

## IN OPPOSITION TO EPISTEMIC MODESTY

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to refute the philosophy of epistemic modesty; we attempt to do so through three types of arguments. 1.) By employing the principle of explosion, as well as the telescoping and Taylor polynomial series of calculus to develop logically-backed arguments and scenarios, we evaluate the definitional vagueness of deep content. Through this established logic, we have found that professor Farid Masrouf's concept of deep content implicates the concept of infinitely deeper content; that infinitely deeper content is unnecessary to definitively determine the truth value of certain content; and that infinitely deeper content can be approximated to determine the definitive truth value of certain other content without 100 percent certainty. 2.) Given the context of infinite impacts, religions and philosophies such as Christianity and absolute deontology justify infinite violence under epistemic modesty. Given that an epistemically modest individual would follow the moral advice of someone more knowledgeable about morality and ethics than themselves, we concluded epistemic modesty to be dangerous. Furthermore, we contended that a core tenet of epistemic modesty – cross-paradigm comparison – is impossible due to the lack of a consistent locus of value between various philosophies. 3.) By applying an alternative epistemological school of thought in order to solve the unhooking problem presented by Masrouf, we argue that epistemic modesty is unneeded to detach ordinary projects from anti-skeptical ones. Specifically, epistemic disjunctivism, an immodest epistemology, provides the same advantage in regards to the unhooking problem while aligning more closely to contemporary linguistic norms. The conclusion is that epistemic modesty is implausible as a philosophy.

### Preface

In this Journal, we will be using the operative definitions of shallow and deep content as set by Masrouf, F 2011, [‘IN DEFENSE OF EPISTEMIC MODESTY’](#), *Philosophical Issues*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 312-331. Masrouf's article is important to the subject of epistemic modesty because it lays down the foundational definitions which are necessary for argumentation of the philosophy and its possible benefits. Masrouf defines shallow content as a statement which combines the following aspects: a statement that does not take

a stance on ideas of deeper content but is not the result of one's actual or potential experiences. Perceived ideas/concepts are always shallow. Furthermore, deep content refers to scenarios or realities which we cannot even perceive such as the scenario of envatment or any other skeptical scenario.

### Background

“Perhaps I do not actually have fingers,” Person 2 says. “What are you talking about?” Person 1 responds. “What if our brains are in vats right now, being fed nutrients, how would I know if my fingers are real? Is it possible that I am seeing a simulation of my fingers as illustrated by a supercomputer?” In this skeptical argument (‘SA’ for short), let ‘*b*’ stand for the skeptical scenario of envatment in which Person 2 is nothing but a brain being artificially kept alive by a supercomputer which simulates the experiences of real life flawlessly. Let ‘*p*’ stand for an external world belief which we believe to be true, e.g., that we have fingers. Here is the argument:

**Person 1:** I don't know that not-*b*

**Person 2:** If I don't know that not-*b*, then I don't know that *p*.

**C:** So, I don't know that *p*.

Given this SA, C appears to be logically justified notwithstanding the absurdity of rejecting such a commonly held world view.

In response to this skeptical scenario which Rysiew (2021) proposed, DeRose (1995) and other contextualists (e.g., Cohen 1986, 1988, 2014; Neta 2003a & b; cf. Unger 1975) have attempted to answer this logical paradox operating under the framework of epistemic contextualism. The conclusion is that when presented with this SA, an epistemic contextualist would be indifferent because of the contextualist tenet which dictates that in everyday scenarios there are evaluative epistemic predicates which are often referred to as “is justified” or “knows”. These predicates allow for an epistemic contextualist to bypass the possibility of a skeptic scenario because everyday contexts support the notion that these scenarios are so unlikely that they can be deemed irrelevant. Essentially, regardless of the truth value in the real world, contextualists only concern themselves with perceived truth value within the “virtual” world in which their consciousness exists. Someone who is epistemically modest would differentiate themselves when presented with this SA not because they would react differently than the epistemic contextualist, but rather because of the reasons by which they find apathy to be the appropriate response to the possibility of envatment. As aforementioned, the contextualist disregards the truth value of their disbelief in the SA, whereas epistemically modest philosophers such as Masrouf set out to seek the truth value in these types of logic puzzles.

