

# Socratic Ignorance, Skeptical-dogmatism, and Self-Refutation

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Presidential Address

In a famous passage in the *Apology*, Socrates tells the jury:

As a result, I became hateful to him and to many of those present; and so, as I went away, I thought to myself, “I am wiser than this man; for neither of us really knows anything fine and good, but this man thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas I, as I do not know anything, do not think I do either. I seem, then, in just this little thing to be wiser than this man at any rate, that what I do not know I do not think I know either.” (21d)<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere in the entire Platonic corpus does Socrates say “I know that I do not know,” still, it is hard not to feel a certain sympathy with commentators who worry that there is at least a tension lurking here.<sup>2</sup> The reason I mention Socrates is because my own thinking has backed me into a similar corner. I have argued for the thesis that philosophers are often wrong when they think they have justified belief about their preferred philosophical thesis. I call this position ‘skeptical-dogmatism.’ Unlike the ancient skeptics, skeptical-dogmatism does not recommend mere suspension of belief, it recommends that you disbelieve many philosophical theses. That is, for many philosophical disputes, you should believe your preferred position is probably wrong. The obvious problem—and parallel with Socrates—is that it seems I should think that skeptical-dogmatism is probably wrong. Extricating myself from this philosophical pickle is the goal of this paper.

Before we proceed in earnest, a couple of caveats. First, I won’t offer an interpretation of Socrates’ thinking—I leave the study of the ancients to those better qualified. I mention Socrates here merely to tip my hat. Second, I will not pretend to provide an adequate defense of skeptical-dogmatism here, although I

will briefly cover one argument for it. In doing so, my aim is merely to clarify the target, not to persuade you.

## I. AN ARGUMENT FOR SKEPTICAL-DOGMATISM

One argument for skeptical-dogmatism stems from disagreement. To illustrate, imagine a bookie offers even odds on four horses with the initials: JF, SC, LB, and UT. Four punters place bets of \$10,000 each on a different horse.<sup>3</sup> The punters meet daily to argue the virtues of their favorite nags. They also write books and hold conferences extolling the merits of their picks. One of the punters has a daughter anxious to follow in her father's footsteps. She pesters her father for years and eventually he relents. As a keen student, she attends their conferences and reads the voluminous literature produced by the punters in support of their favorites.

The apprentice is puzzled by their disagreement. One day she timidly asks whether it might be a much more rational strategy, given the odds, for the punters to pool their money and bet \$10,000 *against* each horse winning. This would mean that the bookie would take in \$40,000 and pay out \$60,000. The group would realize a tidy profit of \$20,000—\$5,000 for each punter. The punters gently laugh at the apprentice's naive but well-meaning suggestion. One says, "Why would I bet against JF? Clearly JF is superior to the others. I have summarized JF's virtues in a 13 volume set in the Oxbridge press. To bet against JF is a sure way to lose money." The other three punters say similar things about their horses to the dim but well-meaning apprentice. In the politest fashion, they extol (yet again) the virtues of their favorite nags: SC, LB, and UT, and point the apprentice to the equally voluminous literature supporting their views in equally prestigious presses.

The apprentice asks the longtime stable hand, Pyrrho, what he thinks. Pyrrho says that with horses, like with everything else, he suspends judgement. He thinks each horse is no more likely to win than not. One must never go beyond appearances. In fact, this is why Pyrrho took the job as a stable hand, even though he was warned by so many that it is a smelly job. For although it appears to Pyrrho that it is a smelly job, he suspends judgement about whether it is in fact a smelly job. Pyrrho finds a certain tranquility in finding it equally credible as not that it is a smelly job.

The apprentice points out that the punters disagreement is a multi-proposition dispute: a dispute where there are three or more incompatible views. Any punter who claims at least some minimal positive probability greater than 0.5 for his preferred nag winning must represent himself as an über epistemic superior: one who is more likely to determine the truth about some matter in a multi-proposition dispute than the combined probability of the other views. So, for example, imagine one punter believes with *seeming* epistemic humility that JF is only slightly more likely than not to win the race. In terms of credence, let's suppose that he has a

credence of 0.52 that JF will win. In which case, the punter must represent himself as an über epistemic superior to his colleagues. For assuming that he distributes the credence equally that one of his three colleagues is correct (0.16 for each colleague), it follows that he must represent himself as more than three times as likely to be right than his peers. The apprentice points out that the punters have no dispute-independent evidence that they are über epistemic superiors to their colleagues. After all, the horses in question are slightly magical: they live tens of thousands of years and take thousands of years to run a single race. No punter has ever lived long enough to develop a superior track record (as it were).

The parallel with philosophical disputes is perhaps (painfully) obvious. We can unpack the analogy with reference to three different positions as to whether we are justified in our philosophical beliefs. Let us think of ‘dogmatists’ as those who believe that their preferred philosophical position is true, or who at least “lean” towards their position: they believe their preferred position is more probable than not. As we shall understand the term, ‘skeptics’ suspend judgement about which philosophical position is correct. In the words of Sextus Empiricus, “...we neither deny nor affirm anything.”<sup>4</sup> Finally, as intimated above, skeptical-dogmatism about a multi-proposition dispute is the belief that each position is probably false.

Many contemporary philosophical disagreements are multi-proposition disputes. Take, for instance, the question of just distribution of goods in society. The question receives quite different answers by Rawls’ justice as fairness (JF), Cohen’s socialism (SC), Nozick’s libertarianism (LB), and Goodin’s utilitarianism as political philosophy (UT). The question of freedom of the will is answered in incompatible ways by the libertarian, the hard determinist, and the compatibilist. The question of the existence of divine entities has three well-known answers: atheism, theism, and polytheism. Realism, constructivism, and empiricism are three major positions in terms of the epistemic goal of science, etc. While we won’t explore the question of numbers here, there is at least some evidence that some major philosophical positions are held by a minority of living professional academic philosophers. For example, a recent survey suggests that the “big three” in normative ethics, consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics, are minority positions. Deontology had the most support in the survey with about 26% of respondents either “accepting” or “leaning towards” deontology.<sup>5</sup>

With respect to disagreements in multi-proposition disputes, philosophers face a stark choice.<sup>6</sup> If we are dogmatists about our positions, that is, if we wholeheartedly believe or even just barely lean towards a particular view in a multi-proposition disagreement, then we must represent ourselves as über epistemic superiors to our disagreeing colleagues. If we accept that it is inappropriate to represent ourselves as über epistemic superiors, and we reject skepticism, then we should be skeptical-dogmatists about the views under dispute. That is, we should think that each of the views, including our preferred position, in multi-proposition

disputes is probably wrong. Consequently, if you find it implausible to think that you are an über epistemic superior to your philosophical colleagues about such disputes, then you should side with the skeptical-dogmatist when it comes to multi-proposition disputes.

