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Skepticism and Relativism

Miller appears to confuse logic and intellectual authority and how Karl Popper resolved the problem of scientific knowledge with the critical search for errors. The assumption of philosophy is that, because the authority created by scientific arguments depends on deduction, the authority created in turn by such arguments must arise also from a parallel kind of deduction. Philosophers call this justification. But Popper showed that this is a false parallelism because the authority of scientific arguments is created by logic in regard to our pursuit of truth as a goal. Miller ignores this and so asserts rather than explains Popper's key insight that the rational authority of science comes from its search for errors.

This point about rational authority coming from goals rather than justifications may seem obtuse, but consider the case of aircraft safety. Here an intense process of error detection occurs based on logical and empirical argument, yet the authority created by such deductions about airworthiness does not link to any ultimate justification, as it comes entirely from the pursuit of safety as a goal. The same process in regard to truth backs the authority of science.

Popper once observed, "Here I am being showered with honours as no professional philosopher before me; yet three generations of professional philosophers know nothing about my work" ([1](#), p. 272). This statement is still true of those working in 1999.

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References.

1. W. W. Bartley III, in *In Pursuit of Truth*, P. Levinson, Ed. (Humanities Press. New York, 1982), pp. 249-289.