Topics in Analytic Philosophy

Skepticism

Crispin Wright (2002)

“(Anti-)Sceptics Simple and Subtle: G.E Moore and John McDowell”

Recent

Real

Raw

Challenging

Goal

Moore’s "proof" is not acceptable

Wright’s goal: Explain why

Further goal: show that skepticism looms...

Warrant

warranted belief

reasonable belief

rational belief

justified belief

Warranted belief

Belief based on good reasons

Warrant

Reasons that support a belief

Wright’s version of Moore’s argument

2 Here’s a hand.

3 There is an external world.

Wright's version of Moore's argument

2 Here's a hand.

3 There is an external world.

Assume: 3 follows from 2
Assume: know that 3 follows from 2

What’s wrong with Moore’s argument

2 Here’s a hand.

3 There is an external world.

You can’t gain warrant for 3 by reasoning from 2 to 3.

What’s wrong with Moore’s argument

2 Here’s a hand.

3 There is an external world.

You can’t gain good reasons for 3 by reasoning from 2 to 3.

What’s wrong with Moore’s argument

Moore’s argument does not transmit warrant from premise to conclusion.

A valid argument

2 There is an external world.

3 There is an external world.

A question begging argument

2 There is an external world.

3 There is an external world.

You can’t gain good reasons for 3 by reasoning from 2 to 3.

This argument does not transmit warrant.

Closure

If you know p, and
you know q follows from p, then
you know q.

Different kinds of closure

If you know p, and
you know q follows from p, then
you know q.

If you have warrant to believe p, and
you know q follows from p,
then you have warrant to believe q.

A valid argument

2 There is an external world.

3 There is an external world.

If you have warrant to believe 2, and
you know 3 follows from 2, then
you have warrant to believe 3.

Closure vs Transmission

If you have warrant to believe p, and you know q follows from p, then you have warrant to believe q. (Closure)

If you know q follows from p, then you can gain warrant for q by reasoning from p to q. (Transmission)

What’s wrong with Moore’s argument

2 Here’s a hand.

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You can’t gain warrant for 3 by reasoning from 2 to 3.

What’s wrong with Moore’s argument

2 Here’s a hand.

3 There is an external world.

You can’t gain warrant for 3 by reasoning from 2 to 3.

WHY?

1 I am having an experience as of a hand.

2 Here’s a hand.

3 There is an external world.

1 I am having an experience as of a hand.

2 Here’s a hand.

3 There is an external world.

1 doesn’t warrant 2, unless 1 already warrants 3.

So I can’t gain warrant for 3 by reasoning from 2 to 3.

A skeptical consequence

1 I am having an experience as of a hand.

2 Here's a hand.

3 There is an external world.

I can't gain warrant for 3 by reasoning from 2 to 3.

But any warrant for 2 comes from my experience.

Any warrant for 3 comes from reasoning from 2 (or something like 2).

So I can never gain warrant for 3!

Wright's answer

I have unearned warrant to believe that there is an external world.