

# PHILOSOPHY WITHOUT BELIEF

## ABSTRACT:

Should we believe our controversial philosophical views? Recently, several authors have argued from broadly Conciliationist premises that we should not. If they are right, we philosophers face a dilemma: If we believe our views, we are irrational. If we do not, we are not sincere in holding them. This paper offers a way out, proposing an attitude we can rationally take toward our views that can support sincerity of the appropriate sort. We should arrive at our views via a certain sort of “insulated” reasoning – that is, reasoning that involves setting aside certain higher-order worries, such as those provided by disagreement – when we investigate philosophical questions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In general, we philosophers think that philosophical questions have right answers. We think that there are facts of the matter about whether there are ordinary objects, or about whether it can ever be rational to have inconsistent beliefs, or about whether a person would survive if each of her brain cells were replaced with an artificial functional duplicate. We also think of philosophy, traditionally, as a truth-seeking enterprise. Our research and discussion is not just for fun. We expect, or at least hope, that all of this work will eventually deliver at least some of the answers that we take philosophical questions to have.

One very pessimistic outlook is that this expectation of truth-deliverance is simply unreasonable. On this picture, we should expect that virtually all important philosophical questions will remain unsettled, forever. Whether such skepticism is warranted is a matter of some controversy.<sup>1</sup> But in this paper, I set this radical skepticism to the side. I will assume that in the long run, it is possible for philosophy to answer at least some of the deep questions that are controversial today. Even on this optimistic assumption, a different sort of challenge to philosophy can be raised – one that concerns the epistemic status of our philosophical beliefs.

The problem is that there is widespread disagreement among philosophers about most of

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<sup>1</sup> For optimism about philosophy’s prospects, see Williamson (2007), Soames (2003–2005), Parfit (2011). For pessimism, see Kornblith (2013), Brennan (2010).

the core philosophical questions.<sup>2</sup> Given certain assumptions about the nature of the disagreements that occur inside philosophy, and given certain assumptions about the epistemic import of disagreement more generally, one might plausibly come to doubt that philosophers are rational to believe their controversial views. Indeed, numerous authors have developed arguments along these lines.<sup>3</sup> The details of their arguments need not concern us, but it will be useful to examine one argument in outline, which will serve as a representative simplification of what they have said.

The simplified argument looks like this:

**CONCILIATIONISM:** On pain of irrationality, one must suspend judgment in the face of disagreement – given that certain conditions are met.<sup>4</sup>

**APPLICABILITY:** Many disagreements in philosophy meet these conditions.

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**NO RATIONAL BELIEF:** Philosophers are not rational in believing many of their controversial views.

Conciliationism enjoys ample philosophical precedent; its strengths and weaknesses have been thoroughly explored. I will not rehearse the debate here.<sup>5</sup> Decidedly fewer have written about Applicability, so it may be helpful to see what can be said in its defense. Christensen motivates the position as follows:<sup>6</sup>

I do have good reason to have as much epistemic respect for my philosophical opponents as I have for my philosophical allies and for myself... In some cases, I have specific information about particular people, either on the basis of general knowledge or from reading or talking to the particular epistemologists in question. [...]

Moreover, even when I lack this sort of individualized information... it seems I have strong reason to doubt

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<sup>2</sup> The Bourget and Chalmers (2013) survey asks philosophers for their views on thirty questions that are taken to be “central” to the field. For most of these, we do not observe anything like consensus.

<sup>3</sup> See Brennan (2010), Christensen (2014), Fumerton (2010), Goldberg (2009), Kornblith (2010, 2013), Licon (2012).

<sup>4</sup> There are several versions of Conciliationism; each spells out the relevant “conditions” differently. For our purposes, it suffices to note that these conditions typically involve one’s having good reason to consider her disagreeer(s) at least as trustworthy with respect to the disputed sort of issue as she is herself.

<sup>5</sup> See Feldman and Warfield (2009), Christensen and Lackey (2013) for several discussions of this principle.

<sup>6</sup> Christensen (2014), pp. 146-147.

that, in general, the more honest, or more diligent, or better-read philosophers are the ones who agree with me... One reason [to doubt this] is simply that the individuals I do have information about certainly don't fit any such pattern. But another reason derives from the group nature of philosophical controversy. It seems clear that the groups of people who disagree with me on various philosophical issues are quite differently composed. Many who are on my side of one issue will be on the other side of different issues. With this structural feature of group disagreement in philosophy in mind, it seems clear that it could hardly be rational for me to think that I'm part of some special subgroup of unusually smart, diligent, or honest members of the profession.

Kornblith takes a similar view, at least with respect to one particular debate:<sup>7</sup>

Disagreements within philosophy constitute a particularly interesting case... Consider the debate between internalists and externalists about epistemic justification. I am a committed externalist. I have argued for this position at length and on numerous occasions. [...] At the same time, I recognize, of course, that there are many philosophers who are equally committed internalists about justification[.] It would be reassuring to believe that I have better evidence on this question than those who disagree with me, that I have thought about this issue longer than internalists, or that I am simply smarter than they are, my judgment superior to theirs. It would be reassuring to believe these things, but I don't believe them; they are all manifestly untrue.

It seems fair to say that Applicability enjoys a kind of intuitive plausibility as well.<sup>8</sup>

In this paper, I take both Conciliationism and Applicability for granted (along with their immediate consequence, No Rational Belief), in order to investigate what sense we can make of philosophy if they are true. If they are true, we philosophers are rationally required to suspend judgment about philosophically controversial questions. If we philosophers suddenly decided to follow this directive, if we all stopped believing our controversial views, would the practice of philosophy be in any way diminished? Would philosophy look any different, to an outsider? To answer these questions, we should think about what an outsider to philosophy would observe, if he were to look.

## II. THE SINCERE PHILOSOPHER'S DILEMMA

Suppose that sociologists came to study the enterprise of philosophy, while staying as

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<sup>7</sup> Kornblith (2010), p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> One notable opponent of Applicability is Grundmann (2013). Grundmann points out that even if my opponent is, in general, as philosophically competent as I am (equally honest, equally intelligent, equally hardworking, etc.), she may not be as reliable as I am with respect to the disputed issue. The observation is a good one. But it is worth noting that these general competencies can still serve as fallible indicators of one's domain-specific reliability. Grundmann does not argue that there is no correlation between these distinct competencies.

neutral as possible about the doxastic states of the participants. What would they observe? For one, they would observe that philosophers tend to act on behalf of certain positions and not others: If a philosopher defends a given position once, she is more likely to defend the same position later – and much less likely to defend a rival position. In addition, they would observe that philosophers often claim these positions as their own (e.g. “As a representationalist, I think that...”). These observations seem to reveal that philosophers display a certain kind of favoritism toward (or perhaps, ownership of) certain positions. At this point, the sociologists might ask: Do philosophers actually believe the views they seem to favor or own?

