

## Gaslighting and Peer Disagreement

(This is a draft. Please cite the final and definitive version which is forthcoming in JESP.)

### Abstract

I present a counterexample to Kirk-Giannini's (2023) Dilemmatic Theory of gaslighting.

**Keywords:** Kirk-Giannini, Cameron; Gaslighting; Epistemic Dilemmas

### Introduction: The Dilemmatic Theory and its Attractions

According to the Dilemmatic Theory proposed by Kirk-Giannini (2023, p. 757):

A gaslights B with respect to p iff (i) A intentionally communicates p to B, (ii) B knows (and A is in a position to know) that if p is true, then B has good reason to believe she lacks basic epistemic competence in some domain D, (iii) A does not correctly and with knowledge-level doxastic justification believe p, and A does not correctly and with knowledge-level doxastic justification believe that B lacks basic epistemic competence in D, and (iv) B assigns significant weight to A's testimony.

Part of what sets this theory apart is that it is not supposed to include any appeal to social hierarchies or testimonial injustice or the intentions of the gaslighter (other than the intention to communicate p). At the same time, it articulates and makes explicit a feature of gaslighting that in retrospect is clearly central but until now has gone largely unrecognized<sup>1</sup>. In particular, the theory illuminates the distinctive dilemmatic structure of gaslighting. This kind of insight, something that in retrospect seems like it should have been obvious and central all along, is the mark of an important contribution.

The theory also delivers the judgment that gaslighting occurs in the following cases:

*Central Case:* Gregory seeks to rob Paula of her aunt's jewels, which are hidden in her attic. He routinely searches the attic, at which times the sound of his footsteps and the dimming of the house's gaslights are clearly perceptible to Paula. But when Paula discusses her observations with Gregory, he insists that she is merely imagining the footsteps and dimmings. Distressed, Paula begins to fear that she is losing her sanity.

and

*Skeptical Peers:* "I moved out of one field of philosophy in grad school due to an overwhelming accumulation of small incidents... When I tried to describe to fellow grad students why I felt ostracized or ignored because of my gender, they would ask for examples. I would provide examples, and they would proceed through each example to 'demonstrate' why I had actually misinterpreted or overreacted to what was actually going on." (Abramson (2014, 5)

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<sup>1</sup>Kirk-Giannini gives credit where credit is due, however. He points out that Stark (2019) briefly touches on a similar idea. And he explicitly identifies elements of his theory influenced by Ivy (2017) and Podosky (2021). He also notes that he draws on and builds his theory in part out of examples first introduced by Abramson (2014).

Kirk-Giannini shows that the Dilemmatic Theory accommodates intuitions about a wide variety of cases including variants of the above. And he shows that more traditional theories have trouble accommodating these cases.

### **The Dilemmatic Theory and Some Variants of Skeptical Peers**

Nevertheless, I think there are variants of *Skeptical Peers* that may be cause to modify the Dilemmatic Theory. Consider:

*Skeptical Peers II*: Paula tells her peers that she feels ostracized and ignored in her subfield of philosophy because she is a woman. Paula provides examples to illustrate. When Paula considers the examples, they seem to her to clearly be cases that illustrate discrimination. When her peers consider the cases, they seem to them to clearly not be such cases. Paula forms her belief on the basis of her personal experiences. Paula's peers form their belief on the basis of statistical reasoning about her descriptions of the case. Paula and her Peers assign significant weight to each other's testimony.

If we stipulate that Paula's peers do not correctly believe that she is mistaken, then the theory has the result that Paula's peers gaslight her. That is not the basis of an objection. The question of whether gaslighting can occur in the absence of intention is a matter of dispute in the literature.

I want to focus on a different seeming result of the theory. At first glance it might seem that the Dilemmatic Theory has the additional result that gaslighting can go in either direction in this case. If Paula is right or if her peers are not justified in believing that she is wrong, then Paula's peers gaslight her. And, if Paula is wrong or if she is not justified in believing that her peers are wrong, then Paula gaslights her peers. In the latter case, condition (i) is satisfied because Paula testifies to her peers that she is ostracized and ignored because she is a woman. Condition (ii) is satisfied because if Paula is right, then her peers lack basic epistemic competence in assessing examples of discrimination. Condition (iv) is satisfied because Paula's peers assign significant weight to Paula's testimony.

