

Philosophy at 3:AM

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH
25 TOP PHILOSOPHERS

RICHARD MARSHALL

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Introduction

THIS BOOK IS MADE up of a selection of 25 interviews taken from a series of online interviews published by the cultural magazine 3ammagazine.com over a period of about a year. The first was with Peter Carruthers in December 2011. Since then more than 70 have been published. The last one included here is the Gary Gutting interview that was posted in December 2012. The series continues.

Where Have All the Philosophers Gone?

The idea of interviewing philosophers at 3ammagazine came to me after reflecting on a curious feature of contemporary culture. An intelligentsia of public intellectuals including economists, political scientists, natural scientists and art and cultural critics is thriving in the cultural mainstream. They comment on and are seen to be part of the important advances, changes, and debates in and about the contemporary world. But my impression is that philosophers are largely absent from all this. Given philosophy's history—even its relatively recent history, when it would have been a sign of cultural illiteracy to not know about Bertrand Russell, Jean Paul Sartre, or Ludwig Wittgenstein—this state of affairs struck me as peculiar. There are notable exceptions to this, of course. Noam Chomsky is well known and significant although not so much for his work in philosophy as for his politics. The philosopher Dennett, as one of the so-called new atheists, has gained huge publicity in what have become dubbed the “Darwin Wars” defending Darwinian evolutionary theory. The Hegelian/Lacanian Slavoj Zizek has also become moderately well known, and in the recent past Derrida attracted notoriety.

But even so, I think it is broadly the case that there is little time given for philosophical questions to be addressed by philosophers in public. Novelists and scientists seem to be much more available and popular even though, qua philosophy, their efforts are often incompetent and distinctions that undergraduates would be able to handle are often missed or misconstrued. It is as if contemporary culture largely fails to recognize that there is such a thing as a

philosophical issue, and that when confronting one a philosopher may well be the best person to discuss it. This is not to say that only those trained in philosophy are philosophers. Richard Dawkins, Sean Carroll, and others have shown themselves willing and capable of philosophical thinking, and of course in the past Newton and Einstein were deeply philosophical. But even including philosophically adept thinkers from other specialist fields, it is hard not to deny that philosophy, if not erased, is largely submerged in contemporary culture. Given that contemporary philosophers are working in a much larger conceptual space than is occupied by the small list noted above, it is odd that they are at best a severely neutered contemporary presence, a situation made even more peculiar when one considers the complexity of the issues facing us on all fronts and their specifically *philosophical* challenges.

However, the internet has enabled a “long tail” of interests to thrive outside of the mainstream. Philosophers are hosting their own web pages, and others are blogging. Some of the blogs have begun to command the attention of many of their philosophical peers, and others have even managed to find readers outside of the philosophical mainstream. Brian Leiter’s “Leiter Reports” blog, for example, commands a very large readership from within the academic philosophical community in the United States and elsewhere. “Bloggingheads tv,” an internet channel devoted to science, politics, and culture in the United States, regularly features Joshua Knobe, the young Yale experimental philosopher, discussing philosophy and cognitive science with others working in that field. “Philosophy TV” has run a series of hour-long discussions between philosophers analyzing various contemporary topics. It is now possible to find excellent websites and blogs on many of the various fields and subfields within academic philosophy. The “Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy” is an open-access free site that produces high-quality entries written by experts in the subject, and many of the Wikipedia entries on philosophical topics are also substantial and written by academic philosophers. The University of Notre Dame runs a site reviewing the latest philosophy books, again written by expert scholars in the relevant fields. One of its co-editors, Gary Gutting, is interviewed about this work in this collection. Alongside all this activity can be found videos of lectures put online by various philosophy departments, which give anyone with an interest access to the very latest in contemporary philosophy and the very best contemporary philosophers. The “PhilPapers” site (www.philpapers.org) has an exhaustive list of papers written by contemporary philosophers, although some of these are behind a pay wall.