## 1. Definitional Vagueness

### Section 1: How deep can deep content go?

The concept of deep content, as tokened by Masrou, leads to infinite regress and an unreasonable amount of continually *deeper content*<sup>2</sup> regarding truth values. How so? Let us refer to Masrou's envatment scenario with John, and the idea of an objective viewpoint. John states that "I am not envatted." Given the context of the virtual world, John is correct; given the context of the real world and the broader context, John is incorrect. Thus, we will say that this type of statement contains a *conditional truth value*. We propose that, falling in line with the *principle of explosion*<sup>3</sup>, such a scenario is illogical. Let us recall the basic idea of the principle: A statement cannot be both true and false – John's statement containing conditional truth value violates the logic of the principle. However, does that then mean that John's statement is void of any truth value due to this logical fallacy? We would say not necessarily. Let us elaborate.

The line of reasoning implicated by Masrou in the case of John leads to infinite regress; it is not unreasonable to say that there is an objective perspective above the originally-established objective perspective of the envatment scenario. Let us represent the starting content and context – which John happens to occupy – as  $\frac{1}{n}$ ; and the next higher perspective and broader context – in Masrou's words, the "objective" perspective – as  $\frac{1}{n+1}$ . As a general rule, the following expressions will be formatted as  $\frac{1}{n+a}$ , where  $a$  will represent any integer greater than 0 and of which lacks an upper bound; as  $a$  increases, so does the depth of deeper content. We will expand upon this idea after the following heuristic. These will be the working definitions throughout all heuristics put forth in the next two sections.

For section 1, let us now have the integer 1 represent the concept of the most shallow of content, and 0 represent infinitely deep content. It has to be noted that the values of 0 and 1 do not represent their respective empirical values – they act as symbols and are understood only in the context of the mathematical procedures listed in the first section. As we have defined these terms, let us now propose a heuristic propagated by epistemic modesty where John is envatted.

$\frac{1}{n}$  : "I am not envatted."  
 $\frac{1}{n+1}$  : "That is false.  $\frac{1}{n}$  is envatted. However, I am not envatted."  
 $\frac{1}{n+2}$  : "That is false.  $\frac{1}{n+1}$  is envatted. However, I am not envatted."  
 $\frac{1}{n+3}$  : "That is false.  $\frac{1}{n+2}$  is envatted. However, I am not envatted."  
 etc.

The implication of Masrou's scenario of John propagated by epistemic modesty implies this line of reasoning that leads to infinite regress; in other words, a sequence of reasonings that have a beginning but no end. This is because epistemic modesty implicates that with every truth value, there exists continually broader context and thus, deeper than

deep content. The issue with this idea is that neither Masrouf nor epistemic modesty implies when such context and content is supposed to stop, nor if knowledge lacks an upper bound. We will expand upon the latter later.

We can apply the telescoping series of calculus to make a point. What is a telescoping series? Put simply, it is a method of which an infinitely expanding series is simplified to a few components, simplifying calculations. Let us represent the two levels of content with the following equation, still referencing the previously established expressions concerning John's scenario.

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left( \frac{1}{n} - \frac{1}{n+1} \right)$$

Given the implied concept of continually deeper content, it is logically assumed that the upper bound of the presented telescoping series here is infinity (thus, lacking an upper bound). We will assume, in this case, that John occupies the shallowest level of content for this example. As we expand this equation, it results in an infinite expansion.

$$\left( \frac{1}{1} - \frac{1}{2} \right) + \left( \frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{3} \right) + \left( \frac{1}{3} - \frac{1}{4} \right) + \dots + \left( \frac{1}{N} - \frac{1}{N+1} \right)$$

However, if we rearrange the parentheses established in the expansion without rearranging the empirical or mathematical value of the expansion, a certain pattern emerges.

