

The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Disagreement

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Introduction: *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Disagreement*

ABSTRACT

Disagreement, and how to deal with it, are some of the oldest problems in philosophy. To highlight the range and depth of the issues involved, the *Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Disagreement* is divided into six thematic sections, mapping the most important variety of this vexing topic. The 12 articles in Section 1 provide an overview of the foundational philosophical questions concerning disagreement. The remainder of the book is divided into five subsections: The Epistemology of Disagreement; Disagreement in Science; Moral Disagreement; Political Disagreement; and (Disagreement and Public Policy. In this introduction, we briefly discuss each of the 41 chapters that have been divided between these six sections, highlighting their underlying philosophical concerns and pointing out to some of their interconnections.

Overview

Disagreement is among the oldest topics in philosophy, one whose intellectual roots trace at least to the Pyrrhonian tradition of ancient Greece, where it played a central role in the thinking of Sextus Empiricus. Disagreement is, at the same time, a perennial topic that remains contested in epistemology, ethics, and outside philosophy in science, politics, and

public policy generally. One reason for disagreement's enduring interest is that generations of thinkers have been baffled by how we ought to respond to it: epistemically, morally, scientifically, and in terms of our individual and public decision-making.

In traditional and social epistemology, this question has gained new popularity, in large part in light of a revived interest over the past 20 years in the epistemology of disagreement¹, which focuses on the question of what the rationally appropriate response is to discovering that you disagree with an epistemic peer. Should you revise your belief, or is it rationally permissible to hold firm? And if the latter, might it be – as the relativists suggest – that both sides are right, relative to their own standard or perspective.² In ethics, anti-realists and relativists have long argued that the widespread intractable moral disagreements cannot be explained by realism or other forms of moral objectivism; and moral disagreement is also claimed to have implications for how we should best understand moral thought and talk as well as for the very possibility of moral knowledge. In science, disagreement has long been – and continues to be – at the very centre of debates about scientific methodology, realism and anti-realism, incommensurability, scientific progress, pluralism and the role of values in science. In public policy, disagreements about topics ranging from healthcare and medicine to the environment and pandemics, have challenged us to better understand (among other things) the role of experts and the value of dissent in liberal democracies. In political philosophy many liberals argue that moral disagreement restricts the type and scope of states governing systems, decision-making procedures, and laws that are deemed legitimate.

A common thread in all of these debates is that, in areas where disagreement is especially pervasive and intractable, the choices between relativism and skepticism become more salient than they might otherwise be, and this fact naturally leads debates that begin with

disagreement to quickly transpose into debates on fundamental questions about the world and its nature. Practically, disagreement appears to counsel caution, toleration, and moderation. But critics maintain that moderating one's practical stance in light of disagreement is no less troublesome than staying steadfast and acting on one's own convictions.

The *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Disagreement* is the first-ever book to comprehensively bring the various distinctive strands of work on disagreement together in one place. The Handbook is divided into six thematic sections, which cover (i) Philosophy of Disagreement; (ii) Epistemology of Disagreement; (iii) Disagreement in Science; (iv) Moral Disagreement; (v) Political Disagreement; and (vi) Disagreement and Public Policy, showcasing 41 leading thinkers on the most pressing philosophical issues surrounding these topics. We briefly describe, in §1-6, the chapters in each of these six themes.

1. Philosophy of Disagreement

We begin the handbook with a selection of 12 chapters organized under the banner "Philosophy of Disagreement", where some of the foundational philosophical concerns around disagreement in various domains are discussed. The entries cover the core philosophical issues central to disagreement and also provide the groundwork for the more specialized entries that feature in the five sections that follow them.

We lead this foundational section off with the foundational questions: What kinds of disagreement are there? What are the objects of disagreement? Steven D. Hales takes up these and related questions about disagreement-types in his contribution "Varieties of Disagreement." The chapter offers a high-altitude taxonomy of different disagreement types,

as well as some of the key choices philosophers typically make when taking a stand on, and developing theses about, specific disagreement types. Hales focuses on disagreement over belief, credence, action, and emotional disagreement, as well as levels of disagreement and key points about parties to the disagreements, including whether they initially reasoned themselves into the positions under dispute (for more discussion on this, see the papers in §2), or instead came to adopt their positions through non-rational means.