3ammagazine.com

So what interested me was bringing this exciting and substantial intellectual activity to a new demographic, one that was not primarily made up of philosophers and their students. The *New York Times* has been a rare case of

a high-profile nonphilosophy site setting up a forum devoted to contemporary philosophy, and the “3 Quarks Daily” site includes philosophy in its cultural round-ups each day. But 3ammagazine addresses a very different readership from these. It is not and never has been a philosophy site (although a couple of us working for the site have philosophy backgrounds), and in fact has a slightly uneasy, sometimes even antagonistic, attitude to academia and the notion of mainstream culture generally. Its main interests have been contemporary fiction, poetry, art, and bookish culture. It tends to position itself as an iconoclastic voice raised against them and carving out a new space. If “underground” is now a better way of describing this than avant-garde, then 3ammagazine is an underground magazine. This was an important consideration. My interviews were not going to be on a philosophy site of any kind, and would be cheek by jowl with writing contemporary academic philosophy rarely shares space with. The juxtaposition was one of the things that I thought gave the project merit. Interestingly, many of the philosophers I interviewed commented that this was something that attracted them to do the interview.

That 3ammagazine is definitely not the usual place to find your contemporary philosopher is clear when one considers the history and profile of the magazine. 3ammagazine is a post-punk literary blog started by Andrew Gallix in April 2000. He continues to run and edit the site from his Parisian domicile. It is one of the world’s oldest literary blogs, has a commitment to post-punk, transgressive literature, underground art, and culture, and carries the tag line “whatever it is, we’re against it.” It has been called “irreverently highbrow” by the *Observer* and an “on-line Fitzrovia” by the *Daily Telegraph*. Gallix, a lecturer at the Sorbonne, regularly writes lit crit pieces for the *Guardian* newspaper. An anthology of writing from its first five years was published in 2005; a city-themed book of fiction followed in 2008. There have also been readings and events organized in London, New York, Paris, and Brazil. Its “3am Asia” strand covers transgressive artists and culture, particularly from Japan. It has recently begun publishing books. Over the 13 years of its existence it has maintained a modest, prickly, and fertile presence in the new media age and is a rare longtime survivor in a digital culture where extinction is commonplace. Proudly independent of money-men and fashion, 3ammagazine is a throwback to the zines of the ’80s and ’90s, and further back to the ’60s and *OZ*, or further back to the dissenting revolutionary pamphleteers of the 18th century. It takes ideas for walks with a whiff of lubricious brimstone.

I joined the magazine in 2001 as a contributing editor and followed the DIY ethos by doing a series of interviews with figures from areas of cult writing and music. I interviewed the likes of Stewart Home, Richard Hell, Billy Childish, Iain Sinclair, Sexton Ming, Marina Warner, Michael Moorcock, Michael Bracewell, Tony White, Zodiak Mindwarp, and Stephen Barber because I found what they were doing thought-provoking, challenging, and edgy.

Gallix introduced the idea of “mind-porn for the chattering classes,” and we all tried to live up to that idea.

For those reasons, I decided in 2009 to interview the Oxford philosopher Timothy Williamson. I had read an interview done some years earlier in the collection of interviews *New British Philosophy: The Interviews* with Julian Baggini and Jeremy Stangroom. Williamson’s thoughts about vagueness struck me as being odd, perverse, unbelievable—and also undeniably powerful and brilliant. It was thinking as refreshingly original as anything I knew about and exactly the sort of thing that 3amagazine would love to publish. I approached him and, shockingly, he agreed to do the interview. The result is included in this anthology. But at the time I thought of it as a one-off and went back to the strangeness of nonphilosophers.

But in the summer or early autumn of 2011, I found I had some time on my hands and went back to thinking about putting philosophy and philosophers into the hands of a new set of readers. I searched the net, and I sent out invitations. Some of the philosophers I had read; others I had just heard about and had an inkling that they were significant in their field. Still others were just names in university philosophy departments. For a while, no one replied. I sent out another batch. Again, there was a deafening silence. I began to feel relieved because on reflection the hubris of embarking on such a project struck me. When I considered similar projects in the past, such as the brilliant Bryan McGee BBC TV interviews in the 1970s or the current online ones at “Philosophy Bites” and Chicago University’s “Elucidations,” all the interviewers were themselves professional philosophers with formidable pedigrees and institutional backing. What I was thinking of doing was just ridiculous. But just as I was thinking that it was far too ambitious a project for someone like me to even consider, I began to receive replies accepting the invitation to discuss their ideas. I seized hubris with both hands and went to work. I had reckoned without the philosophers themselves. If my own credentials were suspect, they were more than compensated for by the philosophers. They proved to be well able to discuss their complex ideas in simple terms that avoided reduction to the simplistic. They were encouraging, helpful, and generous with their time and ideas. Even when I was clearly misunderstanding them, they were prepared to restate the idea so that I got it, and at no point were any of them too self-important and precious not to be engaging and engaged. They were intellectuals who enjoyed their ideas, favored philosophical rigor, and welcomed interrogation and discussion. In a year I had interviewed 142 of them. They continue to be posted at 3amagazine weekly.