Condition (iii) *seems* to be satisfied. There are two ways in which the case can be formulated so that condition (iii) might appear to be satisfied. One way (iii) might be satisfied is simple. If Paula is wrong and she was not discriminated against, then the condition is satisfied because she doesn't correctly believe her peers lack the relevant basic epistemic competence.

The other way (iii) might be satisfied is a bit more complicated. Suppose Paula is right and she was discriminated against but she does not believe it. Stipulate that the disagreement with her peers causes her to be so shaken and distressed that she becomes agnostic and does not believe her peers lack the relevant basic epistemic competence and she doesn't believe that she has been discriminated against. Nevertheless, she thinks it is worthwhile to present her case. This could be because she feels defensive. Or it could be because she believes in intellectual diversity and so although she doesn't believe what seems to her to be true, she thinks it is important to get her different perspective on the table in discussion with her friends. We can imagine something similar happening in *Central Case*. Paula might be so shaken by Gregory's testimony that she no longer believes the gaslights flickered. But she may still feel compelled to assert that the lights have flickered. This could be because she is feeling defensive or because she thinks, even though she may well be wrong, her testimony and perspective should be heard as one voice in the conversation.

So the theory, either because Paula is wrong or because she is right but has been shaken by disagreement, seems to have the implication that Paula gaslights her peers.

Either way, the two main camps in the literature would be uneasy with this result. One camp would be uneasy because they take Paula to lack the intentions required for gaslighting. The other camp would be

uneasy because they take gaslighting to occur only in the direction of more to less powerful people. Paula is less powerful than her peers. So she doesn't gaslight. So this result, if Kirk-Giannini were to accept it, would put him outside of the mainstream.

Being outside the mainstream may not be bad in itself. But if one's theory seems to depart from the mainstream, then it is important to either give a story about why it turns out to be acceptable to depart from the mainstream or give a story about why the theory does not really deliver the relevant out of the mainstream judgment.

In the present case, Kirk-Giannini may plausibly reject the claim that his theory has the relevant result. In particular, he may note that there is an asymmetry between Paula and her peers. In *Skeptical Peers II* Paula is not calling into question a basic epistemic competence. She is instead calling into question an advanced epistemic competence. She calls into question the ability of her peers to evaluate complicated statistical claims. Paula's peers form their belief based on advanced statistical reasoning. Paula forms her belief based on her experience that comes from her position of marginalization. Advanced statistical reasoning is not a basic epistemic competence. As Kirk-Giannini (2023, p. 765) puts it:

there are some domains in which our beliefs are not plausibly regarded as formed on the basis of any basic epistemic competence. First, there are beliefs about theoretical domains like advanced mathematics, the natural and social sciences, philosophy.... Second, there are beliefs which... are formed on the basis of evidence which is subtle or otherwise difficult to interpret.

Indeed, given that the report in the original *Skeptical Peers* is that the grad student peers 'proceed through' the examples and 'demonstrate' that she is mistaken, it sounds like they are employing an advanced rather than basic epistemic competence. On the other hand, experience that comes from one's position of marginalization, one might maintain, is a basic epistemic competence. So condition (iii) is unsatisfied. Paula's peers gaslight her. But Paula does not, given the Dilemmatic Theory, gaslight her peers. And Kirk-Giannini has a plausible way of resisting the argument I gave above.

So far so good. But if one takes this line, then it seems to me the theory is subject to a different counterexample. Consider:

*Skeptical Peers III*: Paula tells her peers that she feels ostracized and ignored in her subfield of philosophy because she is a woman. Paula provides examples to illustrate. She evaluates those examples via her views about complicated statistical inferences, sociological background claims, and philosophical reflection about how women in philosophy are generally treated. Her peers know that she is right. But they dismiss her concerns as being based on a misunderstanding of complicated statistics. They tell her that because she is a woman she is incapable of competently engaging in the kind of advanced statistical reasoning required to understand the examples. They maintain that while women have all basic epistemic competences, they do not have the advanced epistemic competences that are unique to men. Distressed, Paula begins to wonder whether they might be right. And she thinks she might be misunderstanding the complicated statistics and therefore whether she has been discriminated against.