As insiders to philosophy, we know (or, at least, have strong reason to suspect) that some members of our profession really do believe the controversial views they favor. Some of us really do believe that physical determinism precludes moral responsibility, or that (seemingly) vague predicates have precise application conditions. On a broadly Conciliationist picture, there is reason to doubt that such controversial beliefs are rational. So the question arises: If we cannot believe these views, should we stop playing favorites altogether? Or can we continue to advocate for and defend our favorite views?<sup>9</sup>

On the face of it, there seems to be a problem with the second option. The problem is that (a) there seems to be a distinctive kind of sincerity typically underlying our views, even the most controversial ones, and (b) this sincerity might be lost if we stopped sincerely believing them.

First, what kind of sincerity? The sincerity that I have in mind is a way in which I think many philosophers identify with the views they defend. Roughly, the thought is that, for many of

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<sup>9</sup> For ease of expression, sometimes I will simply say “X’s views” to mean “the views X favors or identifies with.” The following discussion is indebted to Goldberg’s (2013b) discussion of the sincerity of philosophical *assertion*. Goldberg’s view will be discussed in detail below.

us, our views *seem right* to us, in some important sense. When I reflect on the relevant issues (arguments, objections, etc.) my thinking leads me to certain conclusions. If I were obligated to defend a different collection of views (perhaps because it was assigned to me by some governing body), “my” views would not be as sincerely held: I would not be calling the shots as I see them; *my own thinking* would not have produced them.

This is supposed to capture, intuitively, what it takes for one’s views to be *sincerely held*.<sup>10</sup> My claim is not that philosophers *ought* to hold their views sincerely, but rather, that many philosophers do experience this sincere commitment toward their favored views and would prefer to be able to continue doing philosophy in this sincere manner. If this is right, then we “sincere” philosophers have a potentially serious problem on our hands.

There seems to be a tension between this sincerity desideratum, on the one hand, and No Rational Belief, on the other. One might make the tension explicit as follows:

I agree that that many philosophers do hold their favored views “sincerely,” as you describe it, and I agree that it is probable that they would prefer for it to stay that way. But it is not clear that they can have what they want, given No Rational Belief. Plausibly, the philosophers who feel this way are precisely those who sincerely believe their views: The sincere belief is what gives rise to the so-called sincerity.

So the “sincere philosopher” is in a bind. Start with a controversial view she now favors. *Either* she can (irrationally) believe it, and, as a result, sincerely hold it *or* she can refrain from believing it, thereby giving up the sincerity. Should she insist on believing rationally *and* on favoring only views that she can sincerely hold, she will end up with no controversial views at all.

We can put the above point as a dilemma:

**SINCERE PHILOSOPHER’S DILEMMA:** Either we philosophers will believe our controversial views or we will not. If we do, then we will be irrational. If we do not, then our views will not be sincerely held.

The main task of this paper is to show how this challenge might be met. But first, the challenge should be strengthened. The worry that gave rise to the challenge was that *belief* is required for

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<sup>10</sup> My choice of the word “sincere” should not be taken to indicate that philosophers who lack this feeling toward their views are being *insincere*, in some problematic way, in favoring the views they do. I am simply pointing out a way in which many of us identify with the views we defend.

the relevant kind of sincerity; this claim is probably too strong. We will see, though, that the heart of the dilemma can be retained, even if belief is not required for sincerity. First let us see how sincerity of the requisite sort might be achieved without belief.

For simplicity, assume a Lockean account of belief, according to which outright belief *just is* confidence above a certain threshold, say .75. And imagine that I often spend my time working out treacherous math problems, replete with tempting pitfalls that frequently trip me up. Over the years, my success rate on these problems is a middling .74, and I know this fact about my reliability. As a result, when I arrive at an answer to any one of these problems, my confidence in the answer I reach tends not to be quite high enough for belief. Despite my lack of outright belief in my answer, the answer I arrive at still seems right to me, in an important sense. My own thinking led me to it. And even though I recognize that there is a good chance I erred, overall, I think my answer is more likely to be correct than not. In this case, I think that it is intuitive to say that my commitment to the answer I arrived at is sincere in the relevant sense. If this is right, then outright belief in one's view is not necessary for sincerity.

Perhaps this is right. Even if it is right, it seems to me that the dilemma proponent need not be terribly concerned, for she can reply as follows:

Perhaps I was too quick in suggesting that outright belief was the only doxastic attitude capable of supporting sincerely held views. A fairly high credence probably can do the trick. But this observation hardly saves the sincere philosopher, for it is doubtful that we can rationally maintain high credences in our controversial views. The same considerations that gave rise to No Rational Belief (i.e. Conciliationism, Applicability) are sure to entail a parallel No Rational High Confidence principle, which will forbid the high credences present in the alleged counterexample. So here's my more general challenge: Tell me specifically which attitude you will take toward controversial views that can get you both rationality and sincerity.

This reply seems to me to be exactly right. The challenge is not simply to demonstrate how to achieve sincerity without belief, but rather, to demonstrate that there is some attitude, or some set of attitudes, which allow for sincere and sensible participation in philosophy. In the next

section, I consider one potential answer, due to Sanford Goldberg.

### III. PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS AS SPECULATIONS

Goldberg has explored nearby territory in a series of recent papers. He defends a version of No Rational Belief, and so he is concerned with a question similar to the one we are considering. He writes: “Unless we want to condemn philosophers to widespread unreasonableness (!), we must allow that their doxastic attitude towards contested propositions is, or at any rate can be, something other than that of belief.”<sup>11</sup> Though Goldberg is not explicitly concerned with allowing that philosophers can sincerely hold their views, he is sensitive to nearby issues, such as the sincerity of philosophical assertion.

Goldberg thinks that there is indeed an attitude that we philosophers can (and should) rationally take toward our views: “[T]here is an attitudinal cousin of belief which is reasonable to have even under conditions of systematic disagreement and which captures much, if perhaps not all, of the things that are involved in ‘having a view’ in philosophy.” The relevant state is called “attitudinal speculation” (or simply “speculation”):<sup>12</sup>

**SPECULATION:** [O]ne who attitudinally speculates that  $p$  regards  $p$  as more likely than  $not-p$ , though also regards the total evidence as stopping short of warranting belief in  $p$ .

