




# *Introduction to Ethics*

## *Part I: Reasoning*

*SMSU*

*Spring 2005*

*Professor Douglas F. Olena*



# Epistemology

- *Pistis – Greek for believe, trust, rely on. The word is used in the Bible, John 3:16 For God so loved...whosoever believes in him...*
- *For Plato (B.C. 427-347) knowledge was justified true belief.*
- *He meant by “justified” that he had reasons sufficient for him to trust that his beliefs were true.*



# The Web of Belief

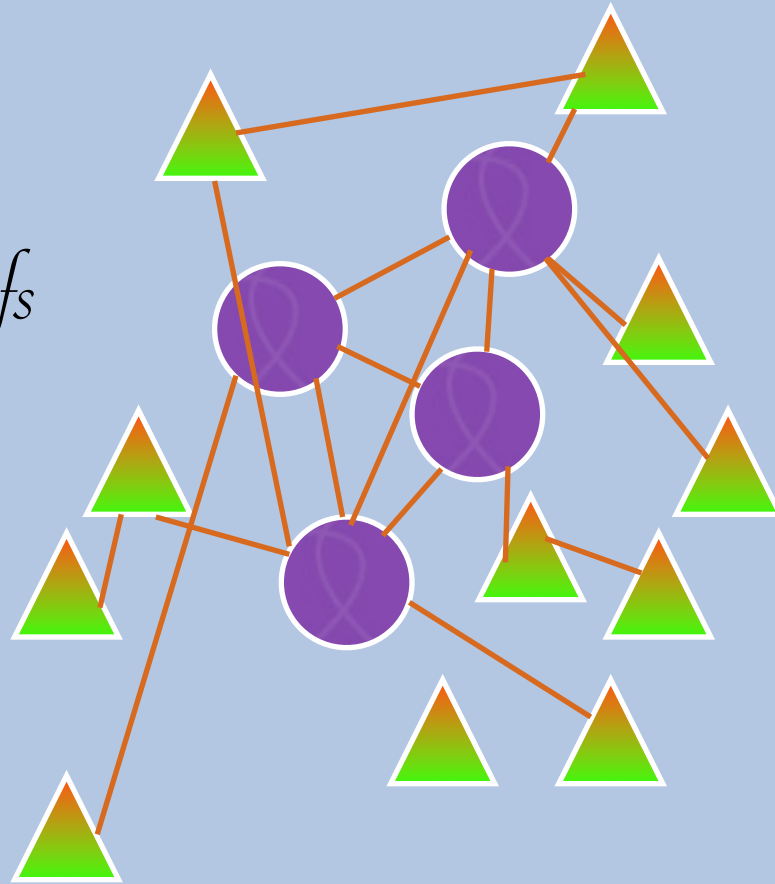
- *W.V.O. Quine and J.S. Ullian describe for us a way of classifying our beliefs in such a way as to give greater weight to some than others.*
- *There are two sorts of belief, Core Beliefs and Peripheral Beliefs (as well as gradations between those types)*
- *These beliefs are connected and interconnected with each other.*



# The Web of Beliefs



-  Core beliefs
-  Peripheral beliefs




# The Web of Belief

- *We need to feel free to abandon beliefs that we discover to be untrue.*
- *It is trivial to abandon beliefs at the outside of our web, for example: I can abandon easily the belief that the Dallas Cowboys are the best football team this year.*
- *However, to abandon beliefs near the core may require dramatic restructuring of my belief system. Say, my belief that there is a universal moral law.*

# Learning Process



- *Confronting disturbing facts leads to doubt leads to unresolved beliefs leads to accumulation of facts and reasons leads to resolution of belief in new form — Learning.*
  - *State of mind: Suspension of Belief until enough relevant data and ideas have been absorbed leads to possible insight.*
  - *Waiting for insight is hard work.*
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# Four Methods of Fixing Belief

- *Authority- the state, church, school... declares that set of beliefs (x, y, z, ...) is the approved set. People holding contrary beliefs may leave.*
- *Tenacity- I will hold to my belief no matter what anyone says, thinks or demonstrates.*

# Four Methods of Fixing Belief

- *A-Priori- conceiving a principle, either simple or complicated (early astronomy) that is logical and coherent (evolutionary biology, Lamarck or Darwin) though perhaps not mature or yet discredited. Ex: Before we knew about the element Oxygen we believed there was something in the air, a burning principle, Phlogiston.*

# Four Methods of Fixing Belief

- *Scientific Method-*
  - *Empirical*
  - *Reproducible*
  - *Testable*
  - *Pragmatic*