Notice that the previous argument does not depend on the controversial assumption that our colleagues are our epistemic peers: approximately equal in terms of their ability to ascertain the truth about some subject of disagreement.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the argument is consistent with the idea that we are epistemic superiors to our colleagues: X is an epistemic superior to Y if, and only if, X is more likely to determine the truth about some disputed matter  $\Delta$ , but not as likely to determine the truth as an über epistemic superior. In other words, the idea of an epistemic superior is one that occupies the midrange between that of epistemic peer and über epistemic superior. Suppose Rawls has a 0.4 credence that his justice as fairness is correct, while the opinions of his three colleagues are assigned 0.2 each. Even though Rawls represents himself as twice as likely to have discovered the truth about distributive justice than Nozick, Cohen, and Goodin, still he should represent himself as an epistemic superior, not an über epistemic superior. Notice that in this instance, even though he represents himself as an epistemic superior to each of his colleagues, Rawls is still a skeptical-dogmatist, since he represents his preferred position as probably false (along with the competitor views). It is worth emphasizing that I am not suggesting it is permissible to represent oneself as an epistemic superior; rather, the point is that for the sake of the argument, I will remain neutral on this question. If one believes that it is not permissible to represent oneself as an epistemic superior to one's disagreeing philosophical colleagues, then one has even *stronger* reasons to reject dogmatism in multi-proposition disputes.

## II. THE BIG BET AND EPISTEMIC HUBRIS

In this section, we shall look briefly at the alethic desideratum: we should aim for true philosophical beliefs. It may well be that some, perhaps many, philosophers disagree with this in deed, if not in word. It might be the case, for example, that one's professional goals are better served with a bit of epistemic bravado: hubristically representing one's beliefs as likely true to one's philosophical audience, while secretly admitting that one's views are probably false. Let us suppose the god of epistemology has confirmed that it would be professional suicide, or at least detrimental to one's career, if one publicly avows that one's preferred philosophical theory is probably false. Imagine Rawls, in an early draft, ended his *A Theory of Justice* with the remark, "Of course, this is just one view in a multi-proposition dispute with philosophical colleagues whom I do not consider to be my über epistemic inferiors, hence, I am probably wrong about justice as fairness." The god of epistemology whispered to Rawls that, although no truer

words have ever been spoken, ending his massive tome this way would be a serious professional mistake: *A Theory of Justice* would thereby fail to garner the attention and praise that it would otherwise. Thus in the final version, Rawls edited out this conclusion. A similar point about the professional usefulness of epistemic hubris, let us suppose, applies to other contenders in the debate over distributive justice mentioned above, namely: Nozick, Cohen, and Goodin.

But of course the god of epistemology has a cruel streak. He confronts our four heroes—Rawls, Nozick, Cohen, and Goodin—with the Big Bet. Each philosopher must bet the lives of a quarter of the world’s population either for or against his own theory. What should they do? The god of epistemology, not totally bereft of compassion, agrees to make things a little easier. He says that the four theories—(JF), (SC), (LB), and (UT)—are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive. He points out that the way to save everyone on the planet is for the author of the correct view to bet on his view, and for the other three to vote against their own views. Of course, since all four believe they have the correct view on distributive justice, this doesn’t help much. It is about as much help as the sage teacher’s advice to students hoping to do well on the final exam: just answer every question correctly. If they all bet on their own theory, then a quarter of the world’s population will survive. If they each bet against their own theory, three quarters of the world’s population will survive. Suppose you are brought in as a high-paid consultant. How would you advise each of the four to bet? It seems there is only one epistemically rational (and moral option): each should bet against his own theory.

The Big Bet throws into relief the idea of epistemic hubris. When the accuracy of our beliefs is of paramount importance, we should believe that our preferred positions are probably false. Yet in our workaday lives, we tend to be epistemically hubristic; we believe that our preferred positions are more probable than not. We either lean towards or accept our preferred positions. The survey of philosophical belief mentioned above strongly supports the idea that philosophers either accept or lean towards a large number of particular views in multi-proposition disputes.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps you think that belief in a philosophical position does not require thinking it is even likely true. Perhaps you think philosophical belief requires merely that philosophical beliefs are justified—or some analog of justification—that is not strongly connected with an alethic aim.<sup>9</sup> If you think that philosophical belief about some multi-proposition dispute  $\Delta$  should aim merely for justification in this sense, then say it loud and say it proud, “I believe my preferred philosophical theory P, and I believe that P is justified, and P is probably false.” For my part, I find this position offers little comfort, for it seems there is Moore to worry about in adopting this line.<sup>10</sup> In any event, this view is not an alternative to skeptical-dogmatism: it embraces it. And if philosophers generally embrace skeptical-dogmatism, then there is a lot less philosophical disagreement than one might expect, given the sound and fury that rages in philosophical journals. For in this scenario, philosophers generally agree that their preferred theories, as well as

that of their colleagues, are probably false. As a sociology of philosophical belief, this seems entirely implausible.

### III. THE NATURE OF THE PARADOX

As we noted above, skeptical-dogmatism is part of a multi-proposition dispute, since skeptical-dogmatism is one of at least three positions: dogmatism, skepticism, and skeptical-dogmatism. It seems then that skeptical-dogmatism is open to the objection that it is self-undermining. The following reductio version of the argument illustrates the point:

#### *Reductio Ad Absurdum of Skeptical-dogmatism*

1. Skeptical-dogmatism about philosophical theories is true. (Assumption for RAA.)
2. So, if X is a specific view in a multi-proposition philosophical dispute, then we should believe X is probably false. (From 1.)
3. Skeptical-dogmatism is a specific view in a multi-proposition philosophical dispute.
4. So, we should believe skeptical-dogmatism is probably false. (Modus ponens on 2 and 3.)

The choices for avoiding the paradox do not look particularly appealing. Proposition 2 follows from our understanding of skeptical-dogmatism. The reasoning for 3 also seems sound, since, as we noted above, skeptical-dogmatism has at least two competitors: skepticism and dogmatism. Finally, 4 follows from modus ponens on 2 and 3. So it looks like the paradox is devastating for skeptical-dogmatism.