$$\frac{1}{1} + \left( -\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} \right) + \left( -\frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{3} \right) + \left( -\frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4} \right) \dots$$

We can also represent the expressions of this equation with different terms so that it will be more understandable. In the context of the following heuristic alone, we will define the variable  $S$  as the original statement regarding an observation, and  $C_a$  where  $a$  represents incrementally deeper levels of  $C$ , content, as  $a$  approaches infinity.

$$S + (-C_1 + C_1) + (-C_2 + C_2) + (-C_3 + C_3) \dots$$

This expression expands infinitely, as do the incrementally deeper levels of deep content in the situation of John. However, as we have shown through the placement of parentheses, the terms of the infinite expansion begin to cancel out, beginning with  $-\frac{1}{2}$  and  $+\frac{1}{2}$  and so on and so forth. Thus, if we apply a limit to this expression while also maintaining a representation of the upper bound, the following expression is produced.

$$\lim_{N \rightarrow \infty} \left( 1 - \frac{1}{N+1} \right)$$

Applying this limit, the expression produces the integer 1; given our definitions and the application of this limit, the production of 1 would imply that even though there are higher perspectives that may have access to continually broader context, they are

ultimately unnecessary. If every number closer to 0 represents continually deeper content and thus a broader context, but each increment represents a reason that the previous justification is incorrect, then all that will remain is the initial observation. The use of the telescoping series is meant to prevent the infinite expansion of an expression from clouding the point of convergence or divergence. One could theoretically expand the expression in our scenario and its calculations in its entirety to find the answer, but it will be the same answer that represents the beginning observation – one.

Why does this matter? It shows that a core logic system such as calculus takes into account the idea of infinite expansion, but uses it to produce an answer. This is in contrast to epistemic modesty: its application approaches neither a singular and definitive truth value nor an answer; this also ties back into the application of the principle of explosion – thus, epistemic modesty violates basic logic. We propose that epistemic modesty is logically unnecessary to determine a truth value as it leads to infinite regress; ultimately, the definitive truth value of John’s statement in the virtual world will be unaffected by continually deeper content.

## Section 2: How much deep content is necessary to determine a truth value?

We have just made clear how unnecessarily deep certain deep content can go to determine a truth value. Given certain shallow contents, and even deep contents, the truth value can be determined with the initial observation. However, one may now argue that perhaps the initial observation truly is flawed; the following heuristic may be provided to show the broader context is sometimes necessary to determine a truth value. We will still use the envatted scenario for this purpose.

$\frac{1}{n}$  : “I am not envatted.”  
 $\frac{1}{n+1}$  : “ $\frac{1}{n}$  is not envatted. I am also not envatted.”  
 $\frac{1}{n+2}$  : “ $\frac{1}{n}$  and  $\frac{1}{n+1}$  are envatted. I, however, am not envatted.”  
 etc.

What does this heuristic illustrate? It shows that the truth value initial statement regarding an observation may be incorrect. With this heuristic in mind, a counter-argument may then propose that it requires continually and infinitely deeper content to definitively assess the truth value of perceptual or transcendent content. We believe that this argument is incorrect. Masrour emphasized the power of human generalization in his heuristic with the example of an 18-month old child abstracting the concept of a steel car to a toy car. Generalization, in tandem with Masrour’s idea of abstraction, supports the idea that approximation is possible. This is because generalization is the approximation of a larger idea; the toy car is not a car, and thus generalization necessitates approximation to understand that the differences of structure, composition, and size are simply deviations of a bigger idea. Thus, we propose that it is unnecessary to achieve a full 100 percent level of certainty to approximate and subsequently determine the truth value of content.