Sanford Goldberg's "What's the point? Championing a view under conditions of philosophical disagreement," in chapter 2, interrogates the very point of doing philosophy, given how widespread disagreement amongst philosophers is – not just on peripheral matters, but also on many of the central theses of philosophical interest. At least, on the assumption (itself a matter of disagreement!) that in doing philosophy we aim at truth, we might reasonably wonder whether there is any point to having and defending a view amid so much dissensus. Against this background, Goldberg offers a defense of what he calls "championing a view," through which he defends the rationality of philosophy, and even if we assume widespread disagreement that calls our knowledge on disputed claims into doubt. Key to making sense of the rationality of championing a view under these conditions is, on the view Goldberg develops, an appreciation of how the practice of philosophy is governed by both epistemic and non-epistemic standards.

Chapter 3, "Philosophical Progress, Skepticism, and Disagreement," Annalisa Coliva and Louis Doulos engage with some of Sanford Goldberg's concerns by outlining a view of how disagreement relates to both skepticism and progress, in philosophy. One point, which specifically places this chapter in dialogue with Goldberg's, is that disagreement in a contentious area, such as philosophy, seems to have a negative bearing on the possibility of

convergence. From a lack of convergence, we might be tempted to veer towards a broader skepticism about philosophical knowledge. Coliva and Doulas challenge a binary picture of our option space on which philosophical skepticism and philosophical anti-skepticism are viewed as contradictories; after surveying the various positions in the literature around these options, they explore the prospects of having the best of both worlds by presenting an alternative account – a Wittgensteinian-inspired ‘hinge-theoretic’ intermediate position that drives a wedge between these two extremes.

One challenge in the philosophy of disagreement arises when disagreements are considered ‘deep’ or apparently intractable. How are we to understand the nature and significance of such disagreements and address their challenges? In chapter 4, “Deep Disagreement,” Duncan Pritchard investigates the phenomenon of such disagreements by offering a tripartite theoretical account of their nature; he further explores – also in connection with the entry by Coliva and Doulas – how deep disagreements stand in relation to hinge commitments. On the position Pritchard develops, insofar as there can be hinge disagreements, it is plausible that they count as deep disagreements (though, not vice versa); however, he rejects the idea that hinge disagreements are as such intractable; according to Pritchard, accepting the existence of deep hinge disagreements doesn’t entail a commitment to there being incommensurable epistemic systems.

One area where we might think disagreements look deep is metaphysics. We find disagreements about such basic questions as whether everything is physical, whether there is a god, whether there are abstract objects, etc. Typically, in these cases, one side asserts one view, the other side denies it and proposes a different view. Should we take these disagreements at face value? In his chapter “Disagreement in Metaphysics”, Timothy

Williamson thinks we should; though in the course of making the case for this position, he offers a critique of the opposition, including and especially due to recent work by Thomasson (2017). Williamson's overarching assessment is that the motivating assumptions driving the reluctance to take metaphysical disputes at face value may be far more problematic than traditional metaphysics itself.

Whereas on Williamson's approach, disagreement in metaphysics and elsewhere is an indicator that at least one party to a given dispute must be wrong, Max Kölbel, in his chapter "Disagreement and Truth," puts forward a very different view of how to think about disagreement in connection with the truth of those claims that feature in the disagreement. For one thing, in what he calls discretionary domains of discourse - for instance those that do not concern straightforward factual matters - it looks less obvious that we can infer a mistake from an apparent disagreement. If I say swimming in the lake is pleasant, and you say it's not, must one of us just be wrong? Kölbel's objective in this chapter is to critically evaluate an argument that would seem to show that all disagreements, even in the simple swimming example above, imply that a mistake has been made. He offers several reasons for thinking the argument should be resisted and hence lays the ground for a relativist solution to some varieties of disagreement. The relativist's solution - which accepts that some disagreements are faultless - has had influence also in moral philosophy, a topic we will revisit in §4 in Jussi Suikkanen's chapter on moral relativism and moral disagreement.

A common tactic interlocutors pursue in good faith disagreements is to find a minimal common ground, shared by both parties, from which rational resolution might be achieved. If no other common ground can be found, might "logic" play the role of a final arbiter? (As one thought might go, if logic isn't something anyone can appeal to, then what is?) In

“Disagreements in Logic,” Graham Priest takes up this question and ultimately concludes that the view that logic is somehow beyond the scope of reasonable disagreement is mistaken. He pursues this critical objective by examining the nature of disagreements in logic, with special attention to the role that consistency plays in such disagreements.

