

How to Read This Book

It is certainly possible to read this book straight through from start to finish, but the book is long enough that I cannot expect most readers to do that. Some guidance may be helpful, though readers should feel free to ignore it.

Everyone should read the introduction and chapter 1, which introduce the project, and at least browse chapter 8, which discusses conclusions and some applications. For a minimal path in between, it is possible to read just the first section or two of each of the intervening chapters, especially chapters 2, 3, and 7. The remainder of chapters 2–4 formulate and argue for scrutability theses in considerable detail, and it is quite possible to skip this detail on a first reading, although readers who are skeptical about scrutability theses might want to focus here. Chapters 6 and 7 (and to some extent 8) focus on the question of just what needs to be in a scrutability base. Chapter 7 is the more important of the two (and provides useful background to chapter 8), but readers should feel free to skip to the cases that are most interesting to them. Chapter 5 is not essential to the central narrative, but it goes into important foundational issues about the a priori while also developing the application of the framework to the analysis of meaning. Everyone should read the summation after chapter 8, which sums up some main conclusions.

Readers should feel free to dip into the excursuses as they like. Many of them can be read on their own, at least given chapter 1 as background, although there is usually some connection to the preceding chapter. A few of the excursuses (especially 3–7 and 14) go into details that are in principle essential to the theses and arguments of the book, but that in practice can be skipped by those who are not too concerned with the relevant issues. Some others (1–2, 8–9, 13) develop connections to related literature. Further excursuses (especially 10–12 and 15–16) develop applications of the framework to issues about modality, meaning, the unity of science, skepticism, and metaphysics. A number of further applications are outlined in chapter 8.

The six John Locke lectures correspond roughly to portions of chapters 1 (along with the introduction), 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 (along with the summation) respectively, with some elements of chapters 2 and 7 thrown in along the way, and with almost none of the material from the excursuses.

The extended edition, containing an additional chapter (on verbal disputes) and four additional excursuses (on inferentialism, reference magnets and the grounds of intentionality, conceptual analysis and ordinary language philosophy, and Twin-Earthability) can be found online by searching for ‘Constructing

the World: Extended Edition'. I have developed a number of relevant points further in various articles, usually cited in the text with just an article title. All of these articles are also available online.

Readers without a background in philosophy will probably find this book hard going, but some relatively accessible material includes the introduction and chapter 1, the material on the Cosmoscope in chapter 3, the first half of chapter 5, and intermittent sections of chapters 6 and 7. A glossary at the end of the book provides a guide both to expressions and theses that I have introduced and to some commonly used philosophical expressions that I deploy.

Issues in many areas of philosophy are discussed in this book. Here I have indicated where to find material especially relevant to certain areas. In what follows '1' stands for chapter 1, '1.1' stands for section 1 of chapter 1, '1.1–2' stands for sections 1 and 2 of chapter 1, 'E1' stands for the first excursus, and so on. Some of these abbreviation formats ('1.1', 'E1') are also used for cross-referencing throughout the book.

Informal epistemology: 2.3, 3.3–4, 3.7, 4, 8.5, E1, E4, E7, E8, E15.

Formal epistemology: 2.4, 4.2, 5.6, 5.7, E5.

Metaphysics and modality: 1.5, 6.4, 6.6, 6.16, 7.3, 7.9, 8.6, E6, E10, E16.

Philosophy of language: 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 5, 6.9–13, E2, E3, E9, E11, E14.

Philosophy of mind: 1.1, 3.7, 6.7, 6.14, 7.4–5, 7.7, 8.3–7, E9, E17.

Philosophy of science: 6.2, 6.15, 7.3, 7.5, 7.8, 8.7, E9, E12.

Carnap and logical empiricism: 1, 3.1, 5, 8, E1, E10, E12, E15.