

Omar Fakhri

Philosophy Department ◊ University of California, Berkeley

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Updated: August 2020

Education

2021	University of California, Berkeley Ph.D., Philosophy (expected)
2012	Texas Tech University M.A., Philosophy Graduate Certificate, Ethics
2009	Biola University B.A. (<i>magna cum laude</i>), Philosophy Minor, Biblical and Theological Studies

Areas of Research

AOS | Epistemology, Ethics, Philosophy of Religion

Dissertation

How to Stand Your Ground in the Face of Moral Disagreement

Suppose you have a moral disagreement with an apparent epistemic peer. How should you respond? I argue that you should not necessarily revise your beliefs in situations of this kind. Revision is warranted only in cases in which your higher-order reasons for taking your dissenter to be your peer are at least as compelling as your first-order reasons for thinking your dissenter made a mistake. Reflecting on a range of cases of moral disagreement, I show that our first-order reasons are often more compelling than our higher-order reasons.

Committee: Lara Buchak (co-chair), Jay Wallace (co-chair), Kinch Hoekstra (law school)

Publications

- 2020 “The Ineffability of God.” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. pp. 1-17.
- Forthco. “Another Look at the Modal Collapse Argument” *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*.
- 2018 “Review of *Idealism and Christian Theology*.” *Journal of Analytic Theology*. Vol. 6, pp. 717-721.
- 2015 “Physicalism, Bodily Resurrection, and the Constitution View.” *Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd, pp. 103-112.
- 2011 “Shoemaker, Self-blindness, Moore-Paradoxical Utterances, and the Broad Perceptual Model of Introspection.” *Southwest Philosophical Studies*. Vol. 33, pp. 44-49.

Submitted for Publication

- (1) “An Underdetermination Argument against Underdetermination”
Conditionally accepted to *Erkenntnis*
- (2) “The Peer Evaluative Requirement at Work”
Under review
- (3) “Past Moral Disagreement”
Under review
- (4) “The Self-Undermining Objection against Conciliationism”
Under review

Presentations

Refereed

- 2021 “Worship as Real Union”
Worship and the Human, Jerusalem, Israel (NOTE: *upcoming March 8-11*)
- 2019 “Another Look at the Modal Collapse Argument”
The Annual Meeting of the EPS, San Diego, CA
- 2018 “Ineffability and Fundamentality”
The Nature of God Summer Seminar, Innsbruck, Austria
- 2017 “The Patristic View of the Person, and Substance Dualism”
SCP, Midwest Conference, Houston Baptist University
- 2017 “A New Look at Disagreement”
The Annual Meeting of the Alabama Philosophical Society, Pensacola, FL
- 2011 “A Critical Evaluation of David Brink’s Response to the Argument from Disagreement and Queerness”
The Annual Meeting of the EPS, San Francisco, CA
- 2011 “David Lewis’ Counterfactual Theory of Causation and Preemption Cases”
The New Mexico-West Texas Philosophical Society 62nd Annual Meeting
- 2011 “An Underdetermination Argument against Underdetermination”
The North Texas Philosophical Association 44th Anniversary Meeting
- 2010 “Shoemaker, Self-blindness, Moore-Paradoxical Utterances, and the Broad Perceptual Model of Introspection”
The New Mexico-West Texas Philosophical Society 61st Annual Meeting, General Conference
- 2010 “On Classical Theism and David Lewis’ Modal Realism”
The New Mexico-West Texas Philosophical Society 2nd Annual Meeting, Student Conference

Other presentations

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| 2014 | “Aquinas, Free Will, and Alternate Possibilities”
St. Thomas Aquinas on Free Choice Summer Seminar, the Pontifical University of Holy Cross |
| 2013 | “Newman on Faith and Reason: An Externalist Account”
The Thought of John Henry Newman Summer Seminar, Oxford University |
| 2010 | “On Augustine, the Problem of Evil, and the Glorified in the Eschaton”
Texas Tech University Graduate Student Philosophy Colloquium Series |
| 2009 | “Is Middle Knowledge Ungrounded?”
The Biola Philosophy Symposium |

Comments

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| 2014 | Commented on “Injustice, Ignorance, and Intellectual Courage” by Kathryn Pogin
American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division Meeting, San Diego, CA |
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Summer Seminars