Goldberg goes on to suggest that this attitude of speculation is the attitude we philosophers should take toward our controversial views and that this attitude is what is required for sincere and proper assertion in the context of doing philosophy. The picture of philosophy being recommended (henceforth, “the speculation picture”) is, I think, a fairly natural one: Advocates of Incompatibilism, say, should hold their view to be more likely than its rival; at the same time, they should acknowledge that the total evidence (including evidence from disagreement) does

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<sup>11</sup> Goldberg (2013b) p. 282.

<sup>12</sup> Goldberg (2013b) pp. 283-284.

not permit sufficient confidence in Incompatibilism for outright belief.

This picture is most attractive when applied to philosophical issues that divide philosophers into exactly two camps (such as Compatibilism/Incompatibilism). Goldberg's picture may require refinement, however, in order to handle debates featuring three or more rival positions. For example, suppose that there is a fact of the matter about which ethical view is correct. Further suppose that Consequentialism, Deontology, and Virtue Ethics are equally popular, mutually exclusive views exhausting the plausible options. According to the speculation picture, my being a Deontologist will require me to have a credence in Deontology exceeding .5, leaving the other half of my credential pie for Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism to share. There are two potential worries here.

First, it is not clear that such a high level of confidence in Deontology can be rationally maintained, on a broadly Conciliationist picture. Admittedly, the version of Conciliationism discussed in the introduction would be silent in this case, as it dealt with all-or-nothing beliefs, not levels of confidence. But some versions of Conciliationism do place rational constraints on one's level of confidence, and in general, they would demand that one's level of confidence in Deontology be roughly  $\frac{1}{3}$  in a case like this – provided that the disagreement meets the relevant criteria.<sup>13</sup>

Second, one of the most attractive features of the speculation picture — its ability to allow us to favor our own view very slightly — seems to disappear in cases like this one. If only two views are on the table, then I can be just a teensy bit more confident of my own position

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<sup>13</sup> In the case described, the three views were supposed to be about equally popular. So about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of my peers reject Deontology and opt for one of the other two views. If I have every reason to think these opponents are, in general, as philosophically reliable as my fellow Deontologists (and myself), then I will not be rationally permitted (from within a broadly Conciliationist framework) to think my side is more likely right than not on this occasion. See e.g. Elga (2007).



than I am of the opposing position. But if there are three views on the table, or five, then suddenly I must be twice or four times as confident of my view than I am of an arbitrarily chosen rival in order to take the attitude of speculation toward it. Slightly favoring my view over the relevant alternatives (by affording it more confidence than I afford any other view) is no longer enough. So this most attractive feature has disappeared.

#### IV. REFINING THE SPECULATION PICTURE

With the foregoing problems in mind, we might modify Goldberg's view as follows:

**SPECULATION\***: One who attitudinally speculates that  $p$  regards  $p$  as the likeliest option (given some set of options), though also regards the total evidence as stopping short of warranting belief in  $p$ .

This amended version seems to capture the spirit of Goldberg's proposal nicely, allowing us to lean slightly toward our preferred positions even when there are multiple incompatible ones on offer.<sup>14</sup> Can this revised account provide an answer to our dilemma?

In order to do this, the speculation picture must meet two desiderata: First, it must be the case that speculation can support sincerity of the appropriate sort; second, it must be the case that we can, at least sometimes, rationally take the attitude of speculation toward our controversial views. We can discuss each of these in turn.

First, notice that there is good reason to think that the speculation picture can meet the first desideratum, pertaining to sincerity. On the proposed picture, I, a Deontologist, could truly say that, of the three plausible options, my view seems likeliest to be true. Would I bet on it, if it

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<sup>14</sup> It is also worth noting that this modified version incurs a problem of individuation from which the first version is immune. Suppose that my confidence in Consequentialism is .4 and that my confidence in each of the others is .3. Since I regard Consequentialism as likelier than the other options, it seems clearly correct to say that I do take the attitude of speculation\* toward Consequentialism. But the problem is that we might carve the options up differently. If instead we say that there are two views on the table – Consequentialism and non-Consequentialism – then I cannot be said to take the attitude of speculation\* toward Consequentialism after all. I will suppose that this challenge can be met, as I think that both versions of the speculation picture are susceptible to a more pressing problem.

were competing against “the field” (i.e. the disjunction of Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism)? No. But if I were forced to pick one of the three to bet on, would I pick Deontology? Absolutely. In such a case, it would likely be accurate to say that Deontology seems right to me, in some sense: It seems better than the relevant alternatives. So if, in philosophy, we were permitted to take the attitude of speculation toward our controversial views, I suspect that the sincerity underlying our commitments would not wholly vanish. There is good reason to think that the speculation picture proposal fares well on the sincerity front.

But how does the proposal fare on the rationality front? Can we rationally adopt the attitude of speculation\* toward our controversial views? Am I rationally permitted to afford a credence of .35 to Deontology, say, in the situation we have been considering? It is hard to answer this question definitively, as there are several thorny issues that enter into play.<sup>15</sup> At the very least, there is some reason to think that speculation\* fares better than belief, on the rationality score. While it is quite apparent, given our assumptions, that *believing* one’s controversial philosophical views is irrational, it is an open question whether and to what extent it is irrational to regard one’s controversial views as slightly more likely than the competitors. Indeed, even if this slight credential favoritism does turn out to be irrational, it is likely to be a rather mild epistemic sin. So with respect both to sincerity and to rationality, speculation\* emerges as a better candidate than belief, for the attitude to be taken toward one’s philosophical views.

Despite these virtues of the speculation picture, there is some cause for concern as well.

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Lackey (2008, 2010) and Christensen (2011) discuss symmetry-breaking considerations that might be thought to reveal that we are permitted to favor our own positions to some degree, even if Conciliationism is true. And even if the symmetry cannot be broken in this way, some might doubt that rationality requires perfect credential precision. See Joyce (2005), Weatherson (2005) for arguments along these lines.

For one, Goldberg points out that the attitude of speculation may not be sufficient for having a view in philosophy:<sup>16</sup>

Still, there are some important differences between attitudinal speculation (*simpliciter*, as it were) and the attitude that corresponds to the endorsement and defense of a philosophical view (when this is done under conditions of systematic disagreement). One who endorses and defends a philosophical view is typically more motivated to persist in defense of the view when challenged, than is one who merely speculates that *p*. (We are more committed, and perhaps more emotionally attached, to our philosophical views, than we are to our speculations.)