Whereas logic might have looked (*prima facie*, at least) on safe ground – beyond disagreement – matters of *taste* initially seem different. This is a point that connects with Kölbel’s discussion of discretionary domains of discourse – viz., areas where it seems at least *prima facie* that personal preferences play a determinative role in accounting for whether judgments (in these areas) are correct. Disagreements about matters of personal taste are a paradigmatic example. You might like your coffee one way, someone else another; and yet, we still find disagreement here: “No, coffee *is* better with milk!” If you and I disagree about this, might it be that our disagreement here is *faultless*? (Kölbel 2004; cf., MacFarlane 2014). In chapter 8, “Disagreement about Taste,” Isidora Stojanovic and Julia Zakkou take up this question. Their chapter provides an overview of approaches to the phenomenon of faultless disagreement about taste, and then, they delve deeper into the language of taste, with the aim of explaining why these cases rise to the level of disagreement in the first place.

Disagreement about taste might in some cases be highly specific (e.g., about the flavor of a particular dish); by contrast, some of broadest scoping disagreements we encounter concern worldviews at large, or ‘maps of reality’. One worry that may arise regarding such maps of reality is that they may stand in competition with alternative maps, which, in turn, gives rise to the further worry that members of your community may switch their allegiance to the alternative map. In “Disagreement and Religious Practice,”

Katherine Dormandy discusses how *religious* communities might develop practices of entrenchment of their beliefs, and the wider maps in which they feature, in response to the competition worry. According to Dormandy, while religious practices do not generally aim to entrench in response to this worry, some do and in ways that are problematic even by the lights of the religious communities who employ them, at least where their objective is to *secure religious knowledge*. Dormandy's chapter, after critiquing the entrenchment strategy in connection with the aim of religious knowledge, offers an alternative proposal for responding to the entrenchment worry.

Different 'maps of reality' will include differences in values. Alison Hills, in her chapter "Disagreement about Values" focuses specifically on disagreements about moral issues – e.g., abortion, capital punishment, eating meat, etc. One philosophical question about such disagreements Hills asks is whether disagreements in values are really different in nature than other disagreements – such as disagreement about logic (Chapter 7) or taste (Chapter 8), and if so, would this tell us anything (e.g., metaphysically, epistemologically, etc.) interesting about the very values we're disagreeing about? Hills interrogates this issue throughout, comparing value disagreements against other kinds of disagreements. The chapter foregrounds themes about moral disagreement that will be taken up in further detail in Section 4.

Esa Diaz-Leon, in her chapter "Disagreement and the Meaning of Gender and Racial Terms," takes as her focus a specific example of morally relevant disagreement: that is, disagreement about the *nature* of gender and race. One idea that has emerged in the literature that attempts to make sense of our talk about gender and race is contextualist – in that it takes the meaning of these terms to vary across contexts of use. Diaz-Leon's explores how

contextualist views about gender and race can make sense of genuine disagreement with someone who is a member of a particular gender or of a particular race. She argues that contextualists views have room to make sense of such genuine disagreements about gender and race.

Our opening section on “Philosophy of Disagreement” concludes with a wide-ranging piece by Bryan Frances. In his chapter “The Unfortunate Consequences of Progress in Philosophy,” Frances articulates and traces out the consequences of one notable kind of result that has emerged from philosophical disagreements – what he calls ‘epistemic upheaval.’ Consider, for example, cases where cycles of disagreement about a given topic in philosophy tip over into a kind of paradigm shift. As Frances notes, we have evidence that these kinds of shifts or upheavals have occurred reasonably regularly throughout the history of philosophy. While this might look like *progress in philosophy* at each point of upheaval, it raises questions about how confident we should be in the views we currently hold while believing, with reason, that they might undergo a future upheaval. In this way, Frances’s challenge can be viewed – in connection with the chapters in our opening section due to Goldberg (Ch. 2) and Coliva and Doulas (Chapter 3) – as entering into a wider discussion of how to conceptualize progress in philosophy given the level of philosophical disagreement that persists.

2. Epistemology of Disagreement

The second group of papers in the handbook focuses on the *epistemology* of disagreement, which has emerged over the past several decades as a central theme in epistemology. Whereas 20th century epistemology was principally concerned – at a high level of generality – with individual-level epistemological phenomena, the epistemology of disagreement is a social

epistemic phenomenon. Understanding its epistemic significance, for individuals engaged in disagreement, requires getting a grip on a cluster of questions, such as whether and how to conceptualize disagreement facts as evidence, and what the conditions are under which our evidence *about* our interlocutors can matter for the (prospective) epistemic significance of a given disagreement.