If the Dilemmatic Theory is combined with the view that advanced statistical reasoning is not a basic competence, then the theory delivers the result that Paula's peers do not gaslight her. In order to satisfy condition (iii), Paula's peers must call into question a basic epistemic competence. But in this case they do not.

They instead cast doubt on whether she is competent in advanced statistics because, they claim, women are incapable of doing advanced statistics. And yet, this seems like a paradigm example of gaslighting.

Let me say more to defend my judgment that Paula's peers gaslight her in *Skeptical Peers III*. Note that this variant is merely a way of filling in the details of *Skeptical Peers*. As Kirk-Giannini notes, *Skeptical Peers* first appeared on the blog *What is it Like to Be a Woman in Philosophy?* and then was adopted by Abramson in her list of eight central cases of gaslighting out of which she builds her theory. Kirk-Giannini observes that the case is underspecified in various ways. And yet, even without very many details being filled in, it is nevertheless a paradigm example of gaslighting. Our reaction is that it is a case of gaslighting. Our reaction is not that we need to hear more from the woman reporting her experience before we can tell whether it is really gaslighting. And Kirk-Giannini points out that one of the details missing from the case is whether the woman's peers are acting with the intention Abramson thinks is required for gaslighting (the intention to subvert or control). Kirk-Giannini reasons that this suggests that whether intention occurs in the case is irrelevant to whether gaslighting occurs. Kirk-Giannini (2023, p. 750-51) puts it this way:

the case as Abramson presents it is underspecified: it does not tell us anything about the intentions of the fellow graduate students.... We can imagine that the perpetrators of the gaslighting in [Skeptical Peers] do indeed have the kinds of subterranean motivations Abramson regards as individuating of gaslighting. But we can also imagine that they do not.... The fact that we can identify [Skeptical Peers] as a case of gaslighting without knowing about the intentions of the gaslighters suggests that our judgment about the case is not sensitive to facts about those intentions. This conclusion is further suggested by the observation that our intuitive sense that the victim's fellow graduate students are gaslighting her persists when we fill out the case so that they lack an intention to subvert or control her. If this line of argument is sound, it must be possible for there to be gaslighting in the absence of the psychological features Abramson and other intentionalists identify, common or salient though those features may be.

I think we can say the same thing about the lack of details in *Skeptical Peers* concerning exactly what kind of competence is being called into question. There are no details in the original *Skeptical Peers* about whether what is called into question is the graduate student's knowledge from a position of marginalization or her ability to do complicated statistics or anything else. If we follow Kirk-Giannini's reasoning, this suggests that exactly which epistemic competence is called into question is not relevant to our intuitions about whether she is gaslighted. Think about it this way: Suppose the woman who wrote the blog post in *What it is Like to be a Woman in Philosophy?* comes back to fill in the details and reveals that she was dismissed by her peers on the basis of her alleged lack of competence in advanced statistics on the basis of being a woman. We would not then conclude that she is mistaken and that her peers did not gaslight her.

Furthermore, *Skeptical Peers* is an especially central example for testing theories of gaslighting. As Kirk-Giannini (2023, p. 768) puts it:

There is thus an important dialectical difference between cases like [BIRD] and [BILL] and cases like [SKEPTICAL PEERS]. Whereas existing accounts' difficulties with capturing the intuition that certain versions of [SKEPTICAL PEERS] involve gaslighting give us reason to hope for an account which does better, the fact that (Dilemmatic Gaslighting) classifies certain versions of [BIRD] and [BILL] as gaslighting does not indicate that it struggles to capture our intuitions in the same way.

So Kirk-Giannini takes it to be especially important to match intuition in *Skeptical Peers*. And there are ways of filling in the details of *Skeptical Peers* in which our intuitions do not change but in which the Dilemmatic Theory seems to give a counterintuitive result. If we follow Kirk-Giannini's reasoning here, then it seems that the point he makes about others' theories also applies to his theory. It is a serious problem if the theory diverges from intuitions about *Skeptical Peers III*.

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Note: Below I include unpublished ideas about how KG may modify his theory so as to avoid my counterexample.