### IV. EXCEPTIONALISM AS THE WAY OUT

Exceptionalism offers a means to escape the paradox. Exceptionalism draws a distinction between first-order debates, like the question of the correct view of distributive justice, and the second-order question about philosophical views about our capacity (or lack thereof) to ascertain the truth of first-order debates. Exceptionalism says that skeptical-dogmatism is justified with respect to many first-order multi-proposition disputes, whereas dogmatism is justified with respect to skeptical-dogmatism itself. So in effect, we have four positions on the table, which we may summarize as follows:

**D:** We are justified in believing, or at least leaning towards, particular theories about first-order multi-proposition disputes.

**SD:** We are justified in believing skeptical-dogmatism about first-order multi-proposition philosophical disputes (i.e., each first-order position is probably false).

**SDD:** We are justified in believing skeptical-dogmatism about first-order multi-proposition disputes (i.e., each first-order position is probably false), and we are justified in being dogmatists about SD.

**SDSD:** We are justified in believing skeptical-dogmatism about first-order disputes (i.e., each first-order position is probably false), and we are justified in being skeptical-dogmatists about SD.

So, both D and SD say something about the first-order level but are silent on the second-order question. SDD and SDSD take competing views about what is justified at the second-order, given SD at the first-order. So we can now more compactly restate the dialectic. The horse racing analogy suggests reasons to believe the philosophical position SD. But in thinking about SD itself, it seems we need to decide between SDSD, which our opponent alleges is self-refuting, and SDD (that is, Exceptionalism).

The main burden of much of the rest of the paper will be to defend the SDD view. The attractions of Exceptionalism (i.e., SDD) for proponents of skeptical-dogmatism are obvious. It permits one to maintain the view that we are probably wrong about the first-order debates while avoiding the seemingly embarrassing paradoxical consequences of SDSD. Assuming for the moment that SDD can be defended, its effectiveness for disarming the reductio are obvious, since it permits the following disambiguation:

- 1'. Skeptical-dogmatism about first-order philosophical theories is true.
- 2'. If X is a specific view in a first-order multi-proposition philosophical dispute, then we should believe X is probably false.
- 3'. Skeptical-dogmatism is a specific view in a second-order multi-proposition philosophical dispute.

And so disambiguated, the inconsistency suggested by the reductio is vanquished: 4 does not follow from 2' and 3'.

## V. THE EVIDENTIAL SPECIAL PLEADING

Let us concede, at least for the sake of the argument, that SDSD is self-undermining. Our opposition then needs to show that a commitment to SD requires a commitment to SDSD. The most obvious route would be if SD implied SDSD, but this does not look like a promising avenue. After all, even given SD, SDD looks to be at least a logically possible alternative, even if it is not plausible. The

fact that SDSD implies SD is of no help—at least so long as affirming the consequent is still an epistemological sin.

The most promising line seems to be for the opposition to claim that SDD is evidential special pleading. The thought is that if we are to treat like-cases consistently, then something like the following disagreement-as-evidence principle is at work in the disagreement argument for skeptical-dogmatism:

**DEP\*:** If epistemically reasonable philosophers disagree about some multi-proposition dispute  $\Delta$ , then we should take the dispute as evidence that each view is probably false.

DEP\* in conjunction with the fact that philosophers disagree about whether dogmatism, skepticism, or skeptical-dogmatism is the correct response to disagreement about first-order multi-proposition disputes provides us with reason to believe that skeptical-dogmatists ought to accept SDSD. Since SDSD is self-undermining, we have a powerful consistency case against skeptical-dogmatism. For opponents of skeptical-dogmatism, this opens up the tantalizing possibility of dismissing the sorts of worries canvassed in the punting and the Big Bet analogies.

#### IV. DEFEATERS AND DEFEATER DEFEATERS

The problem with this line of reasoning is that DEP\* is not plausible. Rather, the disagreement-as-evidence principle should be reformulated along these lines:

**DEP:** If epistemically reasonable philosophers disagree about some multi-proposition dispute  $\Delta$ , then, other things being equal, we should take the dispute as evidence that each view is probably false.

The reason is very general: We may think of DEP\* as describing how disagreement defeats justified belief that P. But defeaters can sometimes be defeated themselves. DEP\* does not allow this possibility, whereas DEP does.

Ironically, it seems that the objector's own reasoning can be turned back on itself. It seems that a good reason to reject the application of DEP to the disagreement about skeptical-dogmatism is that it would lead to thinking that skeptical-dogmatism is probably false. In other words, suppose we find the reasoning for SD to be plausible: it provides us good evidence as to what to believe at the first-order level, namely: SD. In trying to decide between SDSD and SDD, we find that there is a major epistemic difference between the two: the one is self-undermining while the other is not. It seems that we then have a strong reason to suppose that we should not endorse SDSD, which leaves SDD.

Now it may be thought that this line of reasoning begs the question against our opponent; however, an analogy might help us to see that this is not the case.



Suppose Pinocchio's nose grows a centimeter just before he lies. We have lots of evidence for this and so we have reason to believe the nose as evidence principle:

**NEP:** If Pinocchio's nose grows a centimeter, then, other things being equal, we should take this as evidence that Pinocchio is about to lie.

We ask Pinocchio whether he always lies. His nose gets longer just before he answers, "Yes, even this sentence is false." But the liar paradox suggests that NEP must be misleading in this case, since NEP is defeated by the fact that if it is true that Pinocchio is lying, then what he says is true (but if it is true, then it must be false). Let me hasten to add that I'm not suggesting that the self-undermining objection against skeptical-dogmatism is a version of the liar paradox. Rather, the point I want to make with this analogy is that there are at least two different things we might think about NEP in this case. The first is that we must reject it *completely*, since NEP does not universalize: NEP is misleading when Pinocchio utters some version of the liar's paradox. Another possibility is to think that we should still *generally* rely on NEP, but understand that it is not reliable when we ask Pinocchio about second-order self-referential cases like the liar's paradox.

By parallel reasoning, if we land in trouble universalizing DEP, then there appears to be at least two options: either we abandon DEP altogether, or we acknowledge that DEP has limitations. The objector has provided no reason to suppose that the former is the only rational option. We may insist on this point even if we concede that other things being equal, it is good that our epistemic principles have universal application.

To summarize, the dialectical situation is this: Let us grant that if DEP is applied universally, then it will show that skeptical-dogmatism based on DEP is self-undermining. The question resolves to whether DEP should be applied universally. Even granting that there may be a general presumption that we should apply our epistemic principles universally, this is not rationally required in all cases (as NEP illustrates). What our opponent lacks is an argument that we ought to apply DEP universally, given that we allege that it will result in a significant epistemic cost, namely, what DEP reveals about the epistemic rationality of first-order debates. But admittedly, we have not shown that adopting a non-universal form of DEP is worth the epistemic cost of giving up the presumption to apply epistemic rules universally. We've reached a standoff.