Let us expand upon this idea. We will refer to the methodology of Taylor expansion polynomials used in calculus. They are also known as Taylor approximations. What are they approximating? Taylor approximations create increasingly more accurate lines of best fit of a certain function with every incrementally higher degree. With every increase, the Taylor approximation moves closer to becoming identical to the target function. Depending on the original function, the first one to ten increments of degrees are subjectively essential to understanding what the target function will be. However, increments of 10 to 100, 100 to 1,000, 1,000 to 10,000, and so-on and so-forth are most usually unnecessary. Why? Because approximating a more accurate fit after a certain point is unnecessary to understand the target function as a whole.

Is it necessary to pursue continually deeper content and thus, continually broader context to concretely assert a certain truth value? We would say, not necessarily. We can apply this line of reasoning to human approximation of the truth value of deep and shallow content as a whole. Let us look to the expansion of  $\sin(x)$  as an example.

$$\sin(x) = x - \frac{x^3}{3!} + \frac{x^5}{5!} - \frac{x^7}{7!} + \dots + \frac{(-1)^x x^{2n+1}}{(2n+1)!} + \dots$$

The left side of the equation represents the original function; the right side represents its expansion. A fifth-degree Taylor polynomial would give us the following approximation of  $\sin(x)$ .

$$P_5(x) = x - \frac{x^3}{3!} + \frac{x^5}{5!}$$

This particular Taylor polynomial contains terms up to the degree of five, thus the expression stops when the degree of the next term is more than 5. Why is this important? Each increment of degree makes the Taylor approximation more accurate. Given an infinite-degree Taylor polynomial, its approximation for  $\sin(x)$  will no longer be an approximation, but will be identical to  $\sin(x)$ . However, in the case of all mathematical expressions, it is simply unnecessary to have a Taylor polynomial with an infinite amount of degrees. However, it is important to note that even with a single degree of approximation, a Taylor polynomial will be identical to the target function for at least one point.

Let us imagine each incrementally increased degree of a Taylor approximation representing incrementally deeper content in any content. It is improbable to see a first-degree Taylor polynomial anywhere near the actual truth value. However, as the degree of the Taylor polynomial begins to continually and incrementally increase, the validity of the approximation becomes evident, despite the approximation not being 100 percent perfect.

How does this relate to the original argument? A reasonably close<sup>4</sup> approximation that indicates a certain truth value of specific content is sufficient to determine the truth value of that content. Therefore, it is unreasonable to doubt human knowledge once the truth value of specific content is reasonably evident given our approximations. Such approximations will never realistically reach 100 percent certainty. Human knowledge is

finite since human lifespans and the capacity of an individual's knowledge are finite and thus, necessitates approximation; individuals cannot realistically access 100 percent certainty as it only exists within the theoretical realm of infinite knowledge. In fact, the idea of "objective viewpoint" that Masrour proposed was not conceived out of 100 percent certainty or knowledge that it or its arguments actually exist. Hence, it is unnecessary to state that "there is too much knowledge, therefore, humanity cannot definitively determine a certain truth value." This core tenet of epistemic modesty would retard the functions of logic-based systems as it would overly emphasize the importance of minimal and accepted deviation: in mathematical terms, a rounding error. Without the use of approximations, such as the Taylor polynomial, the possibility of philosophical and scientific advancement would be held back by the high possibility of a lack of philosophical and scientific advancement.

What are the findings of these two sections? They are that a.) the concept of deep content implies the concept of infinite increments of continually deeper content; b.) deep content and infinitely deeper content is ultimately unnecessary to definitively determine the truth value of certain content; and c.) if deeper content is necessary to determine the truth value of other certain content, then within the realm of finite human knowledge, it is both necessary and possible to approximate the definitive truth value of that content without 100 percent certainty.

