

WEEK 10

Quine, section 6 of "Two Dogmas"

Quine presents the metaphor of the web of belief here, and he argues that there is no principled distinction to be made between analytic and synthetic statements. What is his argument for this view? And what analogy does he see between large changes in theoretical views which have been made in the sciences, and the possibility of giving up claims in logic such as the law of the excluded middle? He seems to be appealing to some notion of coherence as the standard by which rational change should be judged. What is the status of claims about this standard, and how would Quine attempt to defend it?

BonJour, selections from *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*

In section 5.4, BonJour proposes the Doxastic Presumption in an attempt to address a problem which arises for the coherence theory of justification. What is the Doxastic Presumption, and what problem is it designed to address? To what extent is this move successful?

WEEK 11

Goodman, selections from *Fact, Fiction and Forecast*

On page 64, Goodman remarks, "A rule is amended if it yields an inference we are unwilling to accept; an inference is rejected if it violates a rule we are unwilling to amend. The process of justification is the delicate one of making mutual adjustments between rules and accepted inference; and in the agreement achieved lies the only justification needed for either." What does Goodman mean by "rules" here? What does he mean by "inferences"? Why does he think that neither of these has epistemic priority over the other?

Quine, "Natural Kinds"

Quine introduces the notion of a natural kind in the course of a discussion of inductive inference. What role, according to Quine, does the appeal to natural kinds play in explaining and/or justifying our inductive practice? And to what extent does this help to address the problem which Goodman raises in introducing the predicates 'grue' and 'bleen'?

Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized"

Quine regards positivist attempts to explain the possibility of knowledge as a failure. He suggests that positivist epistemology should be replaced by psychology. When it comes to positivist reconstructions of empirical knowledge, he remarks,

But why all this creative reconstruction, all this make-believe? The stimulation of the sensory receptors is all the evidence anybody has had to go on, ultimately, in arriving at his picture of the world. Why not just see how this construction really proceeds? Why not settle for psychology?

What does Quine have in mind here? How would psychology, at least as Quine sees it, address the kinds of questions which epistemologists tried to address?

WEEK 12

Goldman, "A Causal Theory of Knowledge"

Goldman begins this paper with a very simple account of knowledge: S knows that p iff S 's belief that p was caused by the fact that p . What is it that motivates this account for Goldman? And what are the central problems which he sees with this very simple version of a causal theory of knowledge?

Goldman, "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge"

Unlike the earlier paper of Goldman's, here he cuts back on his ambitions: rather than attempt to give an account of knowledge in general, he offers an account of perceptual knowledge alone. Explain what Goldman's account of perceptual knowledge is. What bar is there, if any, to applying this account more broadly to cover cases of knowledge other than those due most directly to perception?

Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?"

This is the *locus classicus* of reliabilism. Goldman states in the opening sections of this paper that he earlier believed that an account of knowledge should be given which does away with the requirement that beliefs must be justified if they are to count as knowledge. Instead, as he sees it here, it is only what he calls, "Cartesian" views of justification that he means to reject. Knowledge does, he thinks, require justified belief, as long as justified belief is not interpreted in this Cartesian way. What does he mean to reject here? Why does he wish to reject such Cartesian justification as a requirement for knowledge? And why does he think that, once we reject such Cartesian views, we should explain knowledge in terms of justification nonetheless?