

Philosophy 101

Moore on Knowledge & Skepticism

December 11, 2014

Moore's Proof

Cartesian Skepticism

- ① If I do not know that I am not being radically deceived, then I cannot know that h (where h is some commonsensically true proposition concerning the physical world)
- ② I do not know that I am not being radically deceived
- ③ \therefore I do not know that h

Moore's Proof of the External World

- ① Here is a hand
- ② Here is another hand
- ③ \therefore At this moment, two human hands exist
- ④ \therefore I know an external world (a world outside my mind) exists

Extending Knowledge

- We can extend our knowledge by recognizing, and thereby accepting, things that follow deductively from our knowledge

Extending Knowledge

An Example

- ① I know that the walls of this room are blue
- ② I know that if the walls of this room are blue then the walls of this room are colored
- ③ \therefore I know that the walls of this room are colored

An Innocuous Assumption about Knowledge?

- Since we can always extend our knowledge by looking at what is entailed by what we know, we are always in a position to know whatever is entailed by what we know

Epistemic Closure

Closure Principle: Knowledge is "closed under entailment"—
If, while knowing p , S believes q because S knows
that p entails q , then S knows q

Closure and Skepticism

The Cartesian Argument

- ① If I know that here is a hand (h), then I know that I am not being radically deceived (by dreams, an evil demon, etc.)
- ② I don't know that I'm not radically deceived
- ③ \therefore I don't know h

- ① If A then B
- ② ~~B~~
- ③ \therefore ~~A~~

Closure and Skepticism

- ① If I know that here is a hand (h), then I know that I am not being radically deceived (by dreams, an evil demon, etc.)
- Premise (1) depends on the closure principle:
 - I know that here is a hand (h)
 - I know that $h \rightarrow$ I'm not radically deceived
 - \therefore I know I'm not radically deceived

Closure and Skepticism

- ① If I know that here is a hand (h), then I know that I am not being radically deceived (by dreams, an evil demon, etc.)
- ② I don't know that I'm not radically deceived
- ③ \therefore I don't know h

Closure and Skepticism

Moore's Argument

- ① If I know that here is a hand (h), then I know that I am not being radically deceived (by dreams, an evil demon, etc.)
- ② I know h
- ③ \therefore I know I'm not radically deceived

Moore vs. the Skeptic

- *Both* the skeptical argument and Moore's argument depend on closure
- Which is the more plausible second premise?
 - I don't know that I'm not radically deceived
 - I know that *h*

Closure and Skepticism

- If we endorse closure we seem forced to accept one of two conclusions:
 - ① we must be skeptics about our knowledge of h , since we admit we cannot know that we are not radically deceived
 - ② we know h , but then must also say that we know we are not radically deceived

Proving the Premises?

- The skeptic thinks that Moore's proof works only if he can also prove the premises of his argument
 - proof of the premises would amount to a general claim regarding how any propositions of the sort that figure in the argument could be proved

Knowledge without Proof?

I can know things, which I cannot prove; and among the things which I certainly did know, even if (as I think) I could not prove them, were the premises of my...proofs (3)

Knowledge without Proof?

- We typically think of knowledge claims as claims which are backed by the availability of proof
 - mathematical knowledge (mathematical proof)
 - empirical knowledge (an experience)
 - claims concerning responsibility & punishment (legal/moral proof)
- Denial that proof (or its availability) is necessary for knowledge seems to go against a fundamental feature of our epistemic practices

Can We Know the External World?

Two Options:

- ① Reject closure
- ② Accept closure & reject general requirement of proof for knowledge

Exam Review

Time & Place

- TEAC 105
- Monday, December 15th: 10am — 12pm
- <http://registrar.unl.edu/final-exam-information-fall>

Content

- Free will and determinism
 - connection between free will and responsibility
 - compatibilism vs. incompatibilism
 - PAP & Source requirement
 - Frankfurt cases
 - Strawson's 'basic argument' against free will

Content

- Mackie's error theory
 - ethics vs. meta-ethics
 - non-cognitivism
 - error theory
 - argument from disagreement
 - argument from 'queerness'

Content

- Camus & Nagel on absurdity of life
 - Camus' answer to absurdity
 - Nagel's criticisms of standard arguments for absurdity
 - Nagel's argument for the source of absurdity
 - Nagel's answer to absurdity

Content

- Cartesian skepticism
 - Descartes's quest for certainty
 - The method of doubt
 - three kinds of attitude towards a proposition (belief, disbelief/denial, agnosticism/suspension of judgment)
 - The three stages of doubt
 - sense perception, dreams, and the evil demon
 - The only thing of which one can be certain
 - knowledge of one's own existence – I think, therefore I am'
 - Problems with Descartes's argument
 - do we really know our own minds better than anything in the external world?

Format

- ① Argument extraction (2, 10 pts)
- ② Definitions (4, 3 pts)
- ③ Multiple choice (14, 2 pts)
- ④ Short essay (2, 20 pts)

Argument Extraction (Pick 2 of 3)

- ① What's the conclusion of the argument?
- ② What support does the conclusion have?
- ③ What material is essential to the argument and what is extraneous?
- ④ Is the argument valid?
 - if yes, why?
 - if no, why?
- ⑤ Is the argument sound?
 - if no, which premise (or premises) is false?

Definitions (Pick 4 of 5)

Determinism: For any state of the subject, that subject's states are necessitated by the condition of its previous states plus the laws of nature.

Internalism: objective values must be intrinsically motivating — knowledge of a moral requirement entails being motivated to follow that requirement

Multiple Choice (14 questions)

- Free will and determinism
- Mackie's error theory
- Camus & Nagel on absurdity of life
- Cartesian skepticism & Moore's Proof

Short Essay (Pick 2 of 3)

- Mackie's error theory
 - difference between ethics & meta-ethics
 - error theory
 - two arguments for the error theory