Review of: "Who's Afraid of Disagreement about Disagreement?"

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The discussion on peer disagreement represents one of social epistemology's focal points for the past twenty years. Additionally, the results of this discussion have spilled over to a few connecting branches of philosophy, including political philosophy and applied ethics, but also to some related disciplines, like political science and economics. While the work by Elga, Feldman and Christensen helped establish and frame the contemporary discussion, recently published papers (such as this one) indicate that the discussion is still as relevant as twenty years ago.

Ruth Weintraub's paper "Who's afraid of Disagreement about Disagreement" dives directly into this discussion and addresses a serious objection raised against Equal Weight view (EW), one of the popular positions in the debate. Namely, the debate tries to determine what is the rational response to peer disagreement, and the positions in the debate vary from those holding that, in the face of peer disagreements, we should not reduce credence in the belief we have (e.g., Absolute Steadfastness (AS) view and Right Reasons (RR) view), to conciliatory views arguing for some level of epistemic compromise (e.g., EW). While Weintraub's paper does not try to answer the central question (i.e., what would be the rational thing to do in peer disagreement cases) and contributes to the discussion by addressing the famous self-undermining objection (SUP). Namely, this problem targets and affects conciliatory views (such as EW), while views such as AS and RR remain completely untouched by this objection.

Self-undermining objection does not raise at the first level of discussion: we can disagree on government spending, abortion laws or football holding different responses (including EW) to peer disagreement on these issues without ever invoking the self-undermining objection. However, when the disagreement moves to the second (meta) level, and the focus of our disagreement becomes how to rationally act in a disagreement, things start getting messy. Since EW recommends epistemic conciliation and "splitting the difference", it seems to succumb to SUP – EW asks us to meet our epistemic peer halfway, and when our epistemic peer endorses a non-conciliatory view (such as AS), EW asks us to abandon EW.

Weintraub's goal is to demonstrate that EW can avoid SUP. Of course, she is not the first scholar who tried to achieve this. Second part of the paper addressed a few earlier attempts to save EW from SUP. This includes Elga's view following which EW does not apply to itself, Christensen's view which tries to avoid SUP by violating the connection between 1st and 2nd order beliefs, as well as Pittard's view, who (following Elga) argues that EW does not apply on itself. Weintraub demonstrates that all these attempts fail to save EW from SUP. However, she offers an innovative solution by arguing that, before handling disagreements, we should first assess our confidence in the correctness of the rules we are going to

use. Basically, while it seems that the previous authors try to avoid SUP by introducing different epistemic levels, Weintraub tries to address the problem by introducing (something like) a temporal perspective. While we might start from EW in T1, after assessing what our peers think about handling disagreement, we might end up endorsing some other conciliatory view in T2. SUP is apparently avoided because, in T2, we are no longer bound by EW. In the final part of the paper Weintraub uses Wiener's work on the stable credence for EW defend her view from a few objections and to show that EW is a solid answer to peer disagreement.

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I enjoyed reading the paper and learning how far the discussion in the epistemology of disagreement has advanced. The arguments are clear and precise, language and style are appropriate, and the main thesis is well-supported and relevant for the contemporary discussion. However, while I have written a bit on peer disagreement, my background is in political philosophy (so I have mostly dealt with peer disagreement when discussing issues in the epistemology of democracy), and although the digital algorithms have somehow concluded that I am a suitable reviewer for this paper, I must admit I had a hard time grasping what is going on at some parts of the paper. This has nothing to do with how the paper is written (as I have said earlier, it is precise, well-argued, and well-structured), but with how deep the paper is entrenched in the ongoing (but somewhat narrow) discussion.

Here are a few constructive recommendations:

1) The paper is well-structured, yet its structure is not immediately apparent when one starts reading it. I would advise using numbers, letters, or some other tools (maybe even sub-headings) to make it easier to understand what is going on in the second part of the paper ("Major Proposals for Contending with SUP"). Again, there are no mistakes in the text itself, but I think making the structure of the paper (and, in particular, of its second part) more visible (or move obvious) would help readers without a solid background in the epistemology of disagreement.

2) While I have a solid grasp only on the basics of this discussion and I'm unaware of much of the work published addressing these issues, I always wondered why social epistemologists (to my knowledge) do not use Rawls' idea of wide reflective equilibrium when discussing issues related to peer disagreement. It would be interesting to see how this idea is used and I think it could provide substantial benefits, especially when discussing the disagreement about disagreement and thinking when (and how) to modify rules that guide our reasoning.

3) I think this paper is appropriate for an academic journal focused on philosophy or, even more narrowly, on epistemology. While some publications on epistemology of disagreement can easily be used in other branches of philosophy or in other disciplines, it seems to me that this paper has a narrow scope and narrow audience. This does not make it any less relevant, of course, and I think it substantially improves the discussion on peer disagreement. However, I cannot agree with Reviewer 1 on the idea that the paper is "applicable to academic disciplines, cultural discord and political tension". I think that this paper has a more modest (yet very important) aim within the narrow discussion on peer disagreement. I think it is too technical to be used outside that particular discussion, and I find its application on other issues addressed by Reviewer 1 (from war in Ukraine to cultural discord, violence, ethnocentrism, etc.) to be far-fetched

and unconvincing. Therefore, I'd advise submitting the paper to a journal focused on social epistemology (which I find as a better and more promissing option) or modifying it to be more accessible to an interdisciplinary audience.