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## A Revised Dilemmatic Theory

I do not think this is a reason to give up the Dilemmatic Theory. I think it is a reason to revise it and simplify it. I think Kirk-Giannini would do better to drop the appeal to basic epistemic competencies and switch to talk about any epistemic competencies. And I think he should drop condition (iii) of the original theory altogether. This yields the following variant of his theory:

A gaslights B with respect to p iff (i) A intentionally communicates p to B, (ii) B knows (and A is in a position to know) that if p is true, then B has good reason to believe she lacks basic epistemic competence in some domain D, and (iii) B assigns significant weight to A's testimony.

My argument for the revision is this: It simplifies the theory. It gets *Skeptical Peers III* right. And it comes at no cost to Kirk-Giannini. The burden of the rest of the paper is to defend my claim about the revision being costless.

## How Widespread is Gaslighting?

My view has an outside of the mainstream result. It implies that gaslighting is far more widespread than one might have thought. I have a story about why this departure from the mainstream is a virtue, rather than a demerit of my view. I will compare gaslighting to other cases in epistemology and ethics. In these cases, an interesting phenomenon is discovered. At first, it seems that that phenomenon is very narrow. But after subtle reflection on the way the world actually is, it becomes clear that the phenomenon is much more widespread than anyone previously recognized.

### *Newcomb's Problem*

In Newcomb's Problem you are presented with two boxes. One box contains one thousand dollars. The other contains either one million or nothing. You may take either both boxes or only the second. Before your decision, a perfectly reliable prediction is made. If it is predicted that you take both boxes, nothing will be placed in the second box. If it is predicted that you take only the second box, it will contain one million.

There is a characteristic dilemma faced by the agent in Newcomb's Problem. It was once thought that this was an esoteric dilemma far removed from everyday life and from anything an actual agent might face. But as Lewis observed, the esoteric features of the case are inessential. There is nothing about the dilemma that requires the predictor to be infallible rather than merely more reliable than chance. There is nothing about it that requires that she make her prediction in the past rather than in the present. There is nothing about it that even requires that an agent actually makes a prediction about what you will do. All that matters is that there is a process, such as simulation, that could be used to make such a prediction.

So it turned out that the trappings of Newcomb's problem, while making the dilemma vivid, are inessential to the characteristic dilemma in question and made that dilemma seem more esoteric and rare than it really is. As Lewis (1979, p. 240) put it:

Some have fended off the lessons of Newcomb's Problem by saying: "Let us not have, or let us not rely on, any intuitions about what is rational in goofball cases so unlike the decision problems of real life." But Prisoners' Dilemmas are deplorably common in real life. They are the most down-to-earth versions of Newcomb's Problem now available.

This is a surprising result. But it would be a mistake to treat this as a counterintuitive implication worthy of overturning the theory.

In the same way, it seems to me, if we take seriously Kirk-Giannini's idea that the characteristic harm of gaslighting is that the agent faces a dilemma, then we must take seriously the idea that we may discover that dilemma in unexpected places and in other dilemmas that we thought were distinct. And we may discover that it is much more common than we thought. Certain trappings of the *Central Case* serve to make the characteristic harm of gaslighting vivid. But the characteristic harm is a dilemma. And some of the trappings of *Central Case* are inessential to that dilemma just as some of the trappings of the standard case motivating Newcomb's Problem are inessential to the dilemma in that case. It is inessential to the characteristic dilemma of gaslighting that the victim is intentionally tricked. It is inessential that she faces distress. It is inessential that she has less power than her abuser. And it is inessential that the perpetrator is being insincere, doing it for personal gain, etc. The dilemma is present in a wide range of actual cases far beyond what we normally think such as in peer disagreement. Just as it is a mistake to suppose that in Newcomb's Problem can only be formulated in an esoteric way, I maintain it is a mistake to suppose that gaslighting can only occur within the trappings of *Central Case*.

## *Killing*

I think a similar point may be made by looking at the notion of killing. Consider:

*Copper Mugs:* There is an undiscovered causal connection between coffee sips from copper mugs and child deaths on the other side of the Earth. So, for example, each time one takes a sip of coffee from a copper mug, the child furthest from one's location falls dead. In such cases, there is a causal chain that starts with the person sipping coffee and ends with the death of the most distant child. It would require lots of thought and lots of putting together different pieces of evidence to discover this.