## VII. PLANET WASTEID: THE SELF-UNDERMINING OBJECTION IS INSENSITIVE TO TRUTH

The standoff can be resolved when we take into account another desiderata: where possible, our epistemic principles should increase the likelihood that we will arrive at the truth. Accordingly, I shall argue that if we insist on rejecting DEP because

when universalized it leads to SDSA, then we may have to sacrifice truth along the way. In other words, when concentrating on the truth goal, we may have reason to accept that DEP in a non-universal form may be true.

Imagine we take the starship Philosophy to a nearby planet, Planet Wasteoid. Its denizens, the Drunkards, drink heavily every day but one, every year. (Even our undergraduates would have trouble keeping up.) In their drunken stupor they disagree incessantly about multi-proposition disputes. Their inebriated condition means that they labor under severe epistemic limitations. As we listen in on their philosophical disagreements, we are appalled at their reasoning; it is a festival of logical fallacies. It is apparent to the earth delegations that if the Drunkards do somehow light upon some philosophical truth, it is best explained by pure luck rather than the reliability of their skills. The consensus of the philosophical party from Earth is that skeptical-dogmatism applies to the denizens of Planet Wasteoid: each of their first-order philosophical positions is probably false.

On Sober Day, the one day a year everyone stops drinking for twenty-four hours, one of the Drunkard philosophers, Curly, turns to his philosophical colleagues, Larry and Moe, and says that he believes that skeptical-dogmatism is true of the philosophical theorizing of Drunkards: there is incessant disagreement amongst the Drunkards, and no Drunkard is in a position to represent himself as an über epistemic superior. Larry disagrees, claiming that they should suspend judgment about which is the correct philosophical position. Moe believes that he is correct about his first-order position and says that it would be wrong to reduce his confidence given that the others are clearly wrong. Larry and Moe argue that Curly's position is self-undermining for reasons which are familiar by now.

Question: What should the philosophers from Earth think about this? Suppose they grant, for the sake of the argument, that Curly's view is self-undermining. Still, it seems a rash conclusion that the Earthlings should reject skeptical-dogmatism about the Drunkard's philosophical abilities with respect to first-order disagreements. In fact, I submit that what this example shows is that, at least sometimes, the question of whether some position P is self-undermining, and whether P is true, are orthogonal. Take a parallel case: It might be self-undermining for a Cretan to claim that Cretans lie 95% of the time. Nevertheless, it still may be true that Cretans lie 95% of the time. And in fact, if we are investigating whether Cretans lie 95% of the time, the fact that a Cretan says that Cretans lie 95% of the time offers little evidence one way or another as to whether Cretans lie 95% of the time. By parallel reasoning, if we are to understand the charge that skeptical-dogmatism is self-undermining and this somehow reflects on the truth of skeptical-dogmatism at the first-order, then it must be the case that there is an assumption about some strong connection between the claim that skeptical-dogmatism is self-undermining and the truth of skeptical-dogmatism. But no argument is given for this assumption. In fact, the Drunkards show at least one instance where this assumption is false: we have good reason to suppose that skeptical-dogmatism is

true of the first-order disputes of the Drunkards, even if we concede that Curly's view is self-undermining. In other words, if our goal is to establish whether skeptical-dogmatism is true or not, and we take the self-undermining objection to show that skeptical-dogmatism is false, then clearly we would have been led astray. Such reasoning would falsely tell us that skeptical-dogmatism is false on planet Drunkard, when skeptical-dogmatism is in fact true.

The Drunkards example doesn't, of course, show that skeptical-dogmatism is true on Earth. What it shows is that it is a hasty conclusion to go from the claim that skeptical-dogmatism is self-undermining at the second-order level, to the claim that skeptical-dogmatism is not true at the first-order level.

It may be thought that there is a major disanalogy between the Drunkards and humans: namely: we have reasons independent of their disagreement to suppose that Drunkards have poor reasoning skills. While it is true that at least some Earth philosophers are not as drunk as the Drunkards, there is still an analogy with the reasoning impairment of Earth philosophers, namely, many Earth philosophers are drunk with epistemic hubris. Now one may disagree with the claim about epistemic hubris, but that is entirely a different issue from whether the analogy is faulty.

### VIII. WHAT MAKES YOU SO WISE AND VIRTUOUS?

Suppose my opponents (grudgingly) admit the possibility of Exceptionalism when it comes to *epistemic principles*. Still, they may regroup and argue that Exceptionalism is far less palatable when we think of how it plays out in terms of *epistemic virtues and vices*. Consider that part of the brief for SD about first-order debates using DEP is that it is implausible to assume that one is an über epistemic superior to one's colleagues in these debates. The imputation of this argument, so our opponents might maintain, is that it is an epistemic vice to represent oneself as an über epistemic superior. But then the same point seems to apply with equal force in the case of second-order debates. It seems equally epistemically vicious to represent oneself as an über epistemic superior at the second-order. This line of thought might be summarized as follows:

**P1:** If it is correct to represent ourselves as dogmatists about SD, then we must represent ourselves as über epistemic superiors (to dogmatists and skeptics who reject SD).

**P2:** It is always wrong to represent ourselves as über epistemic superiors to philosophical colleagues.

**C:** It is wrong to represent ourselves as dogmatists about SD.

In terms of virtues and vices, the initial impetus for skeptical-dogmatism is a type of epistemic humility: the realization that we are not über epistemic superiors. Indeed, the horse racing and Big Bet examples are suggestive of the idea that

philosophers suffer from epistemic hubris: an excessive confidence in their abilities to determine the truth. But in endorsing SDD, we must represent ourselves as über epistemic superiors, and so it seems that by my own reasoning I should describe myself as suffering from epistemic hubris. So the objection is that whatever we might think of the idea of self-exempting epistemic *principles*, it is quite another to think that *persons* are self-exempt from the very same epistemic criticism they level at others. In other words, if it is an epistemic vice to represent oneself as an über epistemic superior at the first-order, then it seems as much of a character flaw at the second-order.

### IX. 'ALWAYS' VS. 'AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE'

I hope to show that P2 is too strong for present purposes. To see why, consider these sentences:

**CD1:** Canadians always lie (when communicating).

**CD2:** Canadians lie as much as possible (when communicating).

Let us concede, at least for the sake of the argument, that CD1 implies CD2. However, CD2 does not imply CD1 (putting aside paradoxes of implication). As a Canadian, I am tangled in a paradox uttering CD1, but not in uttering CD2.