## 2. Moral Issues

In this section of the paper, we will be explicating various issues within the philosophy of epistemic modesty. The first problem with such a philosophy is the existence of infinite moral effects through means such as religion or philosophy. In absolute deontology, for instance, it is infinitely morally reprehensible to break one of the maxims of the philosophy; thus, killing another human being is infinitely bad given that taking a human life is forbidden by a maxim within absolute deontology. Now consider Pascal's Wager: Pascal affirms that humans are incapable of knowing whether or not God exists, yet they must make a decision in regard to his existence that will ultimately determine their fate, the result is either infinite gain or infinite loss. Infinite gain is defined in this context as an eternity in Heaven and infinite loss an eternity in Hell. The following decision matrix made by McClennen 1994 summarizes the results of the wager which Pascal presented:

	God exists	God does not exist
Wager for God	Infinite gain	Status quo
Wager against God	Infinite loss	Status quo

Therefore, an absolute deontologist who kills someone receives infinite misery, and a religious person who wagers for God in a reality where God exists receives infinite joy. We will refer to the moral repercussions of actions which affect the actor for as long as they live (or in the context of religion, the afterlife) as *infinite effects*<sup>5</sup>. Provided with this context, there are two scenarios which we propose are equally problematic.

1. The existence of infinite effects justifies any number of infinite violence or morally egregious actions. Consider the following scenario:

**P1:** There exists a part of the population which subscribes to a certain religion or ethical philosophy.

**P2:** An epistemically modest person would take the perspective of a person who has a greater education on the matter.

**C1:** The epistemically modest person would take the course of action as prescribed by that certain religion or ethical philosophy (P1 & P2).

**P3:** The religion or ethical philosophy could justify the infinite killing of other human beings.

**C2:** The epistemically modest person could justify the infinite killing of other human beings (C1 & P3).

We would like to clarify that the purpose of this example is not to propose that epistemic modesty is completely implausible as a philosophy, nor are we saying that the above scenario is entirely likely. Rather, the fact that epistemic modesty can justify actions such as genocide and slavery is problematic in and of itself. As context for how infinite effects would relate to absolute deontology and Christianity, we present the following scenario: in order to avoid infinite loss, an epistemically modest philosopher following the moral advice of a christian would justify any action (e.g. killing, stealing, assault, etc.) before renouncing God. In the perspective context of an epistemically modest philosopher following the moral advice of an absolute deontologist, any non-maxim breaking action becomes morally just because there is no difference between one or several thousand non-maxim violating egregious actions versus negative infinite effects. Therefore, epistemic modesty is a dangerous philosophy.

2. Second is the issue of cross-paradigm comparison. The problem with using different philosophies or justifications depending on the context is considering which one is more “just” or “true” is that comparing the two is simply implausible. For instance, deontology evaluates maxims, utilitarianism evaluates the state of affairs, virtue ethics assesses character, etc. The lack of a consistent locus of value between these philosophies is problematic when evaluating situations using a cross-paradigm comparison (e.g. epistemic modesty). Comparisons asking questions such as whether John Milton is more puritanical than a pig is fat have no clear answer, and thus leave no answer for epistemically modest actors. One cannot claim that an action is more unjust under the framework of utilitarianism than it is under deontology because the discrepancy between the aforementioned locus of control means the two philosophies are not comparable. Consider



a scenario in which an individual is transported back in time and is given the opportunity to murder a young Adolf Hitler. A utilitarian would do so in the interest of the approximately twenty million people that Nazi belligerents will inevitably slaughter, but the absolute deontologist would not take the utilitarian's course of action as murdering another individual would violate a core maxim of deontology. So whose advice should the epistemically modest person follow; who is more correct in their actions<sup>6</sup>? Is the utilitarian as justified as the deontologist? These questions can never be answered due to the impossibility of cross-paradigm comparison which we have just presented.

### 3. Advantages of an Alternative System

In Masrour's fifth section of 'IN DEFENSE OF EPISTEMIC MODESTY,' he presents the modest project of explaining how perceptual belief justifies ordinary beliefs. He uses the following argument to illustrate his point:

1. I have an experience with the content that there is a cat in front of me.
2. Therefore, I have justification to believe that there is a cat in front of me.
3. Therefore, I am justified in believing that I am not in a global anti-skeptical scenario.

This follows two moves. The first is that perception provides justification for belief, and the second is that "justified beliefs provide justification for what the subject knows they entail." This second move follows the closure principle.

