
Preface for Instructors

Whenever you read a good book, it's like the author is right there, in the room, talking to you, which is why I don't like to read good books.

Jack Handey

This text covers, at an introductory level, issues in epistemology and philosophy of mind. It is, so far as we're aware, the only contemporary text to do so. It also serves as an introduction to philosophy per se, raising issues about the nature and methods of philosophy and presenting some of the very basic logical tools of the philosophical trade (e.g., modus ponens, reductio ad absurdum, etc.)

In claiming that this text is distinctive, we don't mean to deny that there are a number of textbooks in philosophy of mind available. On the contrary, several have been published in the last few years. But the majority of these are better suited to a more advanced, more specialized, course. Most important, the recent crop of philosophy-of-mind books do not deal with epistemology.

Similarly, what epistemology texts there are also tend to be too advanced for a first-year course. And the epistemology texts do not treat of philosophy of mind.

So far as we're aware, then, despite the numerous texts on philosophy of mind available, there isn't one that adequately discusses knowledge. Still less is there a truly *introductory* text that covers both knowledge and mind. Yet in the present philosophical climate, such a book is required. We want to target the many introductory—i.e., first year, single semester—philosophy courses that focus precisely on these two areas. Moreover, in the age of cognitive science, ever more such courses will surely appear, because epistemology and philosophy of mind are, together with logic and philosophy of language, the philosophical cornerstones of cognitive science. Hence a text that introduces both is called for.

The text has three parts: one devoted to *knowledge*, another to *mind*, a third relating the two. Knowledge and mind are not, of course, unrelated: whereas epistemology addresses the nature of knowledge and what can be known, philosophy of mind deals with the nature of what does the knowing, namely, the mind. (Also, anyone wanting to *know* the nature of mind needs some idea of what knowledge is and how it's attained.) In addition, several of the issues we address clearly overlap the two areas: e.g., knowledge of language (including language acquisition and the relationship between thought and talk) and knowledge of other minds. The book ends with a discussion in the second half of part III of how work on epistemology and philosophy of mind meld together within present-day theorizing in cognitive science.

Other topics could have been chosen, but these strike us as interesting and accessible enough for beginners, while also being of singular importance for those intending to pursue further study in philosophy of mind, epistemology, and cognitive science. Still, some of these choices are non-obvious. Let us therefore explain them, albeit briefly. Discussing the metaphysics of mind and skepticism (both about the external world and about other minds) is standard in philosophical introductions to mind and epistemology, respectively. Choosing these topics needs no defense. Some might wonder, however, at our inclusion of knowledge of language and of free will.

Part of our motivation is to make this textbook connect with the antecedent concerns of readers: both students who are not otherwise philosophically disposed and those who are but have no formal training. Whereas skeptical worries about the physical world or about other people's mental states and events may strike beginners as impractical and pointless, issues like the relationship between thought and language and debates about language learning can, in our experience, capture the imagination and attention of nearly anyone. In a similar vein, whereas mind-body relations might not occur to just anyone, free will and the responsibility that comes with it are issues we all must deal with. (The same can be said, of course, of life after death, another topic we introduce.) Another advantage of including these topics is that students notice the connections between knowledge and mind on the one hand and social/moral philosophy on the other. And just as important, they come to see the relevance of empirical work to philosophy.

The book also contains a section on the nature and methods of philosophy. But, following the advice of nearly every reviewer, we have placed the discussion in the middle of the text, so that students will have done

some philosophy before they are asked to reflect upon what philosophy is. This section on metaphilosophy falls at the end of chapter 3. We chose that location because by that point, students have been exposed both to a quite traditional debate about knowing the external world and to a more empirically informed discussion of knowledge, thought, and language. Thus their own experience should accord with our conclusion in that section: namely, that philosophy is a very heterogeneous activity. We take up the same set of issues once more, albeit briefly, right at the end of the book.