If we judge the arguments

on logic, then, then we can only conclude that the external world exists.

Equally, whatever premises the sceptical argument makes use of, they will be less certain than the premises of Moore's argument; that we have hands is about as certain as anything else. If we judge on plausibility of premises, then, then we can only conclude that the external world exists.

However we attempt to decide between sceptical arguments and Moore's argument, then, we ought to reject the sceptical argument and favour Moore's.

John Austin's Linguistic Argument

Austin proposes a linguistic solution to the sceptical argument from dreaming. We use the phrase "dream-like quality" in everyday life, when describing certain types of events, but what does this mean? Presumably it refers to a quality that separates dreams from reality. But if there is such a quality then the argument from dreaming, which rests on the idea that we cannot tell waking and dreaming experiences apart, fails.

According to Austin then, the premise "dream-experiences are indistinguishable from 'real' experiences" is false, as is demonstrated by our linguistic practices. He writes "If dreams were not 'qualitatively' different from waking experiences, then every waking experience would be like a dream". Indeed if the premise were true then "the phrase ["dream-like quality"] would be perfectly meaningless", he claims.

Austin's attack need not worry the sceptic. Firstly, we must note that linguistic practices are not the infallible guide to truth that Austin may hope. Ridiculous examples abound here, for instance, we may say that someone has "undergone a change of heart" without implying that major surgery has taken place. Linguistic conventions are related more to folk-knowledge than scientific knowledge. As a source of complex theories they are not to be trusted.

But even if we accept Austin's point we have yet to dismiss the argument from dreaming. Consider the phrase "summer weather". Let's say it means weather which is hot and dry. To describe a hot, dry day in March as "summery" is not to say that all summer weather is like this, it is simply to say that a high temperature and an absence of rain are typical of summer days. Similarly, if we accept that there is a valid sense in which we

use the phrase "dream-like quality", this means nothing more than that dreams are often a particular way. We cannot attribute this quality to all dreams any more than we can deny that it ever rains in the summer. This leads to a revision of the premise of the argument from dreaming to "Some dream-experiences are indistinguishable from 'real' experiences". For any real experience which lacks Austin's "dream-like quality" we can still wonder if it is one of the minority of dreams which lacks that quality rather than a waking experience. The weakened premise therefore still supports the sceptical conclusion.

Gilbert Ryle's Counterfeit Coinage Argument

There are varying degrees of scepticism. Some may doubt whether we can have knowledge in a specific area, such as ethics or history. Some may entertain doubts concerning each of their beliefs, wondering which are true and which false. Others may entertain doubts concerning all of their beliefs, wondering whether all of them might be false.

Gilbert Ryle's response to scepticism is a response to it in this last form. Ryle argues that though we may have doubts concerning each of our experiences, we cannot have doubts concerning all of them. Though we may not be able to identify which of our experiences accurately represent the world, we can be certain that at least some of them do.

Ryle draws an analogy between misleading experiences and counterfeit coins. He writes:

"In a country where there is a coinage, false coins can be manufactured and passed… An ordinary citizen… might become suspicious of the genuineness of any particular coin that he received. But however general his suspicions might be, there remains one proposition which he cannot entertain… that all coins are counterfeits. For there must be an answer to the question 'Counterfeits of what?'" [Gilbert Ryle, *Dilemmas*, pp94-95].

Ryle's argument, then, is that in order to have counterfeit coins there must be at least some genuine coins of which they are counterfeits. It makes no sense to talk of counterfeits if all coins are counterfeits; therefore, if there are counterfeits, then there are real coins too.

This point, Ryle's argument suggests, applies to our experiences too. If there are misleading experiences, experiences that do

not represent the world accurately, then there must also be at least experiences that do represent the world accurately. Although we can say of each of our experiences that it may be misleading, we cannot say that of all of them, for the notion of a 'false' experience is parasitic upon that of a 'true' one.

Consider the following situation. The Royal Mint designs a new set of coins. The national press ensure that these designs are well circulated, and a date is given for the release of the coins into public circulation. Across the country, a large number of counterfeiters make their preparations. They manufacture vast quantities of counterfeit coins, and when the announced date arrives they head off to their local shopping centres and spend freely. In the meantime the Royal Mint has made another decision, one that has not become common knowledge, the decision that no new coins are to be made. The counterfeiters can still successful use their illegal tender. A shop-keeper aware that there are counterfeiters in the world can wonder of each coin that he receives whether or not it is 'real'. Yet, contrary to Ryle's claim, every coin is a counterfeit.

So what has gone wrong? Well, the problem with Ryle's story is that the notion of a 'false' coin need not be parasitic upon an actual 'real' coin. The mere notion of a real coin will suffice. This gives us an answer to the "Counterfeits of what?" question without committing ourselves to the claim that there really is such a coin in circulation.

Similarly, as long as we have an idea of what a 'real' experience would be, we can coherently say "All of my experiences may be dream-experiences". And we may, for all Ryle says, be right.

David Lewis's Contextualism

David Lewis holds that the standard of evidence required for knowledge varies with context. This theory, contextualism, provides a partial, but only a partial, response to external world scepticism.

In the context of everyday life, the standard of evidence required for knowledge is relatively low. This means that we don't have to exclude sceptical hypotheses such as the evil demon hypothesis in orer to have knowledge in the everyday sense.

In the context of a philosophical discussion of scepticism, the standard of evidence required for knowledge is very high. Once sceptical hypotheses have been raised, if they cannot be refuted then we cannot have knowledge.

This means that a student who arrives at a philosophy class on scepticism knows the contents of her bag when she arrives. When the lesson begins, however, and the context changes, she loses this knowledge, only to regain it on exiting the class.

As long as we don't think about scepticism, we have knowledge

Secret Intelligence Service

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Naivete

Adversitate. Custodi. Per Verum