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David Christensen and **Jennifer Lackey, eds.** *The Epistemology of Disagreement: New Essays*. Oxford University Press, 2013. 288 pp. $68.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780199698370).

With 11 essays, 10 previously unpublished, from leading contemporary epistemologists, *The Epistemology of Disagreement: New Essays* confirms disagreement's place as a burgeoning topic of much philosophical interest. Along with welcome refinements to concepts in extant debates, this volume addresses in three parts what disagreement tells us about epistemology generally and whether disagreement is especially problematic for the discipline of philosophy as a whole.

The disagreement debate has primarily focused on *peer* disagreement. Epistemic peers (hereafter peer(s)), roughly, are epistemic agents who are equal with regard to training, intelligence, and evidence and are equally as likely under normal circumstances to correctly judge the truth of a proposition. Given this characterization, one motivating question, then, is: How should one respond to a disagreeing peer? Part one of this volume considers this debate.

The most popular response to this question is *conciliationism*, which suggests that the discovery of a disagreeing peer should lessen one's confidence in the initial judgment. Strong conciliatory views hold that peers, upon discovery of disagreement, should split the difference, meaning that each peer should adjust the confidence or credence each have in their respective beliefs to meet in the middle. More moderate conciliatory views propose that each peer give equal weight to the other's conclusion. Each of these positions affirms an independence principle, which maintains that in cases of judging another's conclusion, one should judge one's peer's reasons/reasoning independently of one's own reasons/reasoning. Those opposing conciliationism hold a *steadfast* view—i.e. that even after the discovery of disagreement, one is not required to make any doxastic alteration.

John Hawthorne and Amia Srinivasan offer a challenge to conciliationism on behalf of a knowledge-first epistemology—a view that has been gaining significant traction in recent years. They argue that knowledge is not transparent—we can neither judge that others nor ourselves know something. Nor can we expect to discover any normative mandate for how to respond to a peer in a case of disagreement. Hawthorne and Srinivasan extend this conclusion to the whole of epistemology. Those not seduced by knowledge-first accounts of knowledge may not share this bleak conclusion. With this view recruiting an increasing number of supporters, however, this paper will be of interest to most contemporary epistemologists.

As a longtime defender of the steadfast view, Thomas Kelly contributes further refinements to his total-evidence view—that one should only believe what one's evidence supports in cases of disagreement—while also mounting a substantial challenge to independence. This challenge is important to the debate because, as Kelly attributes to David Christensen (a defender of conciliationism), 'the dispute between conciliationists and non-conciliationists is explained by the fact that the former accept, while the latter reject, [independence]' (37). Kelly goes so far as to suggest that 'once one accepts independence, conciliationism is more or less irresistible' (37). If these statements hold, the implications of Kelly's conclusions leave a considerable mark against conciliationism.

A separate concern for conciliationism is that it is self-undermining. This challenge is levelled by Brian Weatherson, who argues against a splitting-the-difference view. (He refers to the view he is criticizing as the catch-all equal-weight view, but this characterization is not quite right).

Here is the issue: if one is involved in a case of peer disagreement with a stubborn interlocutor, while at the same time adhering to an equal-weight principle, then eventually one would have to adopt the alternative view, as one's conclusion would creep towards the stubborn peer's unaltered conclusion. This issue presents consistency problems for defenders of higher-order normative positions calling for humility in the face of disagreement, when the disagreement in question is about that normative principle itself, such as in cases of disagreement about disagreement. Furthermore, Weatherson argues, the best argument a conciliationist might employ in defense of this equal-weight principle, involving screening of evidence, is subject to regress problems.

With characteristic clarity, Christensen responds to the concern that conciliationism is self-undermining. He argues that self-undermining is more epistemically ubiquitous than we might think, frequently affecting moderate steadfast views and any normative call for epistemic humility. Furthermore, we needn't think of epistemic inconsistency as all-together bad. Christensen appeals to a *competing-ideals* view, wherein perfect rationality may not be attainable; violating some epistemic ideal, in this case the epistemic humility called for by conciliatory views, will be inevitable in circumstances where one's evidence supports a different epistemic ideal.

