This book engages with major philosophical questions concerning time and space — a framework for the investigation being provided by the debate between the absolutists and the relationists, so between Newton and Leibniz, and their followers. The investigation brings to the fore questions of the nature and reality of time and space, and leads on to more recent debates, as those relating to their possible infinitude, to anti-realism, time travel, temporal parts, geometry, convention, and the direction of time. These in turn raise more general issues, issues involving such concepts as those of identity, objectivity, causation, facts, and verifiability. Their examination falls within metaphysics, thought of as the investigation and analysis of fundamental philosophical concepts, but there is also metaphysics of a more contentious character, where the subject-matter is provided by propositions which transcend what can be known either through experience or by pure reasoning. In this connection, a central aim is to show how, without dismissing them as nonsensical, we may arrive at a fruitful interpretation of such propositions. While the focus of the work is not primarily on issues which presume an understanding of physical theory, it is hoped that the arguments developed will throw some light on relevant scientific concerns.

What is Truth?
Paul Horwich

in Truth -- Meaning -- Reality
This chapter begins by describing a traditional conception of truth whereby (a) it's a profound property; (b) we want our beliefs to possess it; and (c) a good theory of its underlying nature will enable us to explain why true beliefs are desirable and how best to obtain them. But there are well-known objections to each of the specific theories of that sort (which analyze truth in terms of correspondence with facts, or verifiability, or pragmatic utility, or consensus). A non-traditional perspective, known as 'deflationism', is then introduced, according to which no such analysis should ever have been expected. For our concept of truth is not that of a property with some hidden nature awaiting our discovery. Rather, it's a superficial expressive device whose utility and mode of deployment are fully captured by the trivial equivalence of ‘is true’ and ‘p’. The chapter ends by deploying this idea in a critical discussion of the recently revived idea that our beliefs (at least within certain domains) are never absolutely true or false, but possess their truth-values only relative to a context of assessment.

The Verifiability of the Truth of a Statement—The Non-verifiability of the Validity of a Norm

Hans Kelsen

in General Theory of Norms

Published in print: 1991 Published Online: 2012
March 2012 Publisher: Oxford University Press
Item type: chapter

An important difference between the truth of a statement and the validity of a norm is that the truth of a statement is verifiable — i.e. it must be possible to prove it to be true or false — while the validity of a norm is not. The validity of a norm is not verifiable because it is its specific existence and can no more be true or false than the existence of a fact. Only the truth of a statement about the existence of a fact is verifiable, since verifying means ascertaining the truth. The only thing which remains open to question is whether the statement about the validity of a norm is verifiable. And this question must be answered in the affirmative, since this statement, like any other statement, can be true or false, and so must be verifiable.
New Accounting for Goodwill: Application of American Criteria from a German Perspective

Walther Busse von Colbe

in The Economics and Politics of Accounting: International Perspectives on Trends, Policy, and Practice

A critical examination is made, from a German perspective, of accounting for purchased goodwill using the new (American) Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) standard: Statement of Financial Accounting Standards (SFAS) 142 (Goodwill and other intangible assets). It is argued that SFAS 142 provides substantial room for manipulation, which raises doubts about its enforceability. The various sections of the chapter introduce some of the economic criteria that lend structure to the ongoing debate on accounting for goodwill – criteria that especially address the question of whether the impairment-only approach or the traditional amortization approach is more appropriate for satisfying investors’ information requirements. The following criteria are considered: relevance for capital markets; reliability of the accounting numbers; verifiability; comparability; conservatism; consistency/compatibility with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP); suitability as a basis for dividend payout. Influence on management compensation/capital budgeting is also briefly discussed.

Equality of Time Intervals

Bede Rundle

in Time, Space, and Metaphysics

The absolutist claims that our preparedness to speak of one clock as a more accurate time-keeper than another commits us to the ideal of an absolute time against which our clocks are to be judged. Similarly, it is held that rotation and expansion can be understood in terms of a relation to the fixed points of absolute space. A common opposing view would have it that these claims are to be rejected because of their unverifiability, but against this it may be held that motion in its various forms is simply not defined in the circumstances envisaged. Equality of
time intervals may also be thought not to be empirically decidable, but to require the adoption of a convention. However, it is argued that such equality can be established empirically, and without having recourse to absolute time. Simultaneity and the rate at which time passes are also discussed.

Cloud Computing, Contractibility, and Network Architecture
Christopher S. Yoo

in Regulating the Cloud: Policy for Computing Infrastructure

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Item type: chapter

The emergence of the cloud is heightening the demands on the network in terms of bandwidth, ubiquity, reliability, latency, and route control. Unfortunately, the current architecture was not designed to offer full support for all of these services or to permit money to flow through it. Instead of modifying or adding specific services, the architecture could be redesigned to make Internet services contractible by making the relevant information associated with these services both observable and verifiable. Indeed, several on-going research programs are exploring such strategies, including the NSF’s NEBULA, eXpressive Internet Architecture (XIA), ChoiceNet, and the IEEE’s Intercloud projects.

