

## General Philosophy Paper (PPE Prelims etc.)

Before starting on this work, please read the webpage giving guidance on the General Philosophy course, at <http://philosophy.hertford.ox.ac.uk/genguidance.htm>.

### *Topic 1: Knowledge*

1. What conditions does Ayer suggest for “S knows that P”? (where S is the “subject” – i.e. a person – and P is a “proposition” – i.e. something that might be known)
2. Do you agree that each of the three conditions suggested by Ayer is genuinely NECESSARY for knowledge? If not, give counter-examples to justify your denial. If so, explain how you would deal with the most plausible counter-examples that you can think of.
3. Explain why Gettier thinks that Ayer’s conditions are not SUFFICIENT for knowledge. Can you suggest any other (and perhaps more natural) counter-examples based on similar principles?
4. Consider the “externalist” conceptions of knowledge advocated by Armstrong and/or Goldman, and BonJour’s objections to them. Are you inclined towards an internalist or an externalist position, and how would you respond to Gettier in the light of your preference?

### READING

E. Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”, *Analysis* v.23 1963, pp.121-123. Reprinted in Michael Huemer (ed.) *Epistemology: Contemporary Readings* (Routledge 2002), Chapter 8, pp.444-446; also in Sven Bernecker and Fred Dretske (eds.) *Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology* (OUP 2000).

A. J. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge* (Macmillan / Penguin, 1956, reprinted Penguin 1990), Chapter 1, pp.7-35.

D. M. Armstrong, “The Thermometer Model of Knowledge”, in Sven Bernecker and Fred Dretske (eds.) *Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology* (OUP 2000), pp.72-85, first published in Armstrong *Belief, Truth and Knowledge* (CUP, 1973), pp.162-175,178-183.

Or:

A. Goldman, “A Causal Theory of Knowing”, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 64, No. 12. (June 1967), pp.357-372. Reprinted in Sven Bernecker and Fred Dretske (eds.) *Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology* (OUP 2000).

L. BonJour, “Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge”, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 5 (1980), pp.53-73. Reprinted in Sven Bernecker and Fred Dretske (eds.) *Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology* (OUP 2000).