The Interviews

As indicated above, the criteria used for selecting the philosophers interviewed were largely ad hoc. And the similarly ad hoc nature of responses also determined the character of completed interviews. It was certainly not intended as

an overview or survey of the current state of philosophy, although I think the interviews do give an interesting snapshot of what some of our contemporary philosophers are doing at the moment across several significant fields.

However, looking over my selections, I see some recognizable criteria. I was looking for ideas that were both attractive to me and genuinely puzzling. The appeal of philosophy has always been its willingness to speak to those pressing niggles that haunt us as we make our way through life. These puzzles are often the ones that are suppressed by our day-to-day operational needs. But in the dead of night, or in moments of clarity or wonder, sometimes dread, they keep rising up. What is truth? Could we think without language? Is materialism everything? Pursuing these questions led me to pursue certain philosophers. And certain names kept cropping up. They were obvious targets. But also there were byways other figures occupied who seemed to be engaged in thoughts that were just too interesting to leave alone. These were thinkers who appealed because they had written a paper or a book with an intriguing title, or who had done an outstanding podcast, or who just seemed to have something worth listening to.

I was also studying, and these studies led me to negotiate some of the vast literature in my field. Vagueness, philosophy of language, logic, the history of these ideas all opened up new puzzles and thinkers. I contacted as many as I could. I also had heroes, philosophers who appealed because they seemed to embody in their ideas something that struck a chord with me, or whose *modus operandi* I admired, or ones who, frankly, I agreed with. And of course there were the famous philosophers, those who anyone working in philosophy had heard about even. An obvious criterion was a philosopher's being easily contactable via e-mail, and several well-known names were excluded simply because they weren't accessible.

Equally important to the selection were the criteria for not contacting certain kinds of philosopher. I avoided philosophers whose style I found too obscure to know what to ask them. Although all of the philosophers I interview are very smart and many of their papers and books very difficult, often technical and sometimes written in a dense style, I always felt that this was a result of the genuine complexity of their material rather than something they were aiming for. For example, a philosopher of logic is not an easy read because she's going to be using symbolic logic at some point, and at this point anyone engaging with her is going to have to work quite hard to keep up. But any obscurity and difficulty here seemed to arise essentially from the subject matter itself. I avoided writers I read as incorporating willful and avoidable obscurity, and this explains why certain thinkers were not contacted. I should also note that occasionally my bold front of bravura self-confidence abandoned me and some philosophers haven't been approached through lack of nerve. For example, Jerry Fodor nearly didn't get interviewed. When in New York I emailed him and even met with him for a coffee, intending to interview him. But I froze up and found I couldn't ask him any of my prepared questions. The interview

didn't take place until many months—and many of my interviews—later. Needless to say, my fears were unfounded: Fodor was a smart, stylish, and friendly respondent.

The 25 interviews collected in this volume are just a sample of the online series. Eighteen of them are by men and seven are by women. Some of them are well established and some, such as Jerry Fodor, subject-defining in their importance. Others are new and up-and-coming. Alongside metaphysics, philosophy of mind, epistemology, logic, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, political philosophy, and ethics, topics discussed here are feminist philosophy, continental philosophy, pragmatism, philosophy of religion, bioethics, animal rights, legal philosophy, and specific philosophers such as Spinoza, Nietzsche, Dewey, and Anscombe. As with the sciences and academia generally, this increased specialization has meant that rather than a homogeneous subject “philosophy” it is better to think of a range of disciplines covered by the term. Not only is it unlikely to find any figure working in all these areas, it is becoming increasingly common to find philosophers working with nonphilosophers. In a way, the rather “potshot” approach of this project reflects the dynamism and specialization of the contemporary philosophical scene, albeit to only a limited degree of coverage.