As the attempted answers to these questions played out in a wave of research beginning in the early-to-mid 2000s, the challenge of the epistemic significance of disagreement was taken to raise special philosophical questions regarding cases that have come to be known as *peer disagreement*. These are cases where those with whom we disagree are not epistemic superiors, or inferiors, but are individuals who, we have reason to think, are in a similar epistemic position *vis-à-vis* a target proposition or domain as we are.

One of the earliest contributors to the peer disagreement literature was Richard Feldman, with his 2004 paper “Reasonable Religious Disagreement”; Feldman leads off the section of the handbook with his chapter “The Epistemic Significance of Peer Disagreement,” which provides an overview of the central epistemological questions raised by peer disagreement. A focal point of both the debate, and the chapter, concerns the rational response to learning that an epistemic peer disagrees with us about something. For example – suppose your friend and you disagree about whether the stove was left on, and you both left the house at the same time, with the same vantage point of the stove. You think it wasn’t left on, your friend thinks it was. Regardless of what you should *do* here (e.g., drive home, etc.), what is rational for you to *believe*, now that you learned what your friend thinks?³ That is: what is the appropriate *rational* response to discovering that you disagree with someone you think could be equally likely right as you? Feldman’s chapter suggests that getting a clear view of how to

answer this question requires an understanding of what disagreement is and what epistemic peers are. The chapter considers a range of answers to this guiding question as well as some puzzles that emerge for those aiming to answer it.

The very idea that discovering disagreement with an epistemic peer might be constitutive evidence for you that you're wrong invites a finer-grained question: what kind of evidence? In their chapter "Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence" Yan Chen and Alex Worsnip connect the topic of epistemic peer disagreement with "higher-order evidence" with an eye to clarifying the idea that the epistemic significance of peer disagreement turns on considerations about higher order evidence. Chen and Worsnip offer their own preferred formulation of higher-order evidence and suggest, in light of this definition, that although peer disagreement can be epistemically significant qua higher-order evidence, it can also serve as straightforward first-order evidence. The chapter concludes by discussing the significance of this latter point in connection with the question of how easy it is to resist conciliatory views of disagreement.

Another of the early central contributors to the peer disagreement debate in epistemology is Thomas Kelly (see, e.g., 2008). In Chapter 14, "Peer Disagreement, Steadfastness, and Conciliationism," Kelly takes as a starting point for discussion the following well-known quote by Henry Sidgwick: "if I find any of my judgments, intuitive or inferential, in direct conflict with a judgment of some other mind, there must be error somewhere: and if I have no more reason to suspect error in the other mind than in my own, reflective comparison between the two judgments necessarily reduces me...to a state of neutrality" (Sidgwick 1874 [1907: 341–42]). As Kelly notes, much of the contemporary disagreement literature can be understood as a response to the above passage, and he uses it as

a reference point to discuss a range of themes that matter for the purposes of assessing those responses, including *idealization*, *peerhood*, *symmetry*, *conciliation* and *steadfastness*.

One important choice point, in thinking about whether Sidgwick is right in his above remarks, is whether the Uniqueness thesis is true: according to this thesis, two rational agents with the same total evidence will never adopt different attitudes towards the same proposition. In “Disagreement and permissiveness” Michael Titelbaum focuses on this thesis and its denial, “permissivism” (White 2005) which holds that at least some evidential scenarios allow more than one rational attitude towards certain propositions. The viability of permissivism is sensitive to how we think about what grounds the disagreement at issue; of special interest here, Titelbaum argues are those cases where disagreement is a result of the parties to the disagreement’ relying on different rational standards. Titelbaum concludes his article by discussing how, in the context of thinking about permissivism, this kind of disagreement has been misunderstood.

Disagreement not only relates to questions of evidence, justification and permissible belief, but also to the very possibility of knowledge. Mona Simion and Fernando Broncano-Berrocal, in their chapter, “Disagreement and Knowledge,” argue that the prospects of ‘stripping off’ idealizations, and, ultimately, of giving an answer to this general question are dim, at least in so far as the only methodological approach to the epistemology of disagreement is one that places the analysis of peer disagreement ahead of an analysis of the normativity of belief in the face of disagreement.⁴ In contrast, Simion and Broncano-Berrocal propose a knowledge-first approach to disagreement that takes knowledge to be the telos of our epistemic activity and hence the central value of the epistemic domain; they develop this

approach and defend it against competitor versions, including Amia Srinivasan and John Hawthorne's (2013) approach.