Masrour sets forth the issue that there is a connection between the ordinary and anti-skeptical projects. If one believes that there is no present justification for believing one is not in a global skeptical scenario, they can conclude that perceptual experience does not provide justification for beliefs. This entails that the failure of the ambitious project implies the failure of the ordinary project.

As a result, the modest project, and our goal, is to effectively unhook the ordinary and anti-skeptical projects. Masrour claims that epistemic modesty is the solution: because perceptual content is always shallow, it's fair to claim that perceptual experience provides independent *prima facie* justification for shallow contents. In addition, justifying shallow contents doesn't necessarily justify global anti-skeptical scenarios because shallow contents do not mean global skeptical scenarios do not obtain.

The one issue that arises with this conclusion is that it isn't unique to epistemic modesty. In fact, epistemically immodest schools of thought such as epistemic disjunctivism can reach this same disconnect between the ordinary and anti-skeptical projects. We will begin by briefly defining epistemic disjunctivism, explaining why it is immodest, and then explicating how it solves the problem Masrour puts forth.

According to Soteriou 2020, epistemic disjunctivism contrasts veridical perception of the world with perception resulting from hallucination, claiming that veridical perception provides a unique justification for belief. In this way, epistemic disjunctivism

consolidates externalist and internalist views to resolve the skeptical problem in a more effective way. Indeed, as stated by Smithies 2013, in epistemic disjunctivism, beliefs allow for both factive justification, guaranteeing truth, but also allows individuals to solely use reflection to know their beliefs are justified.

Epistemic immodesty requires the admission that it is possible to acquire rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of skeptical hypotheses. Because immodesty solely requires the admission of this possibility, rather than belief, it does not affect the argument that follows. Epistemic disjunctivism follows immodesty through the use of an adaptation of the closure principle.

Per Rolla 2016, in epistemic disjunctivism, one can realistically claim that everyday, believable propositions enjoy non-discriminating epistemic support in comparison to radical skeptical hypotheses. This follows the definition of epistemic disjunctivism which involves perception being a factive rational basis for believing. The following adaptation of the closure principle<sup>7</sup> brings about the rationale for epistemic disjunctivism being immodest:

If S rationally knows that p and S competently deduces q from p, forming a belief in q and retaining the rationally grounded knowledge that p, then S rationally knows that q.

The combination of epistemic disjunctivism with this closure principle leads us to the conclusion that epistemic disjunctivism is immodest; that one can acquire rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of radical skeptical hypotheses.

As argued by Pritchard 2012, epistemic disjunctivism provides a near neo-Moorean solution to the conundrum presented by Masrour. Here, instead of using the Moorean strategy of arguing that perceptual experience offers *prima facie* justification for beliefs, which Masrour takes issue with, one is able to say that certainty in a belief is dependent on the existence of reflectively accessible evidence of that belief. Applied to the skeptical argument presented, if we know that there is a cat in front of me, then we must have reflectively accessible evidence that justifies our belief that there is a cat in front of me. Pritchard furthers that this can only be true so long as epistemological disjunctivism is true.

Masrour argues that the reason the Moorean argument does not effectively achieve our desired disconnect of the ordinary and ambitious project is because claiming that perceptual experience provides *prima facie* justification for beliefs preserves that link. Specifically, the Moorean argument concludes that one does not need any anti-skeptical justification. However, in our neo-Moorean epistemological view, no such conclusion is followed.

If both epistemic modesty and epistemic immodesty function to disconnect the ordinary and ambitious project, which is to be preferred? Epistemic disjunctivism adheres more closely to current linguistic and communicative norms. Smithies, in a review of Pritchard's work, provides an example. If a man is intending on taking a trip but is concerned that he left his passport at home, his wife might reassure him that he didn't forget it by saying that she can see his passport in his pocket. This is far more natural than using the language modesty requires, as shown in the skeptical argument provided by

Moore, which would entail something similar to “I am having an experience in which I seem to see that your passport is in your pocket.”

