

Philosophy 24.211

First Paper Topics

Write a 5-6 page paper on one of the following topics.

Your paper is due on Friday October 17, at 5PM.

I will read and return your paper the following week, and you will then rewrite your paper in light of my comments. Please feel free to consult me at any time in your writing process. I am always happy to hear half-formed ideas, and incomplete thoughts.

1. Blumenfeld and Blumenfeld quote a passage from Gilbert Ryle's book *Dilemmas*:

"A country which had no coinage would offer no scope to counterfeiters. There would be nothing for them to manufacture or pass counterfeits of. They could, if they wished, manufacture and give away decorated discs of brass or lead, which the public might be pleased to get. But these would not be false coins. There could be false coins only where there are coins made of the proper materials by the proper authorities.

In a country where there is a coinage, false coins can be manufactured and passed; and the counterfeiting might be so efficient than 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, the proposition, namely, that it is possible that all coins are counterfeits. For there must be an answer to the question: 'Counterfeits of what?' " (B&B, 246)

Does Ryle's analogy show that there is something wrong with argument (D')? Why or why not?

2. According to Stroud, "if somebody knows something, p, he must know the falsity of all those things incompatible with his knowing that p (or perhaps all those things he knows to be incompatible with his knowing that p.)" (29-30)  
Explain what Stroud means. An example will help.  
What is Stroud's argument for this claim?  
What do you think? Should we accept this claim or not?

3. Modify the No Defeaters Theory so it can handle counterexample 3.7 given by Feldman.

Does your revised ND theory fall prey to further counterexamples, as Feldman says?

4. There are striking parallels between Goldman's account of perceptual knowledge (in "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge") and Nozick's account of knowledge.

Compare these two accounts.

What do they have in common?

How do they differ?

(It will help if you can think of some clear examples for which they yield different answers.)

5. Nozick thinks that you cannot know that the skeptical possibilities do not obtain. (For example, you cannot know that you not floating in a vat near Alpha Centauri with your brain being stimulated.)

Why does Nozick think so?

Has Nozick explained the force of the skeptical argument, or has he, instead, conceded too much to the skeptic?