Stewart Cohen further defends conciliationism, contesting concerns from Kelly's earlier work. Kelly argues that conciliatory views are inconsistent with total-evidence views because of their mandate to conform to epistemic norms that ignore one's overall epistemic position. Cohen argues that a hedged equal-weight view is entirely consistent with the 'truism that one should revise one's opinion by taking into account one's total evidence' (99), which is just another way of saying that the equal-weight theory can be construed as a type of total-evidence view.

Part II focuses on a discipline fraught with disagreement, and close to home for many of us: philosophy. Opening this section, Bryan Frances's provocative essay focuses not on epistemic peers but rather epistemic renegades—those who disagree with recognized epistemic superiors. In this lengthy, challenging, and characteristically humorous paper, Frances suggests that philosophers are typically epistemic renegades; many of them hold opinions about topics—Frances focuses on error theories—on which they are not experts, while fully aware of the experts and their clearly opposing views. Epistemic renegades who rigidly hold their beliefs in highly theoretical areas of inquiry are, Frances argues, 'seriously epistemically defective' (122) resulting in a radical skepticism wherein most of us cannot justifiably hold beliefs in any of these areas. In cases where error theory flies in the face of commonsense ("I have hands" versus a theory that says there are no composite objects, e.g.), however, the renegade's belief may be justified. Due to this conclusion, regardless of whether we accept France's radical skepticism thesis, 'the startling consequence is that large portions of metaphysics, the philosophy of language, the philosophy or logic, the philosophy of physics, and metaethics are bunk...' (123).

Sanford Golberg's contribution highlights that peer disagreement leads philosophers to a particularly difficult challenge, with either the actor or the act of philosophy itself under suspicion. Disagreement either undermines what philosophers do or questions whether those opining on contentious philosophical propositions are philosophically reliable. Ernest Sosa focuses on a similar yet more specific problem concerning the reliability of intuition in the face of experimental philosophy's counter-claim against armchair philosophy—that disagreement undermines the reliability of this method. While Goldberg merely highlights a difficult problem for the discipline, Sosa argues in defense of intuitions as a method of philosophizing.

Part III introduces the reader to new problems and new concepts in the epistemology of disagreement. Robert Audi conceptually explores *cognitive disparity,* to be understood as differences between cognitive elements like doxastic dispositions, propositional attitudes, and so on. Suggesting that discovering the different cognitive disparities between oneself and a peer has ramifications for how one reacts to disagreement, Audi concludes that such a discovery can enhance, or focus, the disagreement while also enabling epistemic self-improvement on the parts of those involved.

Seeking to 'provide an account of normativity that has no need of an independent notion of excusability … and no tendency to sniff the air for the scent of irrationality when people disagree' (225), Jonathan Kvanvig works through fallabilistic implications for epistemic rationality. Here Kvanvig seeks to draw a common thread through three seemingly disparate areas of epistemic interest: perspectival rationality, excusibility, and rational disagreement.

In the final essay, Jennifer Lackey addresses a hitherto under-analyzed concept discussed above—independence. It has often been argued that the number of peers with which one disagrees does not matter if the peers' beliefs are not formed independently of one another. Lackey challenges this claim, arguing that 'numbers *do* matter in cases of disagreement, even in the absence of independence' (245). Exploring a number of scenarios, Lackey focuses on exactly how we should try to understand independence. She ultimately concludes that there are no true independence principles, regardless of whether one is assuming partial or complete source dependence or testimonial dependence. There is, thus, no such thing as belief independence. Despite this striking conclusion, Lackey argues not that we can then dismiss swaths of peer disagreement, but rather that the number of peers who disagree with oneself remains important. She goes so far as to suggest that rather than belief dependence undermining a number of opposing peers' conclusion, a shared consensus over some proposition can strengthen a groups' overall epistemic situation. While some may not want to accept this conclusion, Lackey has advanced the debate in an important way by focusing us on exactly what we mean when appealing to independence.

Overall this is an important group of papers that both advance extant debates and set the stage for new arguments and future scholarship in the epistemology of disagreement. This volume should be mandatory reading for any serious scholar in this area and will be of interest for those involved in epistemology more generally.

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