While many of the chapters thus far in this section are concerned, broadly speaking, with the question of what disagreeing *well* involves, the focus has largely been on properties of beliefs (e.g., rationality) as opposed to of believers specifically. Yet, these qualities – e.g., of intellectual character –, as virtue epistemologists contend, might be explanatorily important in their own right. In “Disagreement and Intellectual Virtues and Vices,” Alessandra Tanesini investigates the virtues and vices of disagreeing parties as well as of the witnesses to disagreements. In the course of doing so, she clarifies both the notion of disagreement and the kind of pluralist approach to virtues and vices⁵ she deploys to best characterize how to disagree well and to avoid disagreeing badly. She pursues the topic further by focusing on the related topics of distinguishing genuine from apparent disagreements, responding to peer disagreement, and what it is to disagree well or badly in individual or group contexts.

3. Disagreement in Science

Disagreements in science are prevalent despite the way science both progresses and manages consensus on certain scientific questions. The matter of what the theoretical, methodological and practical implications of disagreement in science are remains a key research area within the philosophy of disagreement as well as in philosophy of science.

For one thing, given that scientists fall within the category of recognized *experts* (at least on their specific area of expertise) – scientific disagreements between such experts will plausibly be instances of the kind of peer disagreement that has been a focus of our chapters in Section 2. Disagreements in science also have ramifications for our views about how we

should think about the (epistemic) significance of scientific disagreement (see, e.g., the contributions of Lawlor and Psillos and Antiochou in this section). For instance, do persistent disagreements in science, in principle, weaken the case for reaching consensus in science?

Within the philosophy of science specifically, the *metaphysical* significance of disagreement (apart from its epistemic significance) has played a central role in debates about realism in science – e.g., about whether our scientific theories are true and whether the entities they postulate exist. More recently, applied questions related to disagreement and science, have also come to the fore. One such question concerns the role of disagreement for rational trust in expert opinion in policy debates, including climate change and vaccine hesitancy, as they will be discussed in Section 6.

In the opening article of this section, “Disagreement in Science in Historical Context,” Markus Seidel examines the topic against the backdrop of the history of science. The chapter focuses on the philosophical consequences regarding disagreement that can be drawn from the history of science, with a focus on the work of Thomas Kuhn (1962) and Paul Feyerabend (1975) who, in different ways, emphasized the idea of incommensurability and its role in scientific disagreement. Incommensurability – a theme we considered in Pritchard’s chapter in Section 2 in connection with Wittgensteinian (1969) hinge epistemology – arises in the context of a disagreement in science where the frameworks or principles appealed to by each side differ significantly enough that rational resolution is impossible by the lights of both competing frameworks or principles. Seidel concludes his historical overview with reflections on the use of historical examples in arguments for and against scientific realism.

In “On the Nature of Scientific Disagreement,” Insa Lawler connects scientific disagreement with the topic of peer disagreement – the central topic of Section 2. The chapter

proposes that, the scope and extent of differences in disagreement across disciplines are explainable, at least in part, in terms of methodological, conceptual, and normative issues and the questions of the correct interpretation of data. Lawler then investigates whether persistent scientific disagreement can be rational and, further, whether it is an impediment to scientific progress. The chapter concludes with reflections on how scientific disagreement might be nurtured or manufactured by outside influences, e.g. by economic or political stakeholders.

One of the central theoretical disputes in the philosophy of science concerns scientific realism. Stathis Psillos and Konstantina Antiochou take up this topic in “Scientific Realism and Disagreement” with a focus on the question of how advocates of realism handle (or ought to handle) scientific disagreement. Along the way, Psillos and Antiochou engage with the so-called underdetermination of theories by evidence as well as the role of values in science. It will turn out, they argue, that the viability of disagreement-based arguments against realism depend on allowing for rampant underdetermination and on the viability of a distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic values in science.