One final comment: when the interviews were originally posted at 3ammagazine.com I wrote introductions that were designed to underline the point that these were aimed at a rather different readership from scholarly academics. I juxtaposed retro-slang and the philosophical subject matter to try to produce something that projected them into a space that distanced them from their academic milieu but placed them in the underground hinterland. In retrospect, I probably ought to have warned interviewees that this was going to happen, although latterly anyone being interviewed will probably understand that these come with the territory and take them in the appropriate spirit. And as a matter of record, several wrote saying they liked what I had called them.

The 25 Interviews

Brian Leiter opens the collection. A leading expert on the so-called Continental Philosophy tradition, Nietzsche, philosophical naturalism, and the philosophy of law, Leiter discusses these topics with customary deftness and combative aplomb. In the interview he engages with “the hermeneutics of suspicion,” and analyzes the divide between continental and analytic philosophy, naturalism and realism, the dispute between Nietzsche and Marx, the current political and economic situation, legal realism, the importance of experimental philosophy, why we should tolerate religion, and the role of literature.

Jason Stanley in Chapter 2 first talks about the place of philosophy in the humanities and whether philosophy is too inaccessible, before moving on to

give an overview of where philosophy of language has developed. Given that this area of philosophy has now embedded linguistics, computer science alongside philosophy, it is a good example of how philosophy is continually changing, developing, and making progress. He comments on the “titanic influence” of Saul Kripke, a philosophical giant currently working in New York and strangely obscure to many. He reflects on his work in epistemology and how he understands Ryle’s distinction between knowing that and knowing how, in particular how he disputes those who would argue that knowledge of meaning is a practical knowledge.

Eric Schwitzgebel is another young and emerging philosopher working in the field of rationality, thought, and metaphysics. He works with psychologists and cognitive scientists and uses experiments as part of his approach to some of the philosophical questions he raises. He is one of the most extreme skeptics about our ability to know ourselves, and his arguments and evidence are corrosive of a comfortable self-image that introspection gives us unique access to transparent knowledge. He talks about a curious state of “in between belief,” which he argues is our common state. He is the inventor of the philosophical position of “crazyism” and draws attention to the strange relationship between common sense and metaphysics. He explains why the history of philosophy is important to him, the moral behavior of ethics professors, Chinese philosophy, and whether the United States is consciousness.

Mark Rowlands begins with the curious case of Brenin, the wolf that inspired him to think about the relationship between other animals and humans and a shared heritage encapsulated in the “Machiavellian Intelligence Hypothesis.” Separately, he discusses arguments for animal rights. He also looks at what a “mental process” might be and his version of the “extended mind” hypothesis. He claims intentionality as the cornerstone of everything he is arguing about, and how he doesn’t think a naturalized account of it has yet been presented, even though he has tried.

Eric T. Olson is the proponent of “animalism,” which argues that we are animals and that there is no metaphysical gulf between humans and the rest. He points out what this position commits him to accepting and rejecting and shows that it is a surprisingly rare position in the history of philosophy, and humankind generally. As part of this, he introduces the issue of personal identity, taking in thought experiments about brain transplants and computer-generated life and a paper he wrote entitled “Why I Have No Hands,” which is part of a discussion on “partism.” He also discusses the relationship of philosophy to science and why philosophy is often neglected in contemporary culture.

Craig Callender is another metaphysician, and his interests are with the nature of time and the philosophical issues arising from science, in particular physics and cosmology. He speaks about the place of metaphysics and its relationship to science and suggests that there are dangers for both if they become disconnected from each other. Indeed he suggests that knowledge of

the history of philosophy and of science would show that we would be hard-pressed to make a clear distinction on many issues. As well as discussing metaphysical implications about time, he also disputes the plausibility of the idea of a multiverse, as discussed by physicist Sean Carroll and of the fine-tuned universe as put forward by Stephen Hawking. He turns to issues concerning scientific methodology and how to distinguish science from pseudo-science, and to Schrodinger's cat and why it illustrates a conflict with our ordinary experiences and the implications of this conflict.