This may be right, and applies equally to speculation\*. But even if the objection succeeds, it probably will not worry the proponent of the speculation picture too much. As Goldberg points out, speculation should be taken to be a necessary condition on having a philosophical view, not a sufficient one.<sup>17</sup>

But there is reason to worry, I think, that speculation and even speculation\*, may not be a necessary condition, either. There seem to be cases in which one can have a view, despite regarding it as less likely, all things considered, than some rival view. Anticipating this complaint, Goldberg asks whether it ever makes sense for one to defend a view she regards as a “long shot.” Ultimately, Goldberg suggests that there is something “slightly perverse” about one’s holding of a view even when she does not think that the view will, in the end, be better-supported by the total evidence.<sup>18</sup> While I share the intuition that there is something troublesome about doing this, thinking about certain cases suggests that this is not as problematic as it might seem. First, consider an analogy:

**LOGIC TEAM:** You are on a five-player logic team. The team is to be given a logic problem with possible answers *p* and *not-p*. There is one minute allotted for each player to work out the problem alone followed by a ten-second voting phase, during which the team members vote *one by one*. The answer favored by a majority of your team is submitted.

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<sup>16</sup> Goldberg (2013b) p. 284.

<sup>17</sup> Goldberg (2013b) p. 284.

<sup>18</sup> Goldberg (2013b) p. 283, fn. 5.

You arrive at  $p$ . During the voting phase,  $V_i$ , who is generally more reliable than you are on problems like these, votes first, for  $\text{not-}p$ . You are next. Which way should you vote?

Given a broadly Conciliationist view, it is not rational for you to regard your answer of  $p$  as more likely than its negation, after seeing  $V_i$  vote. But there is, I think, still pressure on you to vote for the answer you arrived at, rather than the one you now regard as most likely to be correct.

We can illustrate this by adding a bit more information to the case. Suppose that  $V_i$ 's reliability is .9, that the reliability of each other team member is .75, that each team member is statistically independent of each other, and that the team is aware of this information. If everyone were to defer to  $V_i$  during voting, the team would perform suboptimally in the long run.<sup>19</sup> So in this collaborative truth-seeking context, there is nothing troublesome about “defending” a view while thinking that it is more likely incorrect than not. More generally, we can see that, in this context at least, one’s all-things-considered confidence is no sure guide to what view one should put forward as one’s own.

But why think that this context, which is in many respects dissimilar to philosophy, tells us anything about what views one should have in philosophy? I will not try to argue that the contexts are similar in all relevant respects. Even if the analogy is questionable, we can still use it to construct a similar example in the philosophical context.

Within a broadly Conciliationist framework, how popular a position is (among some group of trustworthy evaluators) partly determines how much confidence I should have in that position, all things considered. But it seems doubtful that the philosophical popularity of, say, Physicalism, should determine whether Physicalism is *my* theory. Consider the following example.

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<sup>19</sup> Following this strategy, the team’s reliability would just be  $V_i$ ’s reliability: .90. If each team member votes without deferring, the team’s reliability turns out to be considerably higher: approximately 0.93. (See appendix for proof.)

**TURNING TIDE:** I am inclined to think that the evidence supports Physicalism over the relevant alternatives. I find the arguments for Physicalism to be persuasive; I am unmoved by the objections. And at present, Physicalism is more popular among philosophers of mind/metaphysics than the relevant alternatives. So on balance, I consider myself a Physicalist.

Down the road, the philosophical tide turns in favor of Dualism. Perhaps new arguments are devised; perhaps the familiar objections to Physicalism simply gain traction. In any case, I remain unimpressed. I do not find the new arguments for Dualism to be particularly strong, and the old objections continue to seem as defective to me as they always have.

What should *my* view be, in a case like this? As a Conciliationist who happens to regard other philosophers of mind and metaphysics as generally trustworthy about philosophical matters, my all-things-considered confidence in Physicalism may well decrease as Dualism becomes the dominant view, perhaps even dipping below .5. But what seems strange is that once my all-things-considered confidence in Physicalism falls low enough, and once my all-things-considered confidence in Dualism soars high enough, I should stop being a Physicalist and (perhaps) become a Dualist — solely on the basis of its popularity, *and despite the fact that, when I think about the relevant arguments and objections, it seems totally wrong to me.*

One way to think of this problem is as a redux of Elga's problem of self-trust<sup>20</sup> for the equal weight view (a variety of Conciliationism):

Suppose that a great fraction of those you count as your epistemic peers agree with you on some issue. Then the equal weight view says: stick with your initial assessment. Great! Except that the reason for sticking to that assessment has very little to do with your own evaluation of the common stock of evidence, and very much to do with the fraction of your peers who agree with you. Shouldn't your own careful consideration of the issue count for more than 1/100th, even if there are 99 people you count as epistemic peers? If not, then one might just as well form views on controversial matters by simply sending out a poll... It is implausible that rationality requires you to give your own consideration of the issue such a minor role.

In the end, Elga bites the bullet on this objection. And as far as one's all-things-considered rational confidence is concerned, this may be the appropriate reaction. But as it pertains to which views one should favor in collaborative truth-seeking contexts, the objection may go through. In

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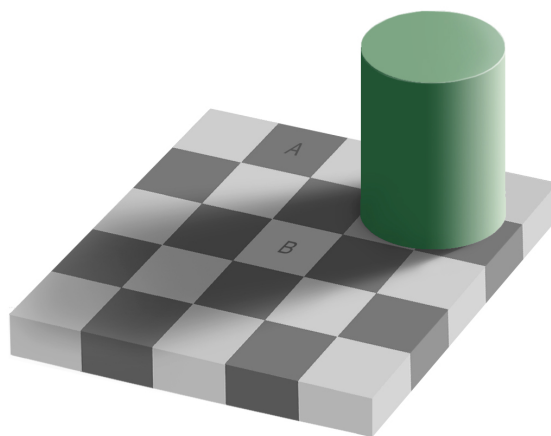
<sup>20</sup> Elga (2007) pp. 484-485.

such contexts, one should not simply defer to some external authority, whether the authority is a majority of one's peers or just a single expert, as we saw in the Logic Team case. Perhaps there is a special role for *one's own* consideration of the issues to play in contexts like these.

## V. PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS AS DISAGREEMENT-INSULATED INCLINATIONS

Thinking about the Logic Team and Turning Tide examples suggests a different approach altogether: As a philosopher, my views should be informed only by the way that *some* of the evidence seems to me to point. In particular, I should set aside the evidence I get from the agreement and disagreement of other philosophers in thinking the issues through. The views that strike me as correct, with this disagreement evidence set aside, are the views I should hold. Of course, the evidence I get from agreement and disagreement remains epistemically relevant to my all-things-considered *beliefs*. But for the purposes of the truth-seeking enterprise of which I am a part, in order to arrive at *my views*, I reason as if it is not.<sup>21</sup>

A good way to get a handle on the proposal is to think about how one typically reacts to a perceptual illusion, such as the one below.