Realism in science, broadly understood, is also the guiding theme of Darrell P. Rowbottom’s “Disagreement in the Scientific Realism Debate.” How do we know when scientific disagreement persists on a given topic and relatedly, if so, what the extent of that disagreement is. Rowbottom clarifies a number of conceptual points relevant to answering these questions, among other things, by drawing attention to the matter of how disagreement requires divergence in attitude (and how significant this divergence must be) and how this relates to degrees of belief. Another key theme of the chapter concerns the question of where to find evidence that, for a given topic, scientific disagreement actually persists. Rowbottom suggests that care is needed in assessing the extent of disagreement in science by considering

published work, and this is due to the potentially misleading import of ‘one-off’ papers published on the topic and which challenge the majority view.

Disagreement in science is closely related to the converse theme of scientific consensus, which (like disagreement) plays an important kind of signaling function. For example, the presence of scientific consensus about a scientific theory may indicate that the theory is at least substantially correct, which in turn prompts scientists to rely on the theory in order to test other theories, as well as to present the theory as true in testimonial interactions with laypeople. Finnur Dellsén, in his chapter “Disagreement and Consensus in Science” examines philosophical issues raised by disagreement and consensus in science, including what counts as a consensus, how to assess when it is reached, and, relatedly, whether scientists themselves should defer to the consensus position among their peers whenever such a consensus exists.

Whereas disagreements about value and disagreements about science are often conceived as separate, it is also the case that, at certain theoretical choice points, what is at dispute in scientific disagreement are values in science. In “Disagreements about Values in Science,” Zina Ward investigates disagreement over scientific values such as simplicity, fruitfulness, explanatory power, and scope, as well as the question of, how to identify these normative features in a given theory. One underlying question Ward pursues in the chapter is whether the presence of disagreement about epistemic values implies that science is laden with non-epistemic values; this underlying question, which connects with the entry by Psillos and Antiochou, in turn raises several further clarificatory issues. The chapter surveys and engages with the relevant literature.

One point of commonality between most (at least, first order) scientific disagreements is that they are disagreements about descriptive facts – about how things *are*, as they are observable and testable. Just as descriptive questions matter importantly to us, so do normative questions, questions whose answers we cannot discover through empirical observations and tests only. Disagreements of this latter sort – a paradigmatic instance of which are *moral disagreements* – will be the next section’s central focus.

4. Moral Disagreement

Moral disagreements are wide ranging and prevalent. We regularly encounter disagreement about applied moral issues, about normative ethics and moral principles, and -- among metaethicists -- about how to best characterize the status of moral disagreements.

One position in metaethics, moral realism, is thought by its critics to be subject to an objection from disagreement – viz., the idea that facts about moral disagreement should lead us to reject moral realism. In their chapter, “Skepticism and Moral Disagreement” Olle Risberg and Folke Tersman examine the idea that disagreement undermines moral realism because of its skeptical epistemological implications. According to this line of thought, if moral facts are as objective as the realist says, then disagreement about them would serve to support epistemic moral skepticism, that is, would serve to show that we have no moral knowledge or justified moral beliefs. But epistemological skepticism is an implausible position, so if realism leads to it, we should reject realism. Risberg and Tersman investigate some ways of making the argument against moral realism from the skeptical implications of moral disagreement. They discuss, among other things, what form of skepticism such an appeal to disagreement would have to establish to vindicate the above line of reasoning

against moral realism and which epistemological assumptions such an argument would need to invoke.

In his chapter, Billy Dunaway engages with the similar questions by trying to vindicate moral realism against skeptical challenges arising from moral disagreement. Dunaway discusses both the kind of epistemological challenge that Risberg and Tersman raise, as well as another well-known argument against moral realism arising from disagreements between us and a community on a moral twin earth. Dunaway argues that naturalist moral realists can overcome both these challenges from disagreement.

Expressivists about moral thought and talk hold that our moral judgments express desire-like mental states rather than the belief-like mental states that moral cognitivists propose. The topic relates to the previous entries in so far as realists are (or at least tend to be) cognitivists. For instance, according to expressivism, to judge that murder is wrong is just to desire not to murder, plan not to murder, or be against murdering (depending on the expressivist). Expressivism is sometimes thought to face a problem with disagreement because some have argued that there is no genuine disagreement between someone who desires not to murder and someone who desires not to murder, just a difference in preferences; in contrast if to judge that murder is wrong is to believe that it is wrong, then the claim of someone who makes this judgments cannot be true simultaneously with the judgment of someone who judges that murder is permissible. In their contribution, “Expressivism and Moral Disagreement” Christa Peterson and Mark Schroeder argue that expressivism actually explains our moral disagreements better than the view that moral judgments are beliefs. They argue that expressivism offers a better account than cognitivism of the pervasiveness, intractability, and depth of our moral disagreements. It also explains better the essential

contestability of moral terms like ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ as well as the fact that moral disagreements seem like they cannot be settled.