## Conclusion

This paper has attempted to refute professor Farid Masrouf’s defense of epistemic modesty using three different lines of argumentation.

First, we proposed that the obscure concept of deep content implicates the existence of the concept of infinitely deeper content. We then employed the principle of explosion as well as the telescoping and Taylor polynomial series of calculus to develop logically-backed heuristics and methodologies to assess the definitional vagueness of deep content. The telescoping series provided us with a form of mathematical logic to prove that deep content and infinitely deeper content, regardless of any broader context it may or may not produce, is unnecessary to determine the truth value of certain content. The Taylor polynomial series provided us with a similar form of mathematical logic to prove that, in the case that if deeper content is necessary to determine the truth value of other certain content, then within the constraints of finite human knowledge, it is both necessary and possible to employ the human ability of approximation to definitively determine the truth value of that content without absolute certainty. Such findings have led us to conclude that the philosophy of epistemic modesty, of which proposes that an excess of knowledge restrains humanity from definitively determining truth values, is a needless philosophy as it would retard empirical and philosophical progress as both necessitate approximation of content without 100 percent certainty.

Second, we have demonstrated that epistemic modesty can create situations where either: no clear choice can be made given two differing philosophies/responses to a situation, or egregious actions such as infinite killing are justified using epistemic modesty as a decision-making framework. Furthermore, we attacked the decision-making ability of epistemic modesty by refuting a core tenet of the philosophy - cross-paradigm comparison - contending that if philosophies contain different locus’ of value then it becomes impossible to compare relative good or bad across them.

Last, through the application of epistemic disjunctivism, we have illustrated that a modest epistemological school of thought is not necessarily necessary to unhook the ordinary project from the anti-skeptical project; epistemically immodest views such as epistemic disjunctivism can also deliver the goods while also providing additional advantages.

## Notes

1. We would like to thank Esteban Lau and Alexander Deutsch for their comments and edits on the initial draft of this paper.
2. We will refer to this concept of deeper content as, colloquially, the deep content of deep content.
3. Principle of Explosion

Step	Proposition	Derivation
1	$P$	Assumption
2	$\sim P$	Assumption
3	$P \vee Q$	Disjunctive introduction (1)
4	$Q$	Disjunctive syllogism (3, 2)

Masroul brings up the example of an individual, John, making a statement that contains two conflicting truth values. John states “I am not envatted” under Masroul’s premise that he is in reality envatted but not aware of it. It is explained from this that John’s statement in relation to the virtual world is, in fact, true. However, Masroul goes on to assert that John’s statement is additionally false under the context of the real world. This creates an issue of consistency with the groundwork of epistemic modesty as the existence of a statement with both true and false values creates a contradiction. Under the principle of explosion, it is impossible for a logic system to coexist with such a contradiction. Using the above table as an example we shall substitute the statement  $P$  with John’s statement of “I am not envatted”. Assuming this, we can also make the assumption of  $\sim P$  which is derived from Masroul’s objective standpoint. Using disjunctive introduction with the assumption of  $P$  we can insert both  $P$  and any statement imaginable into an “or” statement. For example, we can translate step 3 into “I am not envatted or dinosaurs exist” ( $P \vee Q$ ). Using the rule of disjunctive syllogism with the aforementioned “or” statement and the assumption of  $\sim P$ , we end with the conclusion that dinosaurs do indeed exist.

ex.

Step	Proposition	Derivation
1	I am not envatted	Assumption
2	I am envatted	Assumption
3	I am not envatted or dinosaurs exist	Disjunctive introduction (1)

4	Dinosaurs exist	Disjunctive syllogism (3, 2)
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4. By reasonably close we mean that the approximation exists within an accepted range of deviation that is comparable to an empirical rounding error or a standard deviation.
5. In this context, “effects” means “to happen onto the individual”.
6. Because the utilitarian does not subscribe to the belief of absolute deontology, the argument from argument 1 does not apply to this situation.
7. Given Masrour’s acceptance of the closure principle, we felt it unnecessary to defend or justify it.

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