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| 2019 | Catholic Social Thought: A Critical Investigation
July 22-27 at UC Berkeley (funded) |
| 2018 | The Nature of God: Personal and A-Personal Concepts of the Divine
July 26-August 4 at Haus der Begegnung, Innsbruck, Austria (funded) |
| 2018 | Civitas Dei Summer Fellowship: An Introduction to the Natural Law Tradition
July 15-20 at Dominican House of Studies, Washington, DC (funded) |
| 2015 | Natural Law and Public Affairs
July 13-17 at Princeton University |
| 2014 | Thomas Aquinas on Free Choice
July 23-27 at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome, Italy (funded) |
| 2013 | The Thought of John Henry Newman
June 17-21 at Oriel College, University of Oxford (funded) |

Teaching

Primary instructor

2019	Individual Morality & Social Justice UC Berkeley, summer
2012	Beginning Philosophy Texas Tech University, spring
2011	Beginning Philosophy Texas Tech University, fall

Teaching assistant

2020	Philosophy of Science (upper division) Instructor: Shamik Dasgupta, UC Berkeley, fall
2020	Introduction to Logic Instructor: Matthew McCauley, UC Berkeley, summer
2020	Moral Psychology (upper division) Instructor: Kwong-loi Shun, UC Berkeley, spring
2019	Chinese Philosophy (upper division) Instructor: Kwong-loi Shun, UC Berkeley, fall
2018	Contemporary Ethical Issues (upper division) Instructor: Tim Crockett, UC Berkeley, summer
2018	Modern Philosophy Instructor: Kristen Primus, UC Berkeley, spring
2017	Ethical Theories (upper division) Instructor: Jay Wallace, UC Berkeley, fall
2017	Modern Philosophy Instructor: Tim Crockett, UC Berkeley, spring

2016	Man, God, & Society in Western Literature Instructor: Hubert Dreyfus, UC Berkeley, fall
2016	Knowledge & Its Limits Instructor: John Perry, UC Berkeley, spring
2015	Ancient Philosophy Instructor: Klaus Corcilius, UC Berkeley, fall
2011	Introduction to Logic Instructor: Kevin Coffey, Texas Tech University, spring
2010	Beginning Philosophy Instructor: Kevin Coffey, Texas Tech University, fall
2010	Introduction to Ethics Instructor: Jeremy Schwartz, Texas Tech University, spring

Fellowships & Awards

2018-19	Doctoral Completion Fellowship UC Berkeley
2013-18	The Eugene Cota-Robles Fellowship UC Berkeley
2012-13	The Puryear Fellowship UMass, Amherst
2011	Jerry V. Fox Memorial Award Texas Tech University
2010	Philosophy Department Scholarship Texas Tech University

Graduate Philosophy Courses

Taken at UC Berkeley

Evolutionary Debunking Arguments (qual topic)	Jay Wallace
The Epistemology of Peer Disagreement (qual topic)	Lara Buchak
The Metaphysics of Aristotelian Hylomorphism (qual topic)	Klaus Corcilius
Modal Logic (audited)	Wes Holliday
The Moral Nexus	Jay Wallace
Theory of Meaning	John MacFarlane
Does the Mind have a Causal Structure? (audited)	John Campbell
Logic and Computability	Paolo Mancosu
Faith and Reason	Lara Buchak
Primary & Secondary Qualities in Early Modern Philosophy	Daniel Warren
Aristotle	Timothy Clarke
The Nature of Nature	Dreyfus and Noe
Assessment Sensitivity (audited)	John MacFarlane
First-Year Seminar: First-Personal Pronoun	Campbell and Stroud
Theory of Knowledge	Sherrilyn Roush

Taken at UMass, Amherst

Humean Supervenience (audited)	Phillip Bricker
Epistemological Externalism and Internalism	Hilary Kornblith
Space and Time	Chris Meacham
Mereology	Phillip Bricker
Personal Identity and Bodily Resurrection	Lynne Rudder Baker
Self-Knowledge	Hilary Kornblith

