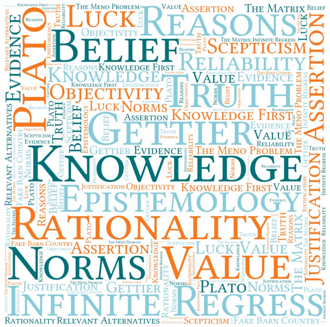


Knowledge, Individuals & Society

Jake Chandler

Lecture 4 Wrap-up

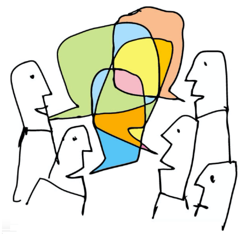
LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

This week

- The idea that knowledge is valuable
- The possibility of grounding the value of knowledge in the instrumental value of truth
- The Meno Problem (accounting for the value of knowledge over and above that of true belief) and a possible source of added value for justification
- The 'Secondary Value' problem (accounting for the value of knowledge over and above that of anything that falls short of it)
- Williamson on the Secondary Value problem (knowledge as valuable because stable) and criticisms thereof
- A possible social spin on Williamson's suggestion

Group discussion

In small groups (3-4) discuss the following questions (and then we'll have a whole class discussion):

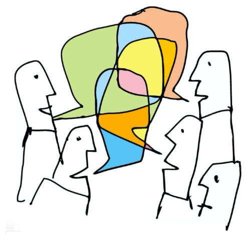


(1) Recall Fricker's Gordon Brown counterexample to Williamson's claim that knowledge is more valuable than true belief because more stable. Do you find it persuasive? Explain your answer.

(2) We saw Williamson's attempt to account for the added value of a 4^{th} "Gettier-proofing" condition on knowledge on behalf of the defender of No Defeaters. Can you think of parallel arguments for the value of satisfying alternative 4^{th} conditions (e.g. J-Infallibility, Sensitivity or Causation)?

Group discussion

In small groups (3-4) discuss the following questions (and then we'll have a whole class discussion):



(3) We have assumed that true belief is valuable because it promotes success in action. But what then should we make of "better safe than sorry" situations, where it seems that no harm can be done by erring on the side of caution (so that a false belief leaves you no worse off than a true one): Would it not be as good an idea to assume that wild mushrooms are always poisonous than simply to assume that they only sometimes are? And what about beliefs regarding matters that are of no obvious practical importance?

Next week

- Topic: Rational belief and practical interests - Pascal
- Required reading:
  - Pojman, L. & M. Rea 2008. *The Philosophy of Religion: an anthology (5th Edition)*. Thomson Wadsworth. Section VIIa 'The Pragmatic Justification of Religious Belief' (incl. selections from Pascal, Clifford and James), pp. 362–379.
- Recommended reading:
  - Chignell, A. 2016. The Ethics of Belief. In Edward N. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2016 Edition)*. (Available here)
  - Hajek, A. (2012). Pascal's Wager. In E.N. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2012 Edition)* (Available here)
  - Marusic, B. 2011. The Ethics of Belief. *Philosophy Compass* 6(1):, p. 33–43. Skip Section 2.
  - Pritchard, D. *WTK*, Ch. 5.