Epistemology MA exam/Winter 2014

Answer one question from each part. Time limit: 3 hours

Part I

1. Some philosophers argue that for all we know we could be dreaming or could be in the throes of being fooled by an evil demon, and that therefore we don’t know anything about “the external world.” Explicate this argument and then evaluate it.

2. In what sense, if any, is G.E. Moore’s proof of an external world a proof?

3. Is there a priori knowledge? Is the cogito an example of it or a specialized case? Can properties of the cogito be used to characterize other examples of a priori knowledge?

Part II

4. BonJour (Can empirical knowledge have a foundation?) writes:

   Thus it finally seems possible to make sense of externalism only by construing the externalist as simply abandoning the traditional notion of epistemic justification and along with it anything resembling the traditional conception of knowledge.

   Is this right? Does externalism require such dramatic revisions in our traditional notions?

5. Is coherentism ultimately only a sophisticated form of circular reasoning?

6. Does the experience of an apple justify one’s claim to know that there is an apple “there”? Does it provide the claim with greater warrant?

Part III

7. Kim accuses Quine’s naturalized epistemology of jettisoning the normative. What does this mean? Does naturalized epistemology jettison the normative?

8. Is knowledge possible without belief? Can we know things that we don’t believe, or don’t believe that we know, or that we haven’t thought about one way or the other at all?

9. What conclusions if any should we draw from what appears to be the evident failure over decades to supplement truth and justification with an extra ingredient that enables us to define knowledge?