**Mind & Brain Third Paper Fall, 2011**

Believing is easy. Knowing can also be easy if one agrees with Protagoras' account of knowledge, but knowledge is much more difficult to achieve if one accepts the concepts of knowledge in the writings of Plato (as his case is argued by Socrates) and Descartes. In addition to questioning what knowledge is, our readings and discussion have raised issues about how knowledge is best attained. In this paper, you are asked to write about the these matters.

In organizing your thoughts for the paper, begin by thinking through whether it is important to get clear about the nature of knowledge, even if knowledge turns out to be not often attainable or if human limitations prevent knowledge claims from being finally validated. In that connection, think about the distinction between justified and unjustified belief. Does that distinction matter to you in practice as you formulate your own beliefs and as you consider what other people believe? How would you respond to (or defend) the position of the "practical" person who says that worrying about these distinctions is a waste of time? After all, don't most of us muddle through quite well, without much understanding of how we manage, and with little disposition to change our habits even if we were to understand things better than we do?

In writing the paper, bring your thoughts on these matters to bear on your own (likely still tentative) account of belief and knowledge, building on or revising your position in the previous paper with respect to the Protagorean or Platonic/Cartesian views, or formulating a different position with as much clarity as possible. Be sure to defend explicitly your view of knowledge against the strongest challenges, or at least acknowledge what those challenges are. Attempt to work out a distinction between justified and unjustified belief that is consistent with your view of knowledge, or else show that your view has no real need for this distinction.

A second portion of the papereither woven into the whole paper or as a separate section, whichever you wishshould present and defend your views regarding the best way to acquire well-grounded or reasonable beliefs. Do you find the Socratic procedure (i.e. engaging in dialectic), and the Cartesian procedure (i.e. building up from a supposedly certain foundation) to be promising, or problematic, and why? You may also suggest and support a different method if you wish. Are the ideas about cause and effect and about induction from the Hume and Russell readings for October 4 relevant here? Why or why not?

You are not expected to have definitive positions and iron-clad arguments on these large philosophical issues. The intent is to provide an occasion to write about your own understanding of these problems, and about how these issues are treated in the readings, and to encourage you to be clear about the reasons you have for whatever opinions you have.

Your paper should be 4 to 5 double-spaced pages long, and is due in class on Tuesday, October 4.