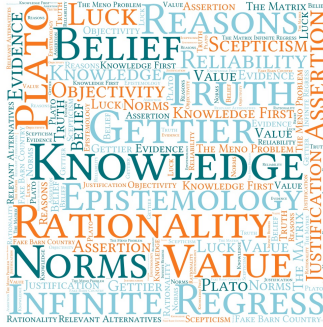




Knowledge, Individuals & Society

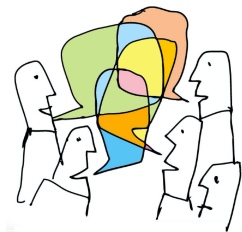
JAKE CHANDLER

Lecture 6 Wrap-up



Group discussion

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



- (1) If Clifford's judgments about his shipowner case are correct, does this case provide us with good reasons to accept the fully general principle stated by CLIFFORD'S RULE below?

CLIFFORD'S RULE: It is wrong always, everywhere and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.

If you think the rule is indeed too strong, could we weaken it in some way to make it more plausible?

This week

- Clifford vs James:
 - CLIFFORD'S RULE and the shipowner example
 - James' two injunctions and illustration of associated tradeoff
 - The charge that Clifford's position could be self-defeating
 - JAMES' META-RULE and associated worries
 - James on intellectual freedom
- Introducing scepticism:
 - Pyrrhonian vs academic scepticism and how they might relate
 - The argument from ignorance and 3 lines of response
 - The idea that any of these 3 lines will incur an explanatory debt: explaining why some claim seems false in spite of being true
 - An overview of a common way of paying that debt, by appealing to rules of good conversational practice (the WAM)

Group discussion (ctd)

- (2) Consider this passage from Clifford's "The Ethics of Belief" and answer the question that follows:

"Every time we let ourselves believe for unworthy reasons, we weaken our powers of self-control, of doubting, of judicially and fairly weighing evidence. We all suffer severely enough from the maintenance and support of false beliefs and the fatally wrong actions which they lead to, and the evil born when one such belief is entertained is great and wide. But a greater and wider evil arises when the credulous character is maintained and supported, when a habit of believing for unworthy reasons is fostered and made permanent...."

Do you agree with Clifford's claim that, every time we believe things for which we lack sufficient evidence, we "weaken our powers of self-control, of doubting, of judicially and fairly weighing evidence"? Explain why or why not.

Group discussion (ctd)

- (3) Do you agree that CLIFFORD'S RULE (see question (1)) is problematic because it violates principles of freedom of thought, as suggested by James in the following passage?

“No one of us ought to issue vetoes to the other, nor should we bandy words of abuse. We ought, on the contrary, delicately and profoundly to *respect one another's mental freedom*: then only shall we bring about the intellectual republic; then only shall we have that spirit of inner tolerance without which all our outer tolerance is soulless”

If so, why so? If not, why not?

Next week

- Topic: The limits of knowledge, Part II
- Required reading:
 - Pritchard, D. *WTK*, Ch. 13, final section titled ‘Contextualism’
- Recommended reading:
 - Cohen, S. & E. Conee 2013: Is Knowledge Contextual? In M. Steup, J. Turri and E. Sosa (eds) *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology, 2nd Edition*. Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 60–83.
 - DeRose, K. 1995: Solving the Skeptical Problem. *The Philosophical Review* 104(1), pp. 1–52.
 - DeRose, K. 1999: Contextualism: an explanation and defense. In J. Greco and E. Sosa, ed., *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*, Blackwell Publishers.

Next week (ctd)

- Recommended reading (ctd):
 - Dretske, F. & J. Hawthorne 2013: Is Knowledge Closed under Known Entailment? In M. Steup, J. Turri and E. Sosa (eds) *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology, 2nd Edition*. Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 27–59.
 - Rysiew, P. 2016: Epistemic Contextualism. In Edward N. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2016 Edition)*. Sections 1–4. (Available [here](#))