The Checker Shadow Illusion – Edward H. Adelson (1995)

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<sup>21</sup> While this paper is about philosophy, this idea may have broader application to other collaborative, truth-seeking disciplines, such as in the Logic Team example.

Viewers almost always incorrectly judge the lettered regions to be different in shade. Importantly, the apparent discrepancy between these identically shaded regions tends to remain even after the viewer has become convinced of their constancy. The viewer continues to have the seeming or inclination, but does not endorse it.

An analogous phenomenon occurs when one gains evidence that one's own reasoning about a given topic is likely to be defective in some way. Consider a case involving judgment-distorting drugs:<sup>22</sup>

**DEDUCING WHILE INTOXICATED:** Basil works through a non-trivial logic problem and comes to believe  $p$ . She then learn that, before she attempted to solve the problem, she ingested a drug that impinges on one's deductive reasoning skills. It causes ordinarily reliable thinkers to miss certain logic problems (such as the one she just tried) at least half of the time. She re-reads the problem and finds herself inclined to reason as before: The information given still seems to her to imply  $p$ . But she refrains from endorsing this seeming and suspends belief.

In the story, Basil is, in some sense, *inclined* to accept a certain claim as true, but opts not to endorse this inclination because of evidence that the mechanisms that produced it may be epistemically defective in some way. This evidence about one's own cognitive capacities is widely known as "higher-order evidence" (evidence about one's ability to evaluate evidence).<sup>23</sup> Notice that the 'seemings' or 'inclinations' that persist despite what is learned are, in some way, not sensitive to this higher-order evidence. In some sense, one can retain the ability to see things *as if* the higher-order evidence were not there, or were not relevant.

But how is this relevant to philosophy? Evidence from disagreement (or agreement) is thought to provide higher-order evidence, too.<sup>24</sup> So the suggestion, to put it roughly, is this: Philosophers (and other members of truth-seeking bodies) should favor the views that seem right

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<sup>22</sup> See Christensen (2007, 2010, 2011, ms.).

<sup>23</sup> See Christensen's (2010) discussion.

<sup>24</sup> See Christensen (2007, 2010, 2011), Kelly (2005, 2010).

to them, ignoring certain bits of higher-order evidence (including evidence from disagreement/agreement). David Chalmers provides a helpful characterization of a related idea:<sup>25</sup>

[A] level-crossing principle... is a principle by which one's higher-order beliefs about one's cognitive capacity are used to restrain one's first-order beliefs about a subject matter. [...] We can imagine a cognizer—call him Achilles—who is at least sometimes insensitive to this sort of level-crossing principle. On occasion, Achilles goes into the mode of insulated cognition. When in this mode, Achilles goes where first-order theoretical reasoning takes him, entirely insulated from higher-order beliefs about his cognitive capacity. He might acquire evidence that he is unreliable about mathematics, and thereby come to believe 'I am unreliable about arithmetic', but he will go on drawing conclusions about arithmetic all the same.

This idea of “insulated reasoning” will be useful. The thought is going to be that in philosophy (and in other collaborative truth-seeking contexts), we should try to reason in a way that is insulated from certain evidence, including the evidence we get from disagreement, in determining our views. For reasons we will discuss, it will turn out that we do not want to be insulated from *all* higher-order evidence, as Achilles is in Chalmers' example. But before we can discuss which evidence we will want to wall ourselves off from, we will need to say a bit about what 'walling off' or 'insulation' amounts to. As it stands, it is unclear from Chalmers' discussion whether insulated reasoning is supposed to be something that we humans ever do or are even capable of.

The relevant sort of reasoning is of a quite familiar variety: conditional reasoning. We reason conditionally when we reason *as if*, or *supposing*, or *on the condition that* our evidence were different than it actually is.<sup>26</sup> Conditional reasoning can be divided into *additive* and *subtractive*

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<sup>25</sup> Chalmers (2012) pp. 103-104. Others have made independent reference to an idea like this as well. Schoenfield, (2014) pp. 2-3, defines “your judgment” as “the proposition you regard, or would regard as most likely to be correct on the basis of the first-order evidence alone” (2014, pp. 2-3). Horowitz and Sliwa (2015) also make use of an idea in this vicinity in their discussion of one's “first order attitude”. These attitudes are very close to the one I will rely on, though the first-order / higher-order distinction will not be the right distinction for the purposes of this paper.

<sup>26</sup> There is perhaps some impulse to understand claims of the form “Supposing that E, I think p” counterfactually: “Were I to learn that E, I would think p” This impulse should be resisted. An example from Horowitz (2015) can be used to illustrate this. Imagine that Ivan becomes severely irrational whenever he believes that spiders are nearby. But let's add (realistically) that Ivan can suppose that there are spiders nearby without any significant problems.



varieties. In additive cases, we introduce a supposition over and above whatever evidence we already have, and then reason accordingly (e.g. “Supposing we get to the DMV by ten, I think it’s likely that we’ll be out of there by noon.”). In subtractive cases, we focus only on a subset of our evidence, ignoring some of the evidence we already have, reasoning as if we never had it (“Even setting aside the witness testimony, I’m inclined toward a guilty verdict; the video evidence, on its own, convinces me of the defendant’s guilt.”).<sup>27,28</sup> In both the additive and subtractive cases, we are evaluating which way some body of evidence (which may or may not be the evidence we in fact have) seems to us to point. For ease of expression, if a certain body of evidence  $E$  seems to me to support  $p$ , we will say that I am *inclined*, on  $E$ , toward  $p$ .

So we can now put the driving thought this way: When one is doing philosophy with the aim of determining her philosophical views, she should not necessarily be evaluating all of the evidence she has. Instead, she should be focusing on a special subset of this evidence. Her views should be determined by her inclinations on this evidence (i.e. by the way this evidence seems to her to point). But what is the special subset of evidence? Provisionally, we will say that the relevant subset is: All of the evidence minus that from disagreement and agreement of fellow philosophers. So a philosopher’s philosophical views should be determined by her *disagreement-*

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What Ivan does think, on the supposition that there are spiders nearby, may turn out to be quite different from what he would think, were he to learn that spiders are nearby.

<sup>27</sup> It is worth noting that subtractive conditional reasoning is in some ways more problematic than the conditional reasoning of the additive variety – at least from the formal point of view. We understand conditionalization; can we make sense of “de-conditionalization?” Some have argued that a kind of subtractive conditional reasoning relates to the “Problem of Old Evidence.” See Joyce (1999) and also Christensen (1999).

<sup>28</sup> It is also worth noting that the disagreement literature already makes some reference to a kind of subtractive conditional reasoning. Certain authors, including Elga and Christensen, have suggested that when we evaluate the epistemic credentials of those that disagree with us, we should do so in a way that sets aside their performance on the matter under dispute. Their performance on the question at hand is undoubtedly relevant to how reliable one should take them to be. But according to some, we are rationally barred from using it in our estimations of their reliability in certain contexts.