Taken at TTU

Master's Thesis, 9 Units	Tucker and Dorsey
What is Physicalism?	Jonathan Dorsey
Modal Logic and Formal Semantics	Dustin Tucker
Asian Philosophy: Early Buddhist Metaphysics	Mark Webb
Religious Epistemology	Mark Webb
Great Figures: Utilitarianism	Jeremy Schwartz
Metaethics	Daniel Nathan
Scientific Realism and Antirealism	Kevin Coffey
Religious Experience	Mark Webb
Studies in Modern Philosophy	Francesca di Poppa
Causation	Sungsu Kim
Contemporary Aesthetics	Darren Hick
Sydney Shoemaker and D. M. Armstrong	David Gray
Philosophical Psychology	David Gray
Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle	Howard Curzer

Languages

- Koine and Attic Greek (limited reading proficiency)
- Latin (limited reading proficiency)

Arabic (strong speaking proficiency and limited reading proficiency)

Services

Referee

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| 2016 | Berkeley-Stanford-Davis Graduate Philosophy Conference |
| 2014 | Berkeley-Stanford-Davis Graduate Philosophy Conference |
| 2011 | Texas Tech University PGSA Conference |

Moderator

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| 2011 | North Texas Philosophical Association 44th Anniversary Meeting |
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References

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Tim Crockett (teaching reference)
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How to Stand Your Ground in the Face of Moral Disagreement

For most of your moral beliefs, there is at least someone out there who disagrees with you, but who is equally well informed and conscientious. How should you respond in situations of this kind? In my dissertation, I explain and defend a novel evaluative requirement for dealing with so-called peer moral disagreement.

The evaluative requirement calls on us to assess our reasons for taking our interlocutor to be an epistemic peer. More specifically, it says that if these reasons are equally compelling to our reasons for accepting that our epistemic peer has made a mistake, then—and only then—are we warranted to substantially revise our belief or suspend judgment in our answer.¹

This requirement has been ignored in the literature about peer disagreement. Without it, however, it is very difficult to make sense of our intuitive verdicts in cases of ordinary and extreme disagreement. According to the evaluative requirement, you are required to revise your belief in cases of ordinary disagreement but not in cases of extreme disagreement because in the former type of cases, but not the latter, our reasons for taking our interlocutor to be an epistemic peer are virtually equal to our reasons for accepting that our epistemic peer has made a mistake.

The evaluative requirement is especially significant when we think about the problem of moral disagreement. There are two different forms that this problem can take. The first starts from the fact that there is no independent check that would confirm your moral beliefs over the beliefs of those who disagree with you, which allegedly undermines your moral knowledge. In response to this type of skeptical problem, I argue that it delivers the wrong verdict in cases involving cross-temporal disagreement.

In the recent past, for example, there are many individuals who believed that slavery is morally permissible. This fact coupled with the independent check requirement implies that I do not know that slavery is morally wrong. Applying the evaluative requirement, I argue that our reasons for the claim that we know slavery to be morally wrong are much stronger than our reasons for the claim that we need an independent check to verify that our beliefs are true in a case of widespread moral disagreement. Thus, we should reject this independent check requirement.

I then consider a second type of problem from moral disagreement. This problem starts not from the absence of an independent check in cases of disagreement, but from the fact of disagreement itself. A natural thought about such situations is that you are warranted to revise your moral beliefs in cases in which someone who is your cognitive and evidential equal disagrees with you. I argue that there is something else you can do in these situations besides revise your first-order beliefs, namely take steps to improve your epistemic position. Specifically, you can either improve your understanding of the reasons for thinking that your peer is mistaken (e.g. through additional research or reflection); or you can significantly improve your cognitive abilities in a way that's relevant to the disputed claim. It turns out that it is easier for the novice, as opposed to the expert, to escape this problem of moral disagreement because the novice has less epistemic work to do than the expert.

The dissertation concludes by applying these lessons to the case of philosophical disagreement. Some philosophers have thought that any position like mine can be self-undermining. If, according to my position, we should substantially revise our beliefs in the face of peer disagreement, and if there are peer disagreements about views of disagreement, then we should substantially revise our belief in my position. Applying the evaluative requirement, I argue that in most cases of disagreements about views of disagreement, the individual who already accepts my position has compelling reasons for accepting it over accepting that so-and-so is her or his epistemic peer. This, of course, does not apply to everyone who accepts my position. Some might accept it for bad reasons, but this is not true of everyone who accepts it. Solving this self-undermining problem is another reason for accepting the peer evaluative requirement.

¹One might think we cannot weigh reasons for and against different propositions, but I argue for the intelligibility of this claim in the dissertation.