PHIL 619: Seminar in Epistemology (tentative syllabus)
Fall 2015, Thursdays, 10:30—12:30, LEA 927

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O ce: TBA
O ce hrs to respect the principles coherence and consistency—we ought to weed

out inconsistent beliefs, we ought to update beliefs on the basis of new evidence, we ought to believe that which is logically implicated by our beliefs, we ought to intend and behave in a fashion consistent with our beliefs, etc. In many ways, the relationship between belief and rationality is intertwined, insofar as each tends to be the yardstick via which the other is measured. We will begin our inquiry with Quine & Ullian's *Web of Belief*, which makes this argument quite explicitly.

However, the connection between rationality and belief, on any dimension, is arguably more complicated and ambiguous than this initial discussion presumes it to be. On one hand, we are faced with evidence from myriad empirical studies suggesting our belief revision practices fall hopelessly short of this goal. On the other hand, a number of in uential accounts in cognitive science note that there are hard computational limits involved in any sort of holistic, global belief revision which render coherence and consistency as impossible, unrealizable ideals. We are faced with what cognitive scientists have dubbed the *frame problem*, alluding to the di cult question of where to stop considering evidence before committing to (or rejecting) any given belief, yet at the same time, trapped in what Cherniak (1986) refers to as the *nitary predicament* of having limited time and computational resources to engage in that process. In short, rationality seems to demand belief revision practices that are "Quinean", while cognitive architecture makes that impossible.

In this course, we will look at a number of accounts of belief and belief revision that attempt to resolve or sidestep this issue, as well as a handful of in uential social psychology

Evaluation:

Participation - 20%