

Question Set 4

Due **Thursday October 15th** at 8pm (the day before your essay drafts!) — submit your work in PDF or Word format, through Canvas.

Typical answers should be about a paragraph per question. Be direct and to-the-point, and use simple words and short sentences.

Robert Nozick: Truth-Tracking

According to Nozick's analysis of knowledge, S knows that p if and only if these conditions are met:

- i) S believes that p
- ii) It is the case that p
- iii) If it were not the case that p , then S would not believe that p
- iv) If it were the case that p , then S would still believe p

1. In his discussion, Nozick also mentions the *causal* analysis of knowledge, according to which S knows that p if and only if S 's belief that p is caused by the fact that p . Point out one similarity and one difference between Nozick's analysis and the causal analysis of knowledge.
2. Explain how Nozick's account avoids Gettier-style counterexamples.
3. To motivate the addition of condition (iv), Nozick provides an example which he takes to show that conditions (i-iii) are insufficient for knowledge. Explain the example in your own words, and explain why, according to Nozick, condition (iv) is not met in this case.
4. Consider this example:

Jane is bored and randomly flipping through a dictionary. Glancing at the page she sees the word "sitzmark" and reads the entry: "an impression made in snow by a skier falling backward onto his or her backside."

Clearly, Jane now *knows* that the word "sitzmark" means. However, she arguably fails to satisfy one of Nozick's conditions. Which condition is it and why?

5. Next, consider this example:

Debbie is worried sick about her grandson, who is a soldier in the war. One day he comes home, she talks to him sees he is alive and well. But she has very protective

friends. If her grandson in fact were sick or dead, then those friends would have assured her that he was alive and well, and she would have believed them.

This case, too, is thought to present a counterexample to Nozick's analysis. Explain why. Does this example show that Nozick's conditions fail to be *necessary* for knowledge or that they fail to be *sufficient*?

Timothy Williamson: Primitivism

Write two four-sentence essay responding to Timothy Williamson's Knowledge and Its Limits (same instructions as last week). As your first sentence, pick two of the following:

- a. Williamson argues that the concept of knowledge **cannot be analysed**, as shown by philosophers' failure to analyse knowledge as the conjunction of belief and something else. I say...
- b. Williamson says that knowledge is a mental state, even though it depends on the way the world is: for instance, when I'm in a windowless basement, a change in weather can affect my mental state, because it affects whether I know that it's sunny. I say...
- c. According to Williamson, a person is in a different mental state depending on whether they are in the "Good Case," (the world as we take it to be) or the "Bad Case" (a skeptical scenario). I say...
- d. According to Williamson, perceiving, seeing and remembering all entail knowing. I say...
- e. According to Williamson, [choose a claim defended by Williamson]. I say...

David Lewis: Contextualism

6. Lewis starts by laying out a dilemma between *fallibilism* and *skepticism* — explain why Lewis finds both positions unacceptable.
7. The account promises to deliver a third way, with *contextualism* — the view that the meaning of the word "knows" differs from context to context. Explain how this account is meant to vindicate both anti-fallibilist and anti-skeptical intuitions.
8. Explain what Lewis means by saying that much of our knowledge is *elusive*.
9. Lewis proposes a number of rules for which possibilities can and cannot be "properly ignored." Explain the motivation for two of these rules.
10. Write a four-sentence essay responding to one of Lewis' central claims in *Elusive Knowledge*.