Suppose you have a pill that will force one truth (and no falsehood) out of anyone who ingests it. You have always suspected that Canadians are habitual liars, so, because you are an American, you force me at gun point to take the pill in order to investigate your hunch. Which of these two questions should you ask to investigate your suspicion?

**Q1:** Do Canadians always lie (when communicating)?

**Q2:** Do Canadians lie as much as possible (when communicating)?

Suppose the following is true. If you ask me Q1, then I will answer “no”, for otherwise, I would utter a falsehood (and a truth). But this doesn't really help much. Since it may still be the case that Canadians are chronic liars, it is simply that it is not possible to lie (and not tell the truth also) in answering this question. It says little about the virtues of Canadians when they tell the truth (and no falsehood) when it is not possible to lie. On the other hand, either a “yes” or “no” answer to Q2 is much more revelatory. It will say something about the moral character of Canadians. Thus in general, when investigating moral character, we are better off avoiding questions that involve the logically impossible. Q2 is a much better question to ask than Q1.

Similarly, I want to argue that P2 is less instructive than P2\*:

**P2\*:** One should, as much as possible when philosophizing, avoid representing oneself as an über epistemic superior to one's philosophical colleagues (while rejecting epistemic nihilism).

I'll explain P2\* more in the following two sections, but the basic strategy will be to argue that skeptical-dogmatism better satisfies P2\*, in comparison with dogmatism and skepticism.

## X. DOGMATISM AND EPISTEMIC HUBRIS

In terms of the first-order debates, it is clear that the skeptical-dogmatist does not need to represent herself as an über epistemic superior, while the dogmatist must represent herself as an über epistemic superior. The punter analogy illustrates this: the four punters are confident that they are correct in their picks, while the skeptical-dogmatist apprentice declines to say which horse will win. In terms of virtues and vices, the skeptical-dogmatist's claim is that punters suffer from epistemic hubris: they have excessive confidence about their abilities to ascertain the fastest horse.

When we move to the second-order, it seems that both the skeptical-dogmatist (who endorses SDD) is equally epistemically hubristic as the dogmatist who endorses dogmatism at both levels (let us refer to this position as 'DD'). That is, the SDD theorist holds that she is correct about SD, while the DD theorist holds that she is correct about D. So, when thinking about the difference between first and second-order debates, it is clear that dogmatists must represent themselves as über epistemic superiors far more often than skeptical-dogmatists.

In fact, when we consider the number of first-order debates that philosophers weigh in on, we can see that dogmatists represent themselves as über epistemic superiors across a wide number of disagreements. As noted above, if a recent survey is anywhere near the mark, it seems that most philosophers lean to or accept a wide number of positions across a wide number of multi-proposition disputes.<sup>11</sup> So whether we count how often one represents oneself as an über epistemic superior in terms of first and second-order disputes, or simply the sheer number of disputes, SDD requires one to represent oneself as an über epistemic superior far less often.

## XI. SKEPTICISM AND EPISTEMIC NIHILISM

I have made the case that skeptical-dogmatism avoids epistemic hubris to a greater degree than dogmatism. Still, it seems that if the desideratum is to avoid epistemic hubris, then Pyrrhonian skepticism should strike us as a more appealing option. Given space limitations, I will need to be rather quick and heavy-handed with the Pyrrhonians—as much as I admire them.

Let's start with Sextus' general description about suspension of judgement about first-order disputes:

The Skeptic Way is a disposition to oppose phenomena and noumena to one another in any way whatever, with the result that, owing to the equipollence among the things and statements thus opposed, we are brought first to epoché and then to ataraxia...By "opposed" statements we simply mean inconsistent ones, not necessarily affirmative and negative. By "equipollence" we mean equality as regards credibility and the lack of it, that is, that no one of the inconsistent statements takes precedence over any other as being more credible. Epoché is a state of the intellect on account of which we neither deny nor affirm anything. Ataraxia is an untroubled and tranquil condition of the soul.<sup>12</sup>

In practice, the Pyrrhonians might deploy the skeptic way by opposing one philosophical theory (or aspect thereof) with another. Against Stoic ethical arguments, Pyrrhonians might point out that the Peripatetic school makes an incompatible but equally compelling claim, so the Pyrrhonians might claim that we ought to suspend judgment about the dispute.

This way of describing the Skeptic Way, which, as we shall see in a moment, is not without controversy, seems to rely on something like the underdetermination principle:

**UP:** If H1 and H2 are incompatible competitor hypotheses, and we do not have reasons or evidence that favor H1 over H2, then we are not justified in believing H1.

The problem for the Pyrrhonians is perhaps apparent: Epoché is the state of the intellect where one neither denies nor affirms anything, but this seems to include UP itself. But if one neither affirms nor denies UP, then it is hard to see how equipollence will lead to epoché, since the principle seems necessary for this process.

Two general approaches to this problem, with a number of variants of each, have developed.<sup>13</sup> The normative account accepts that skeptical arguments have normative force: if we are epistemically rational, then we must yield to their conclusion. To the problem of whether this entails that we are rationally required to suspend judgment over UP, some sort of self-exemption strategy is endorsed. The problem with this approach, in terms of avoiding epistemic hubris, is that it does not offer any advantage over skeptical-dogmatism. Whereas the skeptical-dogmatist says that we should believe that each first-order multi-proposition dispute is probably false, the skeptic says we ought to suspend judgment about

each position. So the Pyrrhonian skeptic must represent herself as an über epistemic superior to both the dogmatist and the skeptical-dogmatist on this score.

The causal or psychological interpretation says that the skeptic does not dogmatically endorse anything like UP, but rather, the skeptic simply finds herself suspending judgment. Skepticism is a psychological disposition. The idea of equipollence is interpreted as a practice: skeptics follow the practice of equipollence and as a result, find themselves in the states of epoché and ataraxia. The psychological interpretation, for our purposes, is the more interesting interpretation, as it seems to avoid the problem of representing oneself as an über epistemic superior to one's colleagues. For now, the skeptic is not claiming that one *ought to* suspend judgment, rather, skeptics are merely reporting that they find themselves suspending judgement. By eliminating from their thinking any normative element about what one epistemically ought to do in the face of competing claims, the psychological account seems to have the advantage of purging the skeptics of any residual epistemic hubris.