*insulated inclinations* (i.e. the positions that seem to her supported by the evidence not from agreement and disagreement of her peer philosophers). Call this picture “Philosophical Views as Disagreement-Insulated Inclinations.” Let us see how it works in the Physicalism/Dualism example that created trouble for the speculation picture.

## VI. EVALUATING PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS AS DISAGREEMENT-INSULATED INCLINATIONS

At the end of the Turning Tide example, the available arguments and evidence seemed to me to support physicalism, but the field was dominated by dualists. On the current picture, in arriving at my philosophical views, I am supposed to think about all of the evidence except for the evidence from disagreement and agreement. This body of evidence includes the arguments and objections with which I am familiar, and which, on balance, seem to me to support physicalism. In other words, my disagreement-insulated inclination is toward physicalism. This makes me a physicalist.

This is not to say that I should *believe* physicalism to be true, or even that I should be more confident of physicalism than I am of its negation. Probably, if I had to bet on one of the two positions, it would be more wise to bet on *dualism*, given its popularity among philosophers whom I have every reason to respect. My all-things-considered confidence should be sensitive to *all* my evidence, which includes the evidence from disagreement. But the key point is that, as a member of the philosophical community, the views I favor need not walk hand-in-hand with my all-things-considered confidence.

We sought an attitude that would afford us the ability to do sincere, rational philosophy. Disagreement-insulated inclination is an appealing candidate for the elusive attitude we sought. If one wishes to hold her views sincerely, and she wishes to be rational, then her views should be her disagreement-insulated inclinations. Let us show how this attitude can deliver with respect to

the sincerity and rationality desiderata, still using the same example as our guide.

Can disagreement-insulated inclination support sincerely held philosophical views? I think it can, to a great extent. In the example at hand, is my view of physicalism sincerely held? In a way it is, and in a way it is not. First, how is it not? All things considered, I deem dualism more likely to be true. Admittedly, a view is going to feel most sincerely held when it has the support of one's all-things-considered belief. Despite this concession, I think that my physicalism is sincerely held, in an important way. When we characterized sincerity early on, we wanted it to be the case that the views we hold could trace back, in some sense, to our own consideration of the issues. We wanted our views to *seem right* to us, in some important sense. It seems to me that my commitment to physicalism is sincere in this sense. Indeed, in certain cases (such as the one at hand), disagreement-insulated inclination may be able to capture this kind of sincerity even better than outright belief can. The upshot of this discussion is that even without belief, we can retain sincerely held views, in a very strong sense.

What about rationality? Can one be rational in taking this attitude of disagreement-insulated inclination toward one's preferred views? It seems to me that one can. The evidence from disagreement is what precludes us from rationally believing our views. The attitude in question is insulated from the very thing that forces us to suspend judgment. With the disagreement set aside, one can be rational – so long as the view one is inclined toward is in fact the view that the remaining evidence supports. A modified version of the judgment-distorting drug case discussed earlier can help us to understand the relevant rational norm.<sup>29</sup>

**DEDUCING WHILE INTOXICATED 2:** Basil and Sage both attempt to solve a challenging logic problem with correct answer *p*. Before attempting the problem, each logician learned that she ingested a drug that impinges on one's deductive reasoning skills. During past experimentation, Basil and Sage discovered that they tend to

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<sup>29</sup> See Christensen (ms.).

answer challenging logic problems correctly about half the time, after having ingested the drug.

On this occasion, Basil correctly deduces  $p$ , while Sage loses track of a negation symbol, and arrives at  $\sim p$ . After obtaining these results, both immediately temper their confidence in their respective answers considerably, because they suspect that their logical reasoning faculties were off-kilter. Indeed, despite having reached different answers, both logicians end up with the same level of confidence in  $p$ : .5.

Basil and Sage ended up at the same place. But intuitively, we want to say that Basil's reasoning was totally rational and that Sage's was not (since it was based importantly on a mistake).<sup>30</sup>

Thinking about this case in terms of inclination can help us to account for this intuition. Even though Basil and Sage have the same attitude toward  $p$ , all things considered, notice that *setting aside evidence about the drug*, Basil and Sage are inclined toward different positions. (Basil might say: "If this drug's a dud, then definitely  $p$ ." Sage might say: "If this drug's a dud, then definitely  $\sim p$ .") And notice that because the non-drug evidence really does support  $p$ , only Basil's inclination is apt. Basil's inclination is rational; Sage's inclination is not.

We should think of this situation as analogous to the situation that philosophers are in. Disagreement in the field compels us to suspend all-things-considered judgment on all philosophically controversial matters. So all things considered, we all are (or should be) at the same place: agnosticism. But setting the evidence from disagreement and agreement aside, we still have our inclinations, and these will differ from person to person. Some of us are like Basil, rationally inclined toward the position the relevant evidence supports. Others of us are like Sage, mistakenly inclined toward some other position. So it will not turn out that *all* philosophers who take the attitude of disagreement-insulated inclination are rational in holding their views. We are rational only to the extent that our disagreement-insulated inclination is toward the view that is supported by the non-disagreement evidence (arguments, objections, etc.).

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<sup>30</sup> Kelly (2010, pp. 122-124) discusses a case with a similar structure (though no drugs are involved).

I will conclude the paper by considering an example which shows that disagreement is not the only kind of higher-order evidence from which we should insulate our reasoning in forming our philosophical views.

## VII. INCLINATION, INSULATED FROM WHAT?

So far, we have said that a philosopher, in coming to her philosophical views, should base them on only some of the evidence she has. Specifically, we have said that she should ignore evidence from agreement and disagreement, but take account of all other evidence, in her philosophical thinking. As it turns out, there is strong reason to doubt that the evidence from agreement and disagreement is the only evidence that should be set aside. Perhaps some other higher-order evidence should be set aside as well.