Kieran Setiya introduces the philosophy of G. E. M. Anscombe, a major philosopher who was a friend and student of Wittgenstein and a woman. Setiya discusses her characterization of intentionality and his own work in this area, where he parts company with Anscombeans and argues that intention is a mental state. He talks about his approach to moral philosophy and the position of moral particularism that he develops.

Kit Fine is known to philosophers as one of the giants of current metaphysics. In the interview he first explains what he takes metaphysics to be. He then makes a key distinction between asking what there is and what is real, arguing that what there is is a something for science or common sense to answer, while what is real is a philosophical question. He then introduces mereology, which is the issue of how parts and wholes relate, followed by his rather negative views about the use of possible worlds in philosophy of language and metaphysics. He outlines his theory of "semantic relationism," defends the importance of philosophy, common sense thinking, queries some aspects of experimental philosophy, and believes that some questions, such as the mind-body dualism, the problem of free will, and skepticism, require more advanced tools than are available at present.

Patricia Churchland is a major naturalist philosopher whose position contrasts with many of Kit Fine's. Where Fine criticizes the American philosopher Quine for thinking that some philosophical questions could be answered by science, Churchland is a Quinean in the sense that for her philosophy and science are continuous. She is combative on this point, and her naturalism is unambiguous. She outlines her work in neurophilosophy and neuroscience. The implications of developments in our understanding of the brain for the issue of free will is summarized before she moves on to explain the implications for morality, philosophy, and religion. She also takes time to reflect on the place of women in academic philosophy.

Valerie Tiberius is another naturalist philosopher. She is interested in how we should live and, like Churchland, is involved in interdisciplinary work with psychologists and cognitive scientists as well as moral philosophers. This is more evidence that contemporary philosophy is much closer to old philosophical traditions that David Hume would recognize than many of its latter-day critics suggest. Tiberius introduces her naturalistic position before then going on to outline her theory of well-being. She offers some subtle thinking about

the role of rational thinking in deciding how to live a reflectively endorsable life; she also argues that the threats of the relativism her position adopts are not as serious as many think and that because science is finding out things about ourselves this requires we change our self-image, but not to a fundamental degree.

Peter Carruthers is a naturalist philosopher working at the interface with cognitive science and psychology. He argues that we are systematically deceived about our own thoughts and draws on psychological experimentation to support his conclusions and to provide clues to the mechanisms causing the opacity of mind. He maintains that there is a single mindreading faculty that we use to perceive our own and other people's thoughts. He also talks about creativity, whether people change their minds to avoid cognitive dissonance or the feeling of having done something bad, and evidence suggesting that the self might be submerged from view, contrary to what many people believe.

Joshua Knobe is a philosopher working in both the philosophy and the cognitive science departments at Yale University and is one of the founders of experimental philosophy. He looks at the impact of people's moral judgments on their intuitions, intentional action, moral responsibility, consciousness, causation, freedom, and happiness, along with the "Knobe Effect," which is an asymmetrical feature of judgment-making named after him.

Alfred R Mele appeared in Knobe and Nichols's book *Experimental Philosophy* and was awarded a \$4.4 million research grant to research free will. In the interview he discusses this project and his own position regarding free will. He examines the role of scientific experimentation in this philosophical work and disputes that there are scientific data yielding the conclusion that free will doesn't exist. He defends his own position about what free will means. He argues against the idea that perhaps the unconscious brain makes the decisions, making free will an illusion. He finishes by reflecting on experimental philosophy and the phenomenon of self deception.

Graham Priest discusses philosophical logic in his interview. He clarifies what philosophical logic is and why he thinks some key orthodox beliefs about truth and rationality are mistaken. He also outlines his own proposals for addressing this. He explains paraconsistent logic, which he proposes is required to address the mistaken belief that propositions are always either true or false. Dialetheism, his own species of paraconsistent logic, is explained, which allows for the existence of true contradictions. He talks about this and its relationship with Buddhism, Aristotle, its history, and its relation to science, false advertising, hypocrisy, Hegel, and Marx.