An alternative to realism, expressivism, and skepticism is moral relativism. According to moral relativism, rightness and wrongness is always standard-relative: some actions are right relative to some people’s standards and wrong relative to others, but this is all there is to right and wrong; there is no objective or absolute rightness or wrongness that outstrips the rightness and wrongness of actions relative to certain standards. In “Moral Disagreement and Relativism,” Jussi Suikkanen discusses arguments for and against moral relativism from disagreement. Many relativists argue that we have to accept relativism in order explain the pervasive amount of moral disagreement that we find within and across cultures. But others argue that moral disagreement counts against relativism because many moral disagreements cannot be accounted for within a relativist framework. For instance, how do we account for the disagreement between Utilitarians and Kantians about the footbridge trolley case? Both parties to this disagreement agree that pushing the man to his death to save five people in this case is right relative to Utilitarianism and wrong relative to Kantianism. But in this case, if there is nothing to right and wrong beyond standard-relative rightness and wrongness, it’s unclear how Utilitarians and Kantians could actually disagree about the morality of this case. Suikkanen explains and assesses both the argument from disagreement for relativism and the argument against disagreement from relativism.

Although there has been a lot of philosophical discussion and debate about the implications of moral disagreement for metaethics—for whether relativism, realism, skepticism, or expressivism are correct—there has been relatively little discussion about the implications of moral disagreement for normative ethics, for accounts of which actions are

right and wrong and why. In his chapter, “Moral Disagreement and Normative Ethics,” Marcus Arvan investigates what the implications of moral disagreement are for normative ethics and discusses eleven different ways of thinking about the implications of moral disagreement for normative ethics.

Beyond the implications of moral disagreement for metaethics and ethics, there are questions about how moral disagreements might be overcome. In “Overcoming Moral Disagreement”, J. Adam Carter clarifies the topic of moral disagreement and makes some distinctions needed to highlight the kinds of disagreements of particular philosophical interest from those that might superficially resemble them. The chapter then outlines some barriers to overcoming moral disagreements, with special focus on pragmatic presuppositions, background-metaethical commitments, inclinations to expressive reporting, and tendencies to polarize.

5. Political disagreements

As with moral disagreements, disagreements on political issues are widespread not only in philosophy, but outside of it in mainstream discourse. In his chapter “Disagreement and Contemporary Political Philosophy,” Michael Hannon engages with and discusses the nature and value of political disagreement, with a guiding focus on what explains political disagreement, whether it is a good thing, whether there is a duty in some circumstances to disagree. He also investigates the obverse of disagreement, the topic of consensus in politics and asks what is reasonable to expect when it comes to political consensus, whether such consensus would threaten democracy, and if so under what conditions civil disobedience might be a justified expression of political disagreement.

Garret Cullity, in his chapter “Virtuous and Vicious Political Disagreement,” focuses on political disagreements through the lens of their political representatives. A guiding question pursued in the chapter is what makes for *virtuous* – and not merely permissible – political disagreement? What constitutes vicious political disagreement? These questions raise a number of important clarificatory issues and subquestions, the chapter delves into these in detail.

In “Epistemic Peerhood and Moral Compromise,” Simon Căbulea May explores reasons to compromise in political disagreement in connection with epistemic peerhood and epistemic compromise in collective decision making. The chapter develops a criterion to distinguish between reasons for correction and reasons for compromise, before setting out, and then criticizing, the peerhood argument for political compromise. May maintains that even if peerhood does sometimes have this implication, this at most motivates correction rather than compromise.

Along with theoretical responses to political disagreement, some responses concern what if any restrictions to place on individuals who participate in certain kinds of disagreements; relatedly, a topic of interest is whether facts about disagreement might motivate a lack of any restriction on the speech one might use in the course of disagreeing. Robert Simpson and Sebastian Bishop-Ben, in their chapter “Disagreement and Freedom of Speech,” examine two ways in which liberal thinkers have appealed to claims about disagreement in order to defend a principle of free speech. One line here due to Mill holds that free speech is necessary for healthy disagreement; a different line is that free speech is needed, when people disagree about values, for a legitimate democratic government. Simpson and Bishop-Ben lay out both of these arguments and argue that they come up short.