Avoiding Strict Finitism
Neil Tennant

in The Taming of the True

Published in print: 2002 Published Online: October 2011
Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199251605.003.0005
Item type: chapter

This chapter shows how to find an acceptable reading of knowability-in-principle in order to avoid visiting upon oneself and one’s opposition the overly restrictive consequence that only the practically and feasibly knowable can feature in the anti-realist’s manifestation requirement on grasp meaning. It discusses the strict finitist’s concern about knowability-in-principle, recognitional capacities and compositionality, and feasible verifiability. It also analyses and concept of aspeectual recognition and discusses ways of finding the right dispositional conditionals.
Chapter 5 considers the challenge to scepticism that both the sceptical conclusion and the problem about our knowledge of the external world to which it is a response are equally meaningless. This line of criticism, which has been presented forcefully by Rudolf Carnap in his papers ‘Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology’ and ‘Pseudoproblems in Philosophy’, is inspired by verificationism in the philosophy of language: the view that a sentence that is not rendered at least more likely to be true by one possible course of sensory experience than another has no meaning, and thus cannot be considered either true or false. On the basis of the verifiability principle, Carnap argues that only ‘internal’ questions about knowledge – questions that pertain to some empirically verifiable matter of fact – can be meaningfully asked; by contrast, the question whether there are any material objects at all, taken as an ‘external’ question by the sceptic, is literally meaningless, and should instead be understood as a merely ‘practical’ question about which ‘linguistic framework’ to adopt.

Stroud observes, first, that this strategy not only appreciates the force of philosophical scepticism but is in fact in complete agreement with it: it denies that there is any theoretical justification for adopting one linguistic framework, such as that of a world of material objects, rather than another, which is precisely the point the sceptic wants to make; and it accepts a version of the ‘conditional correctness of scepticism’. The view that, if the traditional philosopher did manage to raise a meaningful question about our knowledge of the world, then his sceptical answer to it would be correct. Second, Stroud argues that neither the ‘internal’–‘external’ distinction used in the argument against scepticism nor the status of the verifiability principle itself on which it rests are made sufficiently clear to render them efficient and acceptable; moreover, as long as the verifiability principle is not independently shown to be a condition of meaningfulness, philosophical scepticism will itself provide a powerful objection to it.
This chapter shows that Herodotus clearly can (in some sense) distinguish true from false. He can also distinguish a story on the grounds that it is not falsifiable. However, though he may apply these tests of falsifiability or of verifiability to some ‘stories in which the chief characters are gods’, there is no reason to suppose that this category, or that of ‘stories of the distant past’, were coterminous with (or subsets of) a category of stories by definition unverifiable, and by definition unfalsifiable. The Herodotean conception and rejection of ‘myth’ are of modern construction, built upon sand and held together with wishful thinking.

Introduction

Dan Honig
Tailoring Management to Suit the Task
Dan Honig

in Navigation by Judgment: Why and When Top Down Management of Foreign Aid Doesn't Work

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Item type: chapter

This chapter brings quantitative and qualitative empirics to bear on the relationship among project verifiability, navigation strategy, and international development organization Project Success. It draws on the quantitative Project Performance Database and two pairs of case studies comparing U.S. Agency for International Development and U.K. Department for International Development projects in South Africa. It finds that Navigation by Judgment is associated with relatively better project performance as project verifiability falls. It also highlights that Navigation by Judgment is not always successful; in a case pair in the South African health sector, Navigation by Judgment fares less well than tight top-down target setting and measurement.

Identity Hoaxes and the Complicity of Social Authorship
Ashley Barnwell

in Life and Narrative: The Risks and Responsibilities of Storying Experience

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Item type: chapter

Whenever an imposture or an identity hoax is reported in the popular media, anxiety arises around who has the right to claim particular life stories. This chapter discusses what is at stake in the Stolen Valor Act, a law passed by the United States government in 2005 to prosecute people fraudulently claiming to be decorated war veterans. There are certain stories, such as military service, that we legally protect. But is the exclusivity of this narrative truly in the interest of veterans or the wider public? Is verifiability necessarily the most important consideration in ensuring the integrity of autobiography? What happens to those who feel, as a consequence of our selective affirmation, that their life narratives are not of social value? This chapter explores the complex social complicity involved in the authorship of imposture, and the ethical contestation between emotional and verifiable truth that occurs in public culture.
The Descriptive Value of Legal Monism
Paul Gragl

in Legal Monism: Law, Philosophy, and Politics
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Item type: chapter

The aim to defend legal monism requires more than just mere epistemology, as sceptics might argue that monism is incapable of describing the real legal world and the law as it is. Consequently, this part offers a precise analysis as to whether two or more distinct bodies of law blend into a unitary legal order or whether they evade such integration. Thus, it will assess the assumptions of the pure theory of law, and in particular those of legal monism, namely between national law and public international law; and between national law and European Union law. The objective of this assessment is to show whether monism is in fact capable of describing the legal reality as well as or even better than dualism or pluralism.

Observation and Objectivity
Richard Healey

in The Quantum Revolution in Philosophy
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The paradox of Wigner’s friend presents a challenge to the objectivity of description in quantum theory. Distinguishing several aspects of objectivity, I address this challenge. Relativization of quantum state assignment to agent situation disposes of the main problem and a residual worry concerning the objective content of magnitude claims about macroscopic records of outcomes. While Quantum Darwinism cannot alone secure the objectivity of outcomes, it can then help to show why claims about them are intersubjectively verifiable as multiple observers examine records of the outcome in different parts of the environment. A recent extension of the paradox shows why even a true claim about the outcome of a measurement is not transcendentally objective in the sense that it corresponds to a reality that transcends all possibility of observational access by the scientific community.