

Consideratism and the Credence of Conflicting Concepts

Skepticism has had a problem for a long time: it seems self-defeating. If I can't trust something, can I trust that I can't trust it? Pyrrho thought that "No one knows anything - and even that's not certain." [1] Or at least, that was Pyrrho's answer to the "self-defeat objection." Whether this is convincing or not, it has been known that throughout philosophical history, having a skeptical bone in your body is a good thing. From Socrates saying "the only thing I know is that I know nothing," [3] to Voltaire saying "Doubt is not a pleasant condition, but certainty is absurd." [4] While skepticism has been through the wringer, a new challenger emerges, Conciliationism. Conciliationism accepts that skeptical bone and suggests that maybe instead of throwing away any possible certainty, we should accept everything from good sources. This still faces a "self-defeat objection." If someone of sufficient worth philosophically disagrees with conciliationism itself, would you not need to incorporate that into your beliefs? If you do, then wouldn't your conciliatory views be eaten away by those who disagree with it? Proponents of the "self-defeat objection" certainly think so. Christensen, however, doesn't [2]. In this brief essay, I will discuss Christensen's view on the "self-defeat objection" to conciliationism. I will then discuss how this view is flawed and can be rectified with consideratism, a modification to conciliationsim, suggesting an "Occam's Razor" type answer to the "self-defeat objection" of conciliationism.

So first, Christensen doesn't think the "self-defeat objection" has merit because we don't need to incorporate multiple sources saying the same thing. He puts it well in an example:

“If my friend tells me that the NOAA has accurate weather predictions, and I see that the NOAA predicts rain tomorrow, that will affect my credence in rain. But if I then learn that my friend has looked at the NOAA prediction, and as a result she believes that it’ll rain, this should have no significant further effect on my credence in rain. So in this version of the case, there seems to be no problem at all for [conciliationism]” [2]

What Christensen is saying here is that once I am told conciliationism is wrong by a reputable source, I don’t need to hear it again, or rather, incorporate it again. My response is simple, and Christensen addresses it briefly. My response is that of multiple good arguments and sources saying that conciliationism is wrong. Sure, if one reputable source says that conciliationism is wrong and they give me multiple arguments for it, I agree with Christensen in that:

“Conciliationism does not require multiple conciliations with stubborn interlocutors.” [2]

Ultimately, in earnest, Christensen's argument in extraction might look as follows:

- (1) If, as a conciliationist, a peer disagrees with me, then I don’t need to incorporate the same argument multiple times into my view. (Basic)
- (2) If I don’t need to incorporate the same argument multiple times into my view, then my credence in conciliationism does not wane, thereby avoiding the self-defeat objection. (Basic)
- (3) Therefore, if, as a conciliationist, a peer disagrees with me, then my credence in conciliationism does not wane, thereby avoiding the self-defeat objection. (Hypothetical Syllogism 1, 2)

However, there is still the issue of many interlocutors. Christensen addresses the possibility of a couple of interlocutors, but what about expert consensus? In other words, I disagree with (1). If expert consensus was that conciliationism is wrong, the conciliationist would have to, self-defeatingly, stop agreeing with conciliationism.

My answer is simple: consideratism. Consideratism is like conciliationism in that multiple views do help inform our position. However, different from conciliationism, there is no need to incorporate conflicting views into my own if I disagree with them for whatever reason. I should always try to continually further my understanding of a topic and become the expert myself, but I do not have to give credence to an opposing view beyond *considering* its possibility. This view gives that I am always going to want to be more informed on a specific subject in question and will give the “benefit of the doubt” to many views, but by no means does that actually mean I have to incorporate them into my worldview.

One thing is imperative: things can imply multiple, even contradictory things. Humor me for a second, as I understand this is not a great example, however, it should give an understanding of what I am talking about. One might make the argument that running is quicker than walking, and being quicker is good, and so, therefore, running is good. Alternatively, someone else might make the argument that running generates fatigue, and generating fatigue is bad, and so, therefore, running is bad. These two arguments generate conflicting results, one is that running is good, and the other, that it’s bad. They both, if we are humoring me, make a good point. However, it ultimately comes down to the agent to incorporate the view they are most convinced by, but only while also seriously *considering* the alternative. This avoids the “self-defeat objection” altogether by simply saying that we don’t need to incorporate conflicting views, but at least consider their possibility. As a result, my argument in extraction might be seen as follows:

- (4) Consideratism requires us to consider the possibility of other views. (Basic)
- (5) Considering the possibility of other views does not require the incorporation of conflicting views. (Basic)
- (6) Therefore, Consideratism does not require the incorporation of conflicting views.
(Categorical Syllogism 4, 5)

In brief, the arguments presented, both of consideratism's ability to avoid the "self-defeat objection" as well as Christensen's argument are broad strokes. However, I think they paint the picture efficiently considering the circumstances. With consideratism being an alteration of conciliationsim, I think the conciliationist can take consideratism as a means to holding onto the foundation without being forced to allow it to wane. In other words, I do not think that Christensen's argument amounts to the conciliationists relaxation towards the "self-defeat objection," but consideratism does.

Sources

- [1] Nigel Warburton, "A Little History of Philosophy," *Yale University Press*, 2011
- [2] David Christensen, "Akratic (Epistemic) Modesty," *Philosophical Studies*, 2021
- [3] Plato, "Apology"
- [4] Voltaire, "Voltaire in His Letters: Being a Selection from His Correspondence"