Whether this psychological interpretation is the correct way to understand the ancient Pyrrhonians is something I leave to others more qualified. Unsurprisingly, I have no argument with any normative force that can break the committed Pyrrhonian who adopts the psychological interpretation, since the psychological interpretation does not accept any normative principles. Still, if I work in the spirit of the psychological interpretation, then I must report that I find that the doctrine of equipollence does not move me to epoché. For it seems to me that such a psychological movement resulting in epoché depends on a systematic equivocation. From the fact that two opposing statements are equal in terms of their credibility or lack thereof, it does not follow that each statement is as likely true as it is false. This would be to equivocate between the credibility of the two statements in comparison with each other, and the credibility of the two statements within the entire space of probability. A simple example: it is equally credible as not that a die will land either '1' or '2', but it does not follow that it is equally credible that a die will land '1' or it will not land '1'. With three or more contraries, where at least two are equal in credibility and the third has some non-zero credibility, it seems to me that each is probably false. Sextus happily says that epoché will result when we compare contraries, not just contradictories.<sup>14</sup> But unless he attributes zero probability to the remaining logical space not occupied by the two contraries, elementary probability theory suggests that we should lean against both contraries when we think they are equally likely. So I can't follow the skeptics down the path to epoché, since with multi-proposition disputes, I find myself thinking that each is probably false, rather than suspending judgment about all three.

Similarly, I find myself unable to endorse the normative nihilism of the psychological interpretation. I tend to think that normative epistemological questions are extremely difficult. I tend to think that we are hampered in our quest

for the truth about these principles by a tendency to embrace epistemic hubris too quickly. But for all that, I do not find myself tempted by normative nihilism. My plea for modesty is not to be confused with plea or practice of giving up on normativity.

I have put this in a first-person psychological description not as a means to construct an ad hominem attack on psychological Pyrrhonism, but out of deference. Any attempt at dislodging the psychological Pyrrhonian using normative principles will be question-begging, or at least dialectically ineffective. Out of deference, I have described why I do not find myself following the same path.

To summarize, if we accept the normative account of Pyrrhonism, then we have not found an epistemically more modest position than skeptical-dogmatism. The psychological interpretation is potentially more epistemically modest, but it comes with a high price: normative nihilism.

## **XII. NOT JUST ANOTHER DISAGREEMENT AND THE SUPER BIG BET**

To summarize the dialectic thus far: to me, what recommends Exceptionalism as the most promising means to avoid the self-undermining argument, is simply that Exceptionalism is the least bad option. Yes, it requires us to employ non-universal forms of our epistemic principles, and yes, it requires us to represent ourselves as über epistemic superiors to our colleagues at the second-order. But as bad as these costs are, Exceptionalism is still better than dogmatism and skepticism. This is not exactly a ringing endorsement of Exceptionalism, but, as is so often the case, what recommends a philosophical position is simply that it is the least bad choice.

But I believe we can do better. Thus far I've been playing rope-a-dope: it is now time to be offensive. I hope to show that two systemic equivocations pervade the self-undermining objection, which, when noted, render it impotent.

The first equivocation has to do with the question of whether the second-order debate should be treated as just another disagreement, or whether there is something special about the second-order disagreement. The objection under consideration, that it is arbitrary to endorse skeptical-dogmatism at the first-order but not at the second-order, must elide between these two interpretations.

To illuminate the problem, consider the New Big Bet challenge to the skeptical-dogmatist: "Shouldn't you bet against skeptical-dogmatism?" The reasoning provided above in the Big Bet seems to dictate that the skeptical-dogmatist should bet against skeptical-dogmatism. The refusal to take the New Big Bet seems arbitrary.

To respond to the New Big Bet challenge, we need to disambiguate exactly what the second-order question is. Suppose we ask the second-order question in the same way as we might ask a first-order question. For example, we might phrase one first-order debate as: "Should we be consequentialists, deontologists, or virtue



ethicists?” If we phrase the second-order question in a manner that is completely independent of the *content* of our epistemic views about the first-order debate, we might ask:

**Q1:** Should we be dogmatists, skeptics, or skeptical-dogmatists about our epistemic views about first-order disagreements?

This seems analogous to the first-order question. However, as we noted above, the dogmatists, normative skeptics, and skeptical-dogmatists agree that we should be dogmatists at the second level. (The psychological interpretation of skepticism, it seems, neither agrees nor disagrees about what *ought* to be done.) But then the New Big Bet does not work in this case, since the consensus of the wise is that we should be dogmatists at the second level. Where there is agreement, the disagreement argument for skeptical-dogmatism does not apply. Hence, it is perfectly consistent—not arbitrary at all—to endorse dogmatism when one of the conditions for the disagreement argument—that there is in fact disagreement—is missing.

It seems the only way to preserve the analogy with first-order disagreements is to build more content into the second-order question. The question needs to mention both the position at the second-order (dogmatism) and the disagreement about the correct epistemological position at the first-order (dogmatism, skepticism, or skeptical-dogmatism). (The view that we should be normative skeptics at the first-order, and dogmatists at the second-order, we may refer to as ‘SKD.’) Thus, the question is:

**Q2:** Should we bet on DD, SDD, or SKD?

But once we build in this much of the first-order content, it quickly becomes evident that we have failed to arrive at a suitable analog of the first-order question. The trouble is that the second-order dispute is not logically independent of the first-order dispute. We can illustrate this with the Super Big Bet, which works like this: The god of epistemology provides each player a stake of 4 billion people. And as before, the god guarantees that the views are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive. At most, one can bet 1 billion lives on any individual column. The best outcome is to save all (roughly) 8 billion people on the planet. The table below illustrates the Super Big Bet. The choices for each column are to abstain, bet for a particular view, or bet against each view.

*The Super Big Bet*

<i>Column 1</i>	<i>Column 2</i>	<i>Column 3</i>	<i>Column 4</i>
<i>First-order Normative Ethics Dispute</i>	<i>First-order Distributive Justice Dispute</i>	<i>First-order Religion Dispute</i>	<i>Second-order Dispute</i>
A1: Consequentialism	A2: Utilitarianism	A3: Monotheism	A4: DD
B1: Deontology	B2: Libertarianism	B3: Atheism	B4: SKD
C1: Virtue Ethics	C2: Justice as Fairness	C3: Polytheism	C4: SDD

We can now restate the challenge at the second-order to the skeptical-dogmatist: “Wouldn’t it be arbitrary for the skeptical-dogmatist to not bet against SDD in the fourth column?” It might seem like the skeptical-dogmatist must agree, but in fact this is the wrong answer, for the second-order disagreement, in effect, encompasses the bets at the first-order. We can see this by assuming (for the purposes of *reductio ad absurdum*) that it is correct to bet against SDD. This means that logical consistency requires us to accept the recommendations of DD or SKD for the first three columns. Let us see what these payoffs are.