While disagreement in philosophy can be used to argue persuasively for No Rational Belief, it is by no means the only route to this conclusion. Suppose Erika, an avowed Conciliationist, is philosophizing in her office. She discovers a philosophical question that, as far as she knows, has never been investigated by philosophers before. Since there is no disagreement (that she is aware of), her disagreement-insulated inclination and her all-things-considered opinion will match. After some reflection on this new question, she finds that  $p$  seems right to her. But then she pauses, thinking about how much confidence she should have in  $p$ , given that it seems right. And it is not at all clear that Erika can, all things considered, regard  $p$  as likelier than its competitors. Here is one route Erika might take to a more agnostic position on  $p$ :<sup>31</sup>

**EXPECTED DISAGREEMENT:** Although there is no disagreement about whether  $p$  yet, Erika expects there soon to be some. She thinks that this question is exceedingly likely to provoke disagreement from philosophers whom Erika respects (though she may not be able to predict exactly who will be on which side). She decides

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<sup>31</sup> There are other higher-order routes to agnosticism in philosophy that make no essential reference to actual disagreement. Frances (forthcoming) discusses one, which involves being aware of one's past philosophical failings. Another might stem simply from considerations about the difficulty of philosophical questions.

that she needn't wait for anyone to say the words "I disagree." In anticipation of the disagreement, she divides her confidence equally between  $p$  and  $p$ 's soon-to-be competitors.<sup>32</sup>

The above reasoning can be transformed into a more general argument for agnosticism in philosophy. So there might well be disagreement-independent reason to refrain from having much confidence in some of one's philosophical views. And if there is, then for certain philosophical questions (such as those which are likely to engender substantial disagreement), disagreement-insulated inclination cannot fully deliver on its promise: It cannot allow us to arrive at firm, rational opinions about how these philosophical questions should be answered.

One way to react is to recognize that "evidence from expected disagreement" (along with other considerations that might be used to motivate philosophical agnosticism), like evidence from actual disagreement, constitutes higher-order evidence of a certain sort. (The knowledge that fellow philosophers are likely to disagree is, given our assumptions, some evidence that one's own thinking is likely to be mistaken.) Perhaps the next move is to demand more insulation – insulation from all higher-order evidence. Let's call an inclination based solely on first-order evidence "fully insulated."<sup>33</sup> So on this new proposal, our philosophical views should be our fully-insulated inclinations. This would allow Erika to have the view that  $p$ , since  $p$  seemed correct to her before considering certain higher-order worries. Unfortunately, this revised proposal is too simple.

The problem is that certain higher-order evidence does not seem to be evidence that philosophers should set aside in their thinking about the issues. Consider an analogy. Imagine that one is on an admissions committee of some kind. She learns that she is prone to implicit bias: Her (perhaps fully insulated) inclination is, often, to regard male applicants as being more

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<sup>32</sup> [reference omitted]

<sup>33</sup> Recall that this was the kind of insulated reasoning that Chalmers (2012) and others seemed to have in mind.

deserving of admission than their relevantly similar female counterparts. This information constitutes higher-order evidence, since it concerns this committee member's ability to competently evaluate first-order evidence. But it does not seem to be evidence that she should set aside, in arriving at an independent judgment about a given applicant's merit. Intuitively, she should attempt to compensate for her bias to some extent. And this will preclude her being fully insulated.

Let us move to an example from philosophy. One can imagine learning that, in weighing a theory's elegance against a theory's resistance to potential counterexamples, one tends to overvalue one of these virtues, relative to the other. Of course, this constitutes higher-order evidence, since it is evidence about one's capacity to evaluate competing philosophical theories. But once someone did discover this about herself, I think it quite natural to think that she would be justified in compensating accordingly in her evaluation of rival theories. If she knows that she ordinarily tends to overvalue elegance (say), then she might respond by settling on a less elegant theory slightly more often than she otherwise would have. This does not seem immediately problematic. Arguably, it would be problematic to ignore this information. So we should not set aside all higher-order evidence in our philosophical thinking.

From what, then, should our philosophical reasoning be insulated? It may be helpful to think about why insulation was useful in the first place. So far, insulation has in part been motivated by sincerity. But it has other benefits as well. Think first about voting contexts, like the Logic Team case. We know that a team of relative dummies can outperform a single genius, given certain assumptions.<sup>34</sup> One of those assumptions, importantly, is statistical independence.

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<sup>34</sup> Condorcet's celebrated (1785) jury theorem shows this. The Logic Team is an application of the theorem..

Without independence, we do not necessarily obtain the ‘strength-in-numbers’ result.<sup>35</sup> One benefit of insulation from disagreement, then, is that it enforces independence. Why? Because, on the Conciliationist picture, properly accounting for evidence from disagreement involves *herding* – congregating around a particular opinion – and herding undermines independence.<sup>36</sup> Setting aside the evidence from disagreement may stave off potential herding, which can support independence.

In the philosophical context, there is no voting. But there is a related advantage associated with having a big team: It allows for cognitive diversity. Quite plausibly, philosophy progresses most efficiently when various distinct positions are being investigated.<sup>37</sup> We could, perhaps, imagine a variant of the Logic Team case, in which each team is trying to find a proof of a theorem as quickly as possible. Other things equal, the team might well be better off if its members are not all trying the same type of proof. One might think that something similar could be true for philosophy too: If there is something valuable out there to be discovered (an argument, a counterexample, etc.), a group might be more on the whole likely to find it if the group’s members pursue many different paths.

Suppose that the above is right: Cognitive diversity is indeed desirable in philosophy. This insight can help us to determine which higher-order evidence to set aside in our

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<sup>35</sup> For example, if the dummies always arrive at the same opinion, they will perform just as poorly *en masse* as they would alone.

<sup>36</sup> See Estlund (1994) and Lackey (2013) for discussions that show that making sense of statistical independence in belief-forming contexts is trickier than my discussion suggests. My discussion of the logic team context does assume that there is some way to make sense of this notion, but my discussion of the philosophical context makes no such assumption.

<sup>37</sup> See Ch. 8 of Kitcher’s influential (1993) book for a thorough defense of the epistemic advantages bestowed upon a scientific community by diversity. One intuitive takeaway of Kitcher’s discussion is that communities that rapidly approach consensus can be at a disadvantage, since inevitably they will occasionally converge around a mistaken opinion – which turns out to be quite inefficient. It is better for a community to hedge its bets, delaying convergence until the situation is relatively clear.



philosophical reasoning. Specifically, if some higher-order evidence tends to undermine cognitive diversity (when properly accounted for), then that counts in favor of setting it aside. And if the higher-order evidence *guarantees* cognitive uniformity, then that counts strongly in favor of setting it aside. Does higher-order evidence ever tend to breed cognitive uniformity in this way? It can. Evidence from disagreement is the most straightforward case. When two groups of philosophers disagree, Conciliationism will recommend that both sides suspend judgment – a uniform outcome. Evidence from expected disagreement is similar. Like evidence from actual disagreement, it tends to support suspension of judgment. If everyone were to account for the expectation of disagreement in their reasoning (even if their reasoning were insulated from actual disagreement), a uniform agnosticism would result. So it makes sense to ensure that our philosophical reasoning is insulated from disagreement and expected disagreement (and other kinds of higher-order evidence that would guarantee uniformity, if properly accounted for).