Ursula Renz is the only philosopher in the collection not working in either the United States or the United Kingdom. She explains where she works and what she takes to be the rewards of being a philosopher. She discusses philosophical issues regarding the "myth of the given" and connects the discussion to Kant's theory of experience and Spinoza's ethics via the work of Hermann

Cohen and Sellars. She then introduces an aspect of testimonial knowledge for post-Gettier epistemology. However, the main subject of the interview is her original philosophical work on Spinoza's ethics. This gives insights into an important part of contemporary philosophical scholarship where an important historical philosopher is shown to have continued philosophical relevance.

Cecile Fabre's interview begins with a discussion of social rights and the constitution and the relationship between democracy and social rights. She places the philosophical ideas about constitutional rights in a context and contrasts them with other types of rights. She talks about whether autonomy matters to social constitutional rights, Rawls's "Theory of Justice" and egalitarian liberalism, and then surprising consequences arising from her view of distributive justice concerning prostitution, what rights we have over our own bodies, and connected topics such as organ transplants and surrogacy.

Hilde Lindemann is also concerned with philosophical issues around ethics. She introduces feminist ethics, describing it not as a branch of ethics but rather as "a way of doing ethics that uses gender as a central tool of analysis." She analyses notions of power and identity, the rather dismal state of women in professional philosophy and the relationship between gender and disciplinary status within the profession. She outlines strategies of resistance to sexism, including her idea of the "counterstory," and then talks about several approaches to issues from a feminist ethics perspective. She thinks about bioethics and the dangers of linking academic research with big business. Finally she discusses her being on board with experimental philosophy but her resistance to the tendency of giving privileged status to science within naturalized philosophy.

Elizabeth Anderson philosophizes about various aspects of political philosophy in her interview. Like Lindemann, she reflects on the peculiarly poor place of women in professional philosophy compared to other disciplines. She then turns to discuss feminist epistemology and philosophy of science, elaborating her own position as a Deweyian pragmatist feminist empiricist. Dewey is introduced as a philosopher who approaches philosophical questions that are relevant to the problems people face in their lives. She then elaborates on a number of notions of freedom and egalitarianism. The aftermath of September 11 and the so-called war on terror are spoken about next, before turning to racism and the requirement of integration, which she considers "one of the most important social phenomena observed worldwide" and something that is particularly needed in the United States. She ends by explaining why she isn't a Marxist, despite being left-leaning politically, and examines the philosophical importance of the Occupy movements.

Christine Korsgaard begins her interview explaining Kant's formula of humanity, which conceives of our humanity as a source of value. She argues that despite what many philosophers think, Kant is best regarded as a naturalistic philosopher. She also introduces Kant's theory of obligations, which is based

“in autonomy, or rational self-government.” She goes on to outline her ideas about self-constitution and action, arguing that “action is significant because people are their actions.” She then argues that Hume’s notion of the battle between passion and reason makes no sense, preferring to understand the two faculties as serving different functions. She talks about practical normative concepts and why she places practical reasoning at the heart of all discussions about justice. She uses an example from Derek Parfit to raise problems with taking a predictive attitude toward our future values. She ends by dismissing claims that her Kantian, rational approach to moral philosophy can’t be done; discussing moral philosophy and metaphysics as well as the dangers of saying something meaningless; and reiterating her claim about the universality of Kantian reasoning.

Michael Lynch’s focus in his interview is the nature of truth and why truth matters. He gives an overview of the options that contemporary philosophers have and then goes on to say why he takes a pluralist rather than a monist view of truth, in other words, the view that there is more than one kind of truth. Having explained why he takes his position, he then criticizes deflationary theories about truth. He talks about the scope of his theory and why it is consistent with realist approaches. He speaks about moral and mathematical truth, which he considers “the two hardest test theories for any theory of truth,” and about Timothy Williamson’s remarks at a conference saying that many theories of truth were too imprecise to be good philosophy. Lynch goes on to briefly introduce William Alston, “a philosopher’s philosopher,” and then the role of reason, denying that there is any justification in thinking that reasons in the end always give way to something arbitrary. This leads to him talking about the relationship between democracy and the “space of reasons.” Additionally, he criticizes experimental philosophy on the grounds that philosophy is revisionary, not merely descriptive. Finally he talks about the link between objectivity and politics and the divide between so-called Continental and Analytical philosophy.