Now imagine someone puts together all the relevant evidence. Imagine they discover the causal connection between sipping from copper mugs and the death of children. It would be a mistake to revise our theory of killing so that it does not include the relevant sips of coffee. There is a characteristic harm associated with killing. A causes B to die. We discovered that that characteristic harm occurs more often than we thought and in ways that we didn't expect.

I have given a farfetched example to illustrate the point. But some philosophers argue that this is the situation we are actually in. When we examine the world, we find that the characteristic harm of killing is caused by everyday mundane actions that we perform. And so, such philosophers argue, we kill people all the time.

Schwitzgebel and Barandes argue that, given some plausible assumptions about physics, almost everything you do causes almost everything else. And it will turn out that you cause a bunch of deaths among other momentous events. They discuss an elaborate story about how by raising your arm you will save a scientist in the distant future. They (forthcoming, p. 208) go on to say:

Of course, there is another scientist you killed. There are wars you started and peaces you precipitated.... None of these events would have happened to the people they did in fact happen to, had it not been for the raising of your arm.

Mogensen and MacAskill defend a similar view. They argue that by performing a mundane action such as driving to the grocery store you will cause many deaths. And they argue that such deaths are best counted as killing for theoretical purposes. They recognize that this sounds weird but they (2021, p. 8-9) reply:

saying that Charles Manson killed many people can easily create the false impression that Manson himself wielded the knife in the Tate-LaBianca killings.... But this implication is contextually cancelable. Thus, when we say that Hitler and Stalin killed millions, we take it as common knowledge that they acted through various intermediaries.

Of course, what matters to us is not how to use words... There may be no terms in ordinary English whose denotations and connotations map perfectly onto the distinction whose significance moral philosophers debate.... If so, we should permit ourselves to warp the English language to suit the purposes of philosophical analysis....

We grant that it sometimes sounds wrong to say that you do harm to another when you initiate a causal sequence that ends with that person being harmed through the voluntary behavior of some other agent. But so far as we can see, this is entirely explained in terms of pragmatic factors.... Our reluctance to speak of 'doing harm' in these cases therefore provides no guidance as to what matters, morally speaking.

These authors argue that the actual world is one in which the characteristic harm killing occurs much more frequently than anyone previously thought. And mundane actions such as raising one's hand or driving to the grocery store are, surprisingly, acts of killing. They recognize that given the way we talk about killing normally it sounds weird to say that killing occurs in such cases. But they also argue that this is no reason to revise our theory of killing.

In the same way, it seems to me that once we examine the subtleties of peer disagreement then we will see that cases of peer disagreement have the characteristic harm of gaslighting that Kirk-Giannini identifies. We are faced with the same dilemma as Paula in *Central Case*. It would be a mistake to revise our theory of gaslighting because it turns out that the characteristic harm of gaslighting is more widespread than we thought. What we should instead do is simply accept that after careful reflection on the actual world, and a sober look at the nature of actual disagreement, it turns out that gaslighting happens all the time. This is just as, in *Copper Mug*, after careful reflection on the way the world turns out to be, we should accept that killing is more widespread than we thought.

### **Contrast With Kirk-Giannini on Peer Disagreement**

I have argued, contrary to the mainstream, that it is permissible and even a virtue for the Dilemmatic Theory to have the result that gaslighting is widespread and present in cases of peer disagreement. I now want to argue that Kirk-Giannini's theory has this result even without the revisions I propose. In his paper, he considers various strategies for blocking this result. Here I will consider each of them.

First, Kirk-Giannini casts doubt on the idea that in peer disagreement basic rather than advanced epistemic competence is called into question. We have already talked about that. That way of doing things leads to a counterintuitive judgment about *Skeptical Peers III*. Suppose I am right about that.

Second, consider:

*Bill*: You and your veterinary acupuncturist are calculating the tip for lunch. You agree that the tip should be 25% of the total on the bill. You do your mental arithmetic and form a belief about the amount of the tip. Your veterinary acupuncturist, however, announces a number for the tip which is different than yours. In fact, your calculation is correct.