If we equate the skeptic’s view with abstaining—believing there is no more reason to bet for or against—then the skeptic winds up with no more and no less than the original stake for these three columns, namely, three billion. Assume that dogmatists are evenly distributed over each of the rows of first-order debates, e.g., that there are as many dogmatists about consequentialism as there are about virtue ethics and deontology. Dogmatists, since they believe their preferred view is more likely than not, will bet on each of their preferred views. Thus, each will bet one billion persons over the three disputes. On average, they will lose twice and win once. So overall, dogmatists will do worse than skeptics: they will end up down one billion people with only two billion remaining of their original three billion stake.

To complete the reasoning here, we need to see how skeptical-dogmatists will fare over the first three columns. Skeptical-dogmatists should bet 1/3 of a billion against each of the nine cells in the first three columns. The skeptical-dogmatist will win twice and lose once in each column, resulting in gaining 1/3 of a billion people in each column. Thus, over the first three columns, the skeptical dogmatist will be up a billion, equal to four billion lives saved. If the goal is to save as many lives as possible (and by analogy, truth), then skeptical-dogmatism is the most rational option over the first three columns (for those who should not represent themselves as *über* epistemic superiors).

So we are now in a position to reject the assumption that it would be rational to bet against SDD in the fourth column. The reason is that consistency would require us to adopt either dogmatism or skepticism within first-order disputes in

the first three columns, and these are suboptimal strategies when it comes to the first three columns.

Thus the response to the challenge that skeptical-dogmatists should bet against skeptical-dogmatism might be summarized by way of dilemma. Either the question is formulated as independent of the first-order content (as Q1 above), in which case there is no disagreement, or the question is formulated in a manner that is not logically independent of the content of the first-order disagreements (as Q2 above). In which case, consistency with the rational decision at the first-order dictates betting on SDD in the fourth column. It is only by equivocating between an understanding of the second-order question as being both logically independent and not logically independent of the first-order disagreements that the objection appears to have any force. Thus it is not arbitrary to refuse to bet against SDD, because the disagreement about SDD is significantly different from the usual first-order disputes.

But then it may be objected: “You have simply shown your reasoning for being a dogmatist at the second-order. Why can’t this same strategy be used at the first-order to defend dogmatism? All that dogmatists need to do is lay out their reasoning for the first-order disputes and the parallel is complete.” I can’t discuss this line of objection here in detail. Let me just note that this seems to assume that epistemic resources necessary to underwrite dogmatism in both cases are the same. However, this will have to be argued for—it is certainly not a plausible general rule. Consider our young apprentice. Her recipe for skeptical-dogmatism involves a couple of ingredients that the punters seem to lack: epistemic humility and a dash of very elementary probability theory. Presumably, to justify dogmatism about a particular horse winning the race would require different epistemic resources, e.g., detailed knowledge about the fitness of the horse, the type of track the race is to be run on, who will be the jockey and trainer, etc. In making her case, the apprentice does not appeal to have detailed knowledge about any of these matters. Similarly, dogmatists about first-order philosophical disputes must assume they have greater epistemic resources than dogmatism about skeptical-dogmatism at the second-order. To put it somewhat metaphorically, skeptical-dogmatism is destructive; dogmatism is constructive. And, in general, it is easier to destroy than create.

### **XIII. DISAGREEING WITH THE UNREASONABLE**

The second equivocation turns on the question of the reasonableness of my colleagues. You won’t be surprised that I use an analogy to set the stage. Suppose I go mountain climbing with three friends. On the descent, we return to an open meadow that we agree is about halfway down the mountain. There are four paths going in different directions from the meadow—a point we hadn’t noticed on the way up in our enthusiasm to reach the summit. Each of us is initially confident that a different path is the one we took on our ascent, and therefore the way back to

basecamp. On hearing the disagreement, I suggest that we accept that each of us is probably wrong: we have overestimated our epistemic abilities when it comes to judging direction. No one in our group has a track record or other evidence that distinguishes him or her from the others as an über epistemic superior in terms of a sense of direction.

My reasoning, let us suppose, is based on a climber's analog of DEP:

**DEP\*\*:** If epistemically reasonable climbers disagree about some multi-proposition dispute  $\Delta$ , then, other things being equal, we should take the dispute as evidence that each view is probably false.

Of course the analogy is much like our earlier ones, except that this time a diachronic element is at the forefront: our disagreement is recently revealed. We can imagine the revelation plays out in two different ways. In one ending to the story, my friends internalize the lesson that we were initially overly optimistic about our epistemic abilities to determine the correct path, and they agree that each path is probably the wrong way to go—and then devise a plan consistent with this epistemic humility. At this point, DEP\*\* no longer applies since we all agree about the right doxastic attitude to the question of which is the correct path. I retain the idea that my comrades are reasonable, but now there is no dispute.

In the second version, two of my climbing companions ignore my plea for epistemic modesty and continue to insist that they are more likely than not right about the correct path. The third (hindered by elementary errors in probability theory brought on by the methane fumes from horse dung) suggests that it is as credible as not that each of the four paths is the correct path. All three argue that my own position dictates that I should accept that DEP\*\* is probably false, since they disagree with DEP\*\*. They charge me with endorsing a self-undermining position.

Notice, however, an absolutely critical point in their charge: the assumption that my position dictates that I am still required to accept that they are epistemically reasonable. However, if DEP\*\* is true, then I have reason to think that they are not epistemically reasonable: they do not think that each of their views about the correct direction home is probably false. Since they do not accept this consequence, I have reason (assuming DEP\*\* is true) to reject the idea that the antecedent of DEP\*\* is satisfied in this instance. That is, to reject the idea that my climbing colleagues are epistemically reasonable. But if my colleagues are not reasonable, then the fact that they disagree with me about DEP\*\* does not in itself show that I should think that DEP\*\* is probably false. So in either ending to the story there is reason to reject the idea that DEP\*\* is self-undermining, since in either case, the antecedent is not satisfied.

Of course, by analogy, the suggestion is that the fact that my epistemically unreasonable philosophical colleagues disagree with me about DEP does not show

that I should think that DEP is probably false. For again, the antecedent is not satisfied: if DEP is true, then philosophers who continue to insist they are probably correct about multi-proposition disputes are not epistemically reasonable. The dialectic is harder to see here because often the diachronic element is missing: it is not like we do philosophy for a long time and then all of a sudden discover as we hand in our doctoral dissertation that philosophy is rife with disagreement. Still, we can imagine individual cases. Suppose I meet a philosopher for the first time at the New Mexico Texas 2018 conference. If I find out he has strong beliefs in favor of certain views in multi-proposition disputes—e.g., he thumps his chest as he pronounces in favor of atheism, hard determinism, political libertarianism, deontology, etc., and he claims to be an über epistemic superior to all those with whom he disagrees—then I have reason (according to DEP) to reject the idea that my new acquaintance is epistemically reasonable (in some respects, at least).