Timothy Williamson’s interview took place in 2009 and so does not take into account work done recently, including his own new book. He takes up the issue about the Analytical-and-Continental divide in philosophy but leaves it until later in the interview to fully develop his thoughts about it. He outlines his controversial epistemic theory about vagueness, defending classical logic against attempts to construct alternatives such as those discussed earlier in the interview with Priest. He then turns to his theory of knowledge, which reverses the traditional view in epistemology that starts with belief and analyses knowledge in terms of it. So Williamson starts with knowledge, and belief is analyzed in terms of its failure to be knowledge. He reflects on practical application for his views before introducing the topics of the linguistic and conceptual turns in philosophy and the development of philosophy since then. It is here that he explains why he finds Analytic philosophy attractive and criticizes

those critics who have failed to keep up with what Analytic philosophers are doing. He also judges that, by way of contrast, much of Continental philosophy is stagnating.

Ernie Lepore talks about his philosophy of language and his approach to semantic minimalism. He discusses his approach to philosophy and then moves on to the influence of Wittgenstein and semantic holism on philosophy of language generally. He also talks about the work, and his relationship, with Donald Davidson. Following this, he explains the development of speech act pluralism, the view that “we say indefinitely many things when we utter a single speech sentence,” which he developed with Herman Cappelen. This leads to his ideas on the role of meaning theory in explaining belief formation and his work on quotation, which he considers a special feature of language. He then turns to the issue of what a word is, the role of collaboration in his work, the relationship of mind and language, and his belief that philosophy of language is going through a kind of second renaissance (following the first, which supposedly peaked in the 1970s).

Jerry Fodor, a collaborator with Lepore, is one of the contemporary giants of philosophy. He explores his theory about the language of Thought, the work that has made him such a significant presence, reflecting on its philosophical roots and its influence. He talks about semantic holism and why he believes it is a hopeless theory, about materialist theories of consciousness, and his amazement that there are still behaviorists. He engages with issues arising from his book on David Hume and why he refuses to read Heidegger and then turns to the controversies surrounding his last book, which argued that Darwin’s mechanism for natural selection was flawed. He ends by discussing a disagreement with Stephen Pinker about the scope of a modular theory of mind.

Huw Price begins his interview by talking about facts and the function of truth and then goes on to elaborate his deflationary theory of truth, contrasting it with other varieties. He continues by analyzing time (whether it has a direction) and explains a dispute with Stephen Hawking about a related issue of cosmology, as well as his thoughts about the relationship between science and philosophy. What follows is a prolonged analysis of causation. He talks about why he isn’t a metaphysician and what sort of a pragmatist he is. He explains expressivism and why he rejects any assumption of a bifurcation in language between expressivism and representationalism and how he can hold to both expressivism and deflationism. He ends by thinking about philosophy’s relation to experimental enquiry and some observations about philosophers changing their minds.

Finally, Gary Gutting begins by elaborating the scope of his skepticism, including the influence of Rorty on “skeptical challenges to philosophy itself.” He then reflects on the divide between Analytic and Continental philosophers and believes that the divide is real and unbridgeable. He returns to this near the

end of the interview when discussing the naturalistic bias in contemporary Analytic philosophy. He further considers the cognitive limits of science and in particular the focus Sellars gives to this issue. He goes on to talk about pragmatic liberalism, defending what he calls “the best of the Enlightenment” and seeing “Rorty, Taylor, and even MacIntyre as contributors to the Enlightenment project.” He then introduces some thoughts on scientific realism before turning to some aspects of philosophy of religion and the ideas of Alvin Plantinga regarding arguments for the existence of God. He comments on his interest in Foucault and French philosophy, and in particular his defense of Sartre as an impressive and original thinker. He speaks about Derrida, and although he thinks we should take him seriously, that judgment comes with a health warning. He ends by reflecting on the role of the public intellectual and philosophy in the age of the internet.

The interviews are stand-alone discussions and can be read in any order. Each is accompanied by a brief biographical note and bibliography of the books written. I believe that they offer a chance for readers to deepen their understanding of distinctive and various contemporary philosophical currents. I think they are a legitimate contribution to attempts to make the contemporary philosophical scene more accessible.