Kirk Giannini shows that *Bill* is underdescribed. On most ways of filling it out, and in the most common sorts of cases like this, he argues, gaslighting does not occur. But there is indeed one variant of the case about which he agrees that his theory delivers the result that gaslighting occurs. As Kirk-Giannini (forthcoming, p. 23) puts it:

So we are left with, for example, a version of [Bill] in which you have correctly calculated that the tip on the \$100 bill is \$25, your veterinary acupuncturist claims (knowing that your answer is \$25) that it is in fact \$35, and you assign his testimony significant weight, seriously wondering whether you have somehow miscalculated despite the apparent obviousness of the answer. (Dilemmatic Gaslighting) does characterize this unusual sort of case as gaslighting. Yet, when we spell out the details in this way, the verdict is not counterintuitive.... [I]o lead someone to believe falsely that they are a defective epistemic agent just is to cause the harm characteristic of gaslighting, and so it is no objection to (Dilemmatic Gaslighting) that it characterizes cases with this structure as cases of gaslighting. (emphasis added)

I completely agree with the last point. And I adopt that myself in defense of the claim that gaslighting is widespread. But I deny that this sort of case is rare. I think it is, to borrow Lewis' phrase, 'deplorably



common'. I have strongly held views about philosophy, politics, and religion. Prior to interaction with my peers, many of my views seem true to me to the point of being obvious. But I then find that I have peers who disagree with me and for whom the opposing view seems equally obvious. I do not see such cases as significantly different from the variant of *Bill* that Kirk-Giannini judges to be a case of gaslighting.

Of course, in the relevant variant of *Bill*, as outside observers, we are aware and know that I am right and something is going wrong with my friend who thinks the tip is \$35. And I think *that* feature of the case is rare and is something that is different from normal cases of peer disagreement. In real cases of peer disagreement we just don't know who is right. We are not standing outside the cases so to speak in the same way we are with the variant of *Bill* in question. But all of the other relevant features of the case are there in real world cases of peer disagreement.

I also think this rare feature of *Bill* is apt to mislead us in a certain way. Because from the outside it is so clear that you are right and the acupuncturist is wrong, it is tempting to think you should have stuck to your guns and that you are justified in holding your view. I think the case is still a bit underdescribed. But once it is filled in the right way, I think you and the acupuncturist both should start to doubt yourselves. And that is the rational response.

Third, consider again:

(iii) A does not correctly and with knowledge-level doxastic justification believe p, and A does not correctly and with knowledge-level doxastic justification believe that B lacks basic epistemic competence in D.

Another way in which Kirk-Giannini addresses the worry that gaslighting is widespread in cases of peer disagreement is to maintain that who is right matters.

We saw this in *Bill* for example. You are right that the tip is \$25. You are justified in your belief. You should stand your ground. And if you do, you are not gaslighting in that case. This is because condition (iii) of Kirk-Giannini's theory requires that you do not justifiably believe that the veterinary acupuncturist lacks a basic competence. However, you are justified in holding that belief. And so (iii) is not satisfied. And he might say the same thing about widespread disagreement. It matters who is right. If the person in a peer disagreement about some topic comes to the discussion with a justified belief, and if that belief is true, and if they stick to their guns, then they do not gaslighting their peer.

I have two concerns about this approach. My first concern is that it requires an appeal to a specific and controversial account of peer disagreement. In particular, it depends on Lackey's (2008a) and (2008b) theory. While her theory is certainly an important one, there are other contenders. I myself side with Feldman (2006), Christensen (2007), and Kornblith (2010). My view of *Bill* and of peer disagreement is that before we compare calculations, it might be that we are each justified in our belief. And whichever one of us is right has a true and justified belief. After you and I have shared information, however, after we see that we have a peer that disagrees with us, our justification is destroyed. And so condition (iii) is satisfied. And I think this is true across the board on every interesting and controversial issue. All our disagreements about religion, politics, and philosophy undermine our justification. Given that we have peers on these topics who disagree with us, we have a powerful defeater for our beliefs about these topics.

My other concern about this approach is that it still leads to the conclusion that your peer gaslights you. Condition (iii) requires that one does not correctly believe the relevant proposition. And your peer's belief is false. So she satisfies condition (iii). Furthermore, she asserts the relevant proposition. So condition (i) is satisfied. She knows that if the proposition is true something is wrong with your basic competence. So condition (ii) is satisfied. Finally, you assign significant weight to her testimony even if you remain steadfast.