So the dialectical terrain is something like the following: I find that systematic disagreement among dogmatists about first-order multi-proposition disputes reveals that dogmatists are epistemically hubristic about the extent of their epistemic prowess. As a result, I find them epistemically unreasonable—on this point, at least. So the fact that dogmatists (and normative skeptics) disagree with me about DEP is no indication that DEP is self-undermining.

Another way to see the point here is to suppose DEP is formulated without the qualifier of ‘reasonable,’ for example, something along these lines:

**DEP\*\*\*:** If philosophers disagree about some multi-proposition dispute  $\Delta$ , then, other things being equal, we should take the dispute as evidence that each view is probably false.

Something like DEP\*\*\* would make the case that skeptical-dogmatism relies on a self-undermining principle much stronger, for then my disagreeing colleagues would provide considerable evidential weight against skeptical-dogmatism. But this is not my position.

It should be clear that any characterization of ‘reasonable’—not just DEP—is going to have this potential effect of dividing actual (and possible) philosophers into the reasonable and the unreasonable. If you think some sort of consistency constraint is part of what constitutes the notion of reasonable, and Graham Priest offers you an inconsistent proof that inconsistency is reasonable, you will be forced to say that he is unreasonable. If you think a constraint on what counts as reasonable is that you should not argue in a circle, then you may have reason to denounce Hegel as unreasonable when he champions the “circle of circles.”<sup>15</sup>

It may be remarked that this simply pushes the dialectic one step back, because now the issue will be whether my characterization of what is epistemically unreasonable may be questioned. I accept this: this is where the dialectical action should concentrate. If I am wrong about what is epistemically unreasonable, then

the argument as stated fails. In which case, the argument of my opponents that my argument is self-undermining becomes otiose. And if I am right about a condition for epistemic reasonableness, then I am right not to apply DEP to those colleagues who violate this norm.

#### XIV. SOCRATIC WISDOM

The parallel with Socrates can now be drawn more fully. Where Socrates claims that we are ignorant of the ‘fine and the good,’ I claim that we are not justified in dogmatic beliefs about first-order multi-proposition disputes. Where Socrates professes wisdom about our epistemic situation, we are not wise about the fine and good, I claim that we are justified in believing that we are probably wrong about first-order debates. Where Socrates finds that he is wise in comparison to his contemporaries who are dogmatists about the fine and the good, I follow.

It may be asked, “Aren’t you embarrassed to compare yourself with the immortal Socrates?” To which I reply that we must keep this in some perspective. Socrates, after all, was just a man. So yes, so long as we put aside his philosophical talent, charisma, and humor, then indeed I think the comparison is pretty apt. In other words, yes, I still feel much discomfort with where my philosophical path has led me: there is the obvious discomfort of saying that one is wiser, epistemically virtuous, or more reasonable than so many other contemporary philosophers. Socrates could get away with it because, well, he is Socrates. It is quite another matter for some puny philosopher from some or other state school to make such a boast. On the other hand, I feel out of step with so many of my colleagues who feel they are justified in believing that some philosophical position in a multi-proposition dispute is true, or at least who lean that way. Although I consider myself a recovering dogmatist, such casual indifference to representing oneself as an über epistemic superior about first-order debates now escapes me. So I stand with Socrates on the limits of human philosophical abilities.

#### NOTES

1. Plato, *Plato: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, Translated by Harold Fowler (Harvard University Press, 1914).

2. For some review of the problem and literature on Socratic ignorance, see Richard Bett, “Socratic Ignorance,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 215–36.

3. See Mark Walker, “Between Gods and Apes: On the Lack of Scientific and Philosophical Progress,” in *Philosophy’s Future* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 147–58.

4. Sextus Empiricus, “Outlines of Pyrrhonism,” in *The Skeptic Way*, translated by Benson Mates (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

5. David Bourget and David J. Chalmers, “What Do Philosophers Believe?,” *Philosophical Studies* 170, no. 3 (2014): 465–500.

6. For some discussion of the relationship between multi-proposition disputes and binary disputes see Mark Walker, “Na-Na, Na-Na, Boo-Boo, the Accuracy of Your Philosophical Beliefs Is Doo-Doo,” *Manuscripta* 45 (2022): 1–49. A discussion of the historical and social dimensions of multi-proposition disputes can be found in Mark Walker, “Epistemic Permissiveness and the Problem of Philosophical Disagreement,” *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review/Revue Canadienne de Philosophie*, 2022, 1–25.

7. I’m using the “alethic” version of ‘epistemic peer’ here. For some discussion of competing conceptions see David Christensen, “Conciliation, Uniqueness and Rational Toxicity,” *Nous* 50, no. 3 (2016): 584–603.

8. Bourget and Chalmers, “What Do Philosophers Believe?”

9. In these terms we should think of accounts of justification that eschew any strong alethic connection, e.g., sometimes the idea of reflective equilibrium is understood in this way. Others might follow Lewis in saying that a reasonable aim is to look for a certain amount of internal coherence of our philosophical views:

Philosophical theories are never refuted conclusively. (Or hardly ever, Gödel and Gettier may have done it.) The theory survives its refutation—at a price....Our “intuitions” are simply opinions; our philosophical theories are the same... a reasonable task for the philosopher is to bring them into equilibrium. Our common task is to find out what equilibria there are that can withstand examination, but it remains for each of us to come to rest in one or another of them...Once the menu of well-worked out theories is before us, philosophy is a matter of opinion. David Kellogg Lewis, *Philosophical Papers: Volume I* (Oxford University Press, 1983). x-xi.

10. A. Hájek, “My Philosophical Position Says ‘p’ and I Don’t Believe ‘p,’” *Moore’s Paradox: New Essays on Belief, Rationality, and the First Person*, 2007, 217.

11. Bourget and Chalmers, “What Do Philosophers Believe?”

12. Sextus Empiricus, “Outlines of Pyrrhonism.”

13. Harald Thorsrud, *Ancient Scepticism* (University of California Press, 2009). Diego E. Machuca, “A Neo-Pyrrhonian Response to the Disagreeing about Disagreement Argument,” *Synthese*, no. 194.5 (2017): 1663–80.

14. Sextus Empiricus, “Outlines of Pyrrhonism.”

15. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Theodore F. Geraets, *The Encyclopaedia Logic* (Hackett Publishing Company, 1991).

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