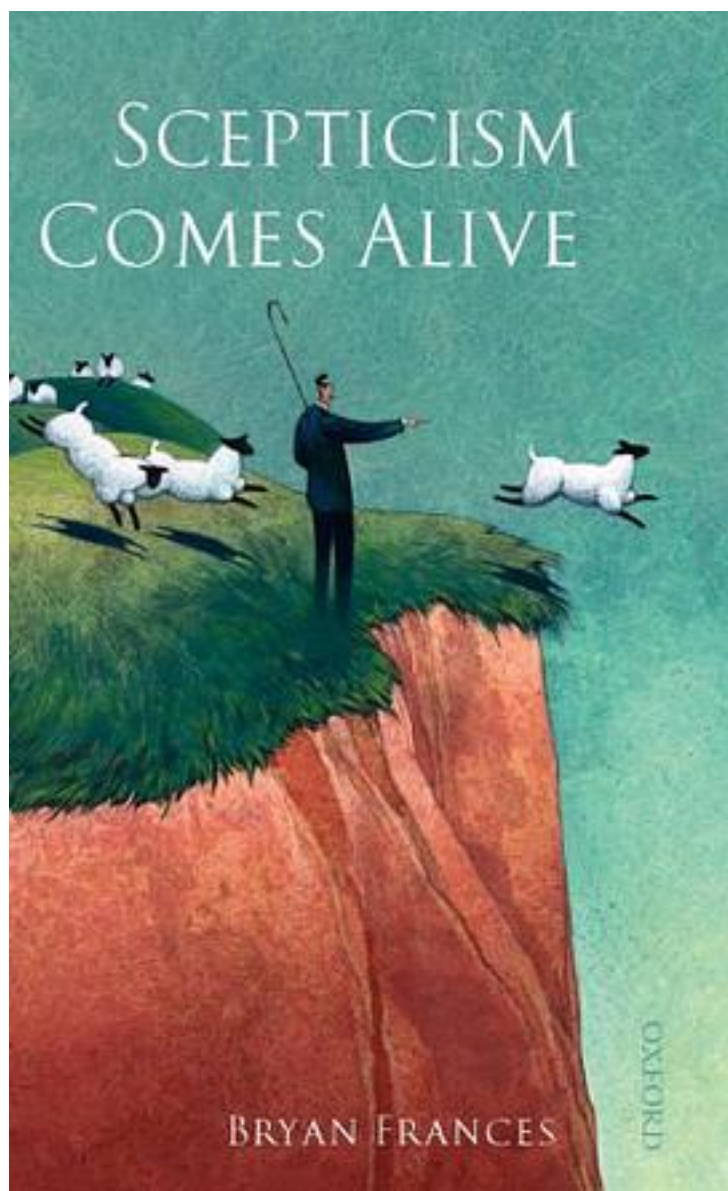


Scepticism Comes Alive



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In epistemology the nagging voice of the sceptic has always been present. Over the last thirty years or so philosophers have thought of several promising ways to counter the radical sceptic: for instance, facts about the reliability of our cognitive processes, principles determining which possibilities must be ruled out in order to have knowledge, and principles regarding the context-sensitivity of knowledge attributions. In this entertaining and provocative book, Bryan Frances presents a new argument template for generating new kinds of radical scepticism, ones that hold even if all the clever anti-sceptical fixes defeat the traditional sceptic. Not only is the argument schema novel, but the sceptical consequences are entirely unexpected. Although the new sceptic concludes that we don't know that fire engines are red, that we sometimes have pains in our knees, or even that we believe that fire engines are red or that knees sometimes throb, she admits that we know millions of exotic truths such as the fact that black holes exist. You can know about the existence of black holes, but not about the colour of your shirt or even about what you believe regarding the colour of your shirt. The new sceptical arguments proceed in the usual way (here's a sceptical hypothesis; you can't neutralize it, you have to be able to neutralize it to know P; so you don't know P), but the sceptical hypotheses plugged into it are 'real live' scientific-philosophical hypotheses often thought to be actually true, such as error theories about belief, colour, pain location, and character traits. Frances investigates the questions, 'Under what conditions do we need to rule out these error theories in order to know things inconsistent with them?' and 'Can we rule them out?' Particular attention is paid to recent methods used to counter the traditional sceptic. Sharp, witty, and fun to read, *Scepticism Comes Alive* will be highly provocative for anyone interested in knowledge and its limits.

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