Like Simpson and Bishop-Ben, Neil Levy takes up the issue of political disagreement and free speech. In his chapter “Refusing to Disagree and Debate: Disagreement and No Platforming”, Levy considers arguments for and against open speech, with a special focus on the epistemic costs (and benefits) of restricting speech in universities and similar institutions. Of interest here is a distinction drawn by some writers between academic freedom, which is governed by university-specific norms, and free speech, which is governed by norms that apply to all members of civil society. Levy maintains that this distinction is not fine-grained enough for profitable epistemic analysis regardless of its legal value; moreover, as Levy suggests, different norms might be applicable to speech in classrooms versus specialised research seminar rooms, given different background expectations and different background knowledge.

Ritsaart Reimann & Mark Alfano, in their chapter, “Political Disagreement, Moral Misinformation, and Affective Polarization” address the relationship between misinformation and disagreement, and note the explanatory significance of affective polarization, as opposed to ideological polarization, in this space. Along the way, they explore the relationship affective polarization has with moral outrage and misinformation, and (with a focus on US political discourse) they look at the political implications of affective polarization as well as potential solutions to the problems that arise in this area.

6. Disagreement and Public Policy

The sixth and final section of the Handbook focuses on how disagreements affect public policy. In “Philosophical Disagreement and Public Policy Making,” Thom Brooks takes as a starting point the observation that philosophers often disagree about matters pertinent to public policy

and, likewise, often advise policy makers in light of philosophical literature. Brooks considers how such philosophical disagreement should impact on policy-making and on philosophers advising policy-makers. He focuses on philosophical disagreements about three approaches to politics, justice, and policy-making: a Rawlsian liberal approach, Nussbaum and Sen's capabilities approach, and the behaviorist 'nudge' approach favored by Thaler and Sunstein.

In their chapter "Disagreement about Evidence and Evidence Based Policy" Nancy Cartwright and Nick Cowen take up the topic of disagreement in connection with the application of scientific methods to public affairs (i.e., evidence-based policy), contrasting this with ideologically-driven or merely intuitive "common-sense" approaches to public policy.

In "Disagreement and Public Health" Katherine Furman and Maya Goldenberg examine various factors that could lead to public disagreement about issues of public health and the implications of such disagreements. Among other things, they emphasize that (when the science is uncertain and emergent, for instance, at the outset of an outbreak, "following the science" is an inadequate refrain for signaling good public health response. A complicating factor is when, in the face of early emergent scientific results about a public health issue, decisive action is needed. Furman and Goldenberg emphasize the importance of unpacking competing interests, values, and trade-offs for ensuring inclusive, equitable, and effective public health interventions.

Sam Baron and Anna Sawyer focus on how disagreements are relevant to public policy-making surrounding Artificial Intelligence in their "Disagreement and Artificial Intelligence." They investigate three topics. First, whether moral disagreement undermines our ability to generate ethical AI. Second, how considerations regarding rational and peer

disagreement impact on and interact with the use of AI in medical diagnosis and the opacity of AI algorithms. Third, the implications of disagreements about the classifications of datasets for how we should train machine learning algorithms.

The section, and the Handbook, rounds out with Jay Odenbaugh's chapter "Disagreement and the Environment"; on issues related to the environment including climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, invasive species. Odenbaugh notes that we find disagreement about what is happening, why it is happening, and what is to be done. This chapter focuses on one of the most pressing topics of our time, the case of climate change by examining what climate skepticism is, what evidence convinces climate scientists to think climate change is largely human caused, and the evidence for a consensus amongst experts and why such a consensus should even matter. Odenbaugh concludes by considering some popular sources of disagreement about climate such as the "Merchants of Doubt" and Climategate.

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¹ For some representative contributions to this debate, see, e.g., Feldman (2006); Christensen (2007); Elga (2007); Frances and Matheson (2019); Kelly (2008).

² For some representative overviews and approaches to this position, see Baghramian and Carter (2015); MacFarlane (2014); Baghramian (2004); Baghramian and Coliva (2019); cf., Boghossian (2007).

³ Alternatively: to what extent if any are you rationally required to lower your credence in the target proposition.

⁴ For earlier work on the normativity of belief by Simion and colleagues, see, e.g., Simion, Kelp, and Ghijsen (2016).

⁵ For Tanesini's own recent development of vices in particular, see Tanesini (2021)