And so condition (iv) is satisfied. Thus, the unrevised theory delivers the judgment that the person with a false belief in cases of peer disagreement gas

Fourth, another way in which Kirk-Giannini sometimes blocks the result that gaslighting is widespread, given his theory, is to appeal to:

- (i) A intentionally communicates p to B.

Consider:

*Bill II*: You and your veterinary acupuncturist are calculating the tip for lunch. You agree that the tip should be 25% of the total on the bill. You do your mental arithmetic and form a belief about the amount of the tip. Your veterinary acupuncturist, however, announces a number for the tip which is different than yours. In fact, your calculation is correct. You both respond to this by conciliating. Now you no longer believe what you judged the tip to be and she no longer believes what she originally judged the tip to be.

The unrevised Dilemmatic Theory delivers the judgment that the two of you gaslight each other. Suppose Lackey is right about disagreement. If you had stuck to your guns, then you would justifiably believe your position. And so condition (iii) would not be satisfied. And you would not gaslight your peer. But in *Bill II* neither of you stuck to your guns. So condition (iii) is satisfied.

This is where the appeal to (i) comes in. Kirk-Giannini maintains that this sort of case would be odd because people who suspend judgment about a proposition do not usually continue to assert that the proposition is true.

I have two thoughts about this approach. First, if this way of blocking the result works for Kirk-Giannini, then it works for me too. It is a feature of his theory that I keep. My two changes are to remove the appeal to basic rather than advanced epistemic competences and to remove condition (iii). Condition (i) is retained.

Second, I do not think it blocks the relevant result. Again I think that cases like this are much more common than Kirk-Giannini does. I think that often in cases of peer disagreement people continue to assert their views even if they now, as a result of disagreement, come to have doubts about them. They might assert them because they have a tribal allegiance that requires them to do so. They might assert the relevant propositions because they feel defensive and by asserting the proposition they are attempting to suppress their doubts. They might continue to assert the relevant proposition because they still think there is enough evidence to place their bets on the relevant proposition but they don't think, after conciliating, that there is enough evidence to believe the relevant proposition. They might continue to assert the relevant proposition because they think that, in light of disagreement no one knows what they are talking about, but the search for truth is a communal project that is best served by people defending the view that seems true to them.

But all of this, I think, is beside the point. The real issue isn't whether the theory can be complicated in such a way that, with the original variant's condition (iii) for example, can block the implication that peer disagreement is gaslighting. I'm sure there is a clever way that I can't see that Kirk-Giannini can use to block the result. For me the real issue is this: Why would he want to block the result? Such complications are to my mind unmotivated and unneeded. The chief motivation for including condition (iii) is to avoid the idea that peer disagreement cases like *Bill* are cases of gaslighting. But, if my argument in the previous section and in this section is correct, there is no benefit for the theory to exclude this result. It would be like changing the definition of Newcomb's Problem so that prisoners' dilemma doesn't count as a Newcomb Problem once we

learn that they are the same dilemma. Or it would be like changing the definition of killing once we learn that, as things empirically turn out, mundane acts like sipping from coffee, raising your hand, or going for a drive to the grocery store cause the characteristic harm of killing. I think it would be a mistake to complicate our theories of Newcomb's Problem or killing to accommodate these cases. And I think it would be a mistake to complicate the theory to exclude cases of peer disagreement such as *Bill*.

Indeed, it seems to me that the explanation he gives for why it is not counterintuitive to maintain gaslighting occurs in the specific variant of *Bill* he considers applies equally to other variants of *Bill* and to common peer disagreement about politics, philosophy, and religion. As I quoted earlier he says '[T]o lead someone to believe falsely that they are a defective epistemic agent just is to cause the harm characteristic of gaslighting, and so it is no objection to (Dilemmatic Gaslighting) that it characterizes cases with this structure as cases of gaslighting.' I think he is right. And I think that once he is already putting that explanation to use in the one case, I think he should put that explanation to use in other cases where he can as well. Doing so would yield a simpler and more elegant theory. So I don't see that there is any advantage to blocking the result that gaslighting occurs in peer disagreement.

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