But what about evidence about one's own bias toward elegant theories? It is worth noting that that evidence about one's elegance bias is unlike evidence from disagreement in an important respect: Correctly compensating for it in no way guarantees uniformity: A disagreement between two philosophers could easily persist, even after one or both of them compensated for an elegance bias afflicting them. At the same time, compensating for a pernicious elegance bias can undermine diversity in at least some cases: If I am the only one afflicted by the bias, then (before compensating) I might be inclined toward certain (particularly elegant) positions that others find less plausible. After compensating, I might come to dismiss those positions, too, making the overall distribution of views more uniform. If diversity is all that counts, then I should not compensate (i.e. my reasoning should be insulated from evidence of this bias).

The clear reply is that diversity is not all that counts. Yes, my bias might lead me to pursue views that no one else would. But since the bias is a pernicious one, it is likely making me less accurate. And accuracy counts, too. So our concern for diversity should be tempered by our concern for accuracy.

One might worry, though, that a concern for accuracy could be used to motivate taking account of disagreement evidence, as well. After all, taking proper account of disagreement evidence also makes one more accurate in the long run. Setting it aside makes one less accurate. (This was especially dramatic in the Logic Team example.) In the case of both bias evidence and disagreement evidence, insulating facilitates diversity at the cost of individual expected accuracy. Why insulate in one case but not the other?

To see the difference, we should notice that there are three values we are simultaneously trying to promote: (1) individual expected accuracy, (2) cognitive diversity, and (3) sincerity. In trying to determine which of our inclinations should underlie our philosophical views, we should consider the extent to which each of these values may be promoted or undermined by a given policy, were everyone to adopt it.

Start with evidence from disagreement. Ensuring that philosophers reason in a way that is insulated from disagreement evidence will hurt everyone's individual expected accuracy (as insulation always does). But it will enable sincerity to a great extent (as we saw in *Turning Tide*), and it will facilitate cognitive diversity to a great extent (for if everyone were to take account of disagreement evidence, *complete uniformity* – suspension of judgment by all parties – would result). So while there is a cost associated with insulating from disagreement evidence, there are substantial benefits (such as the avoidance of complete uniformity).

The case for insulating from bias evidence is weaker. With respect to values (1) and (3),

accuracy and sincerity, the case for insulating from bias evidence may be as strong as the case for insulating from disagreement evidence: After all, insulating from bias evidence hurts personal expected accuracy (just as insulating from disagreement evidence does), and insulating from bias evidence may enhance sincerity (just as insulating from disagreement evidence does). But while insulating from bias evidence may enhance cognitive diversity to some extent (depending on the details of the case), it will not enhance diversity *to the extent* that insulating from disagreement evidence does. Properly accounting for bias evidence would not guarantee uniformity in the way that accounting for disagreement evidence would. Even if every philosopher learned tomorrow that she harbored a bias toward elegant theories and compensated accordingly, it is very doubtful that consensus would result. So there are reasons to favor insulating from disagreement over insulating from biases.

This is not to offer a clean-cut rule telling us precisely when to insulate and when not to. But it is not obvious that any such rule should be given. My inclination is to think we philosophers might have some flexibility in certain cases, due to the fact that philosophers value sincerity to varying degrees. Suppose for the moment that both of the first two values (individual expected accuracy and cognitive diversity) tell in favor of accounting for one's elegance bias (i.e. not reasoning insulated from it). Still, I think that it might well make sense for a philosopher to adopt the view corresponding to her inclination insulated from the bias. Perhaps this philosopher is better able to defend her views when she finds herself sincerely committed to them. Or perhaps she finds that she is most creative when she argues on behalf of views that "seem right" to her in the relevant sense. Even if, other things equal, the community might prefer (on accuracy and diversity grounds) to have a philosopher defending view A rather than view B, it could turn out to be more valuable to the philosophical community to have a creative and

persuasive advocate of B rather than a somewhat uninspired advocate of A. So while there do seem to be some general observations we can make (e.g. insulating from disagreement is typically a good idea), we may not be able to delineate the bounds of insulation in philosophy with much precision. Indeed, there may well be cases in which the philosopher has a choice: It will be acceptable to insulate, and also acceptable not to. Since we are trying to promote several different values that can diverge, this permissiveness is not a problem – in fact, it is just what we should expect.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

We began by assuming that philosophical belief in controversial claims was irrational, in order to see what sense we could make of philosophy if this were so. We saw that the “sincere” philosopher – the philosopher who holds views that seem correct to her – faces a dilemma: Either she may believe her views irrationally or else abandon an important kind of sincerity underlying her philosophically controversial commitments. This paper has proposed that, if careful, the sincere philosopher can retain most of what she might want. In thinking about philosophical questions, the sincere philosopher should set some of her evidence aside – including the evidence provided by disagreement. She can sincerely and rationally advocate the views that she is inclined toward, with this evidence set aside. Though she may not believe her controversial views, all things considered, she can hold views that seem correct to her, in an important sense.

This is the view I am putting forward for your consideration. I fully expect to encounter dissenting opinion, and I confess that this expectation prevents me from having much confidence in the proposal, all things considered. Nonetheless, I can say sincerely that it seems to me to be correct.

## APPENDIX

In discussion of the Logic Team case, I asserted that the team would perform better if each player voted in accordance with her initial judgment (call this “Steadfast Strategy”) than if they all voted in accordance with Vi’s (more reliable) judgment (call this “Deferential Strategy”). Let  $A$  denote the event corresponding to the team’s submitting the correct answer. Let  $V$  be an indicator function corresponding to Vi’s answering correctly. Let  $X_i$  be indicators corresponding to each other team member’s answering correctly (where  $1 \leq i \leq 4$ ). Recalling information from the case, we obtain:  $P(V=1) = .90$ ,  $P(X_i=1) = .75$ . Recall that team member voting is independent in the Steadfast case. Compare  $P(A)$  on both strategies.

Steadfast Strategy

$$P(A) = P(V + \sum_{i=1}^4 X_i \geq 3) =$$

$$P(\sum_{i=1}^4 X_i \geq 3) + P(\sum_{i=1}^4 X_i = 2, V = 1) =$$

$$P(\sum_{i=1}^4 X_i = 4) + P(\sum_{i=1}^4 X_i = 3) + P(\sum_{i=1}^4 X_i = 2, V = 1) =$$

$$[\frac{4}{4} (.75)^4 (.25)^0] + [\frac{4}{3} (.75)^3 (.25)^1] + [\frac{4}{2} (.75)^2 (.25)^2 * (.9)] =$$

$$.928125$$

Deferential Strategy

$$P(A) = P(V = 1) = .90.$$

Steadfast Strategy is a bit more likely to result in a correct team submission.

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