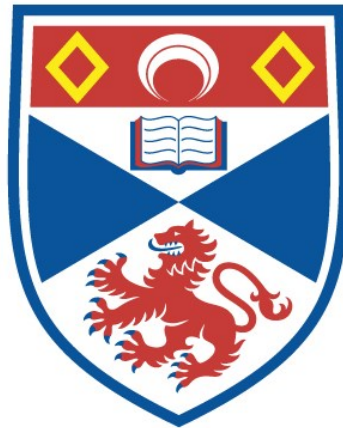# DISAGREEMENT WITHIN CONTEMPORARY ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY: A PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

Quentin Parker Pharr

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

2022

Disagreement Within Contemporary Analytic Philosophy: A Pragmatic Perspective

Quentin Parker Pharr
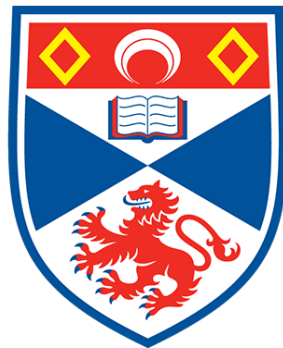
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at the University of St Andrews

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Abstract

In this thesis, I offer a new perspective on the extant disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy - and, in particular, a perspective which is grounded in both the 2009 and 2020 PhilPapers Surveys of David Bourget and David Chalmers (2014; and forthcoming), as well as a tradition that is often disregarded by contemporary analytic philosophers: Pragmatism. I call it "*a* pragmatic perspective." Using that perspective, I work through various aspects of the existing philosophical literatures on disagreement in order to evaluate the discipline's own. On the one hand, I clarify and extend this literature - especially, as it applies to the discipline. But, several gaps are also found and addressed, including: what pragmatic commitments and policies contemporary analytic philosophers might need to make and enact in order to address their disagreement; how disagreement might affect the possession, transferability, and vindication of various collective epistemic/rational goods (for example, collective knowledge or rational consensus); and what consequences such philosophers might be forced to face - both inside and outside of their discipline - if they are unable to possess, transfer, and vindicate all that many epistemic/rational goods. Overall, my results are more grounded conclusions regarding both the nature and extent of the disagreement within the discipline, as well as a clearer understanding of why contemporary analytic philosophers might be right to worry about it and how they might be able to resolve it.

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Have I missed the mark, or do I, like a true archer, strike my target? Or am I prophet of lies, a babbler from door to door?

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*

1

Disagreement Within Contemporary Analytic Philosophy: An Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In evaluating their discipline, contemporary analytic philosophers have often worried about the extent to which they disagree. They have looked to the various questions that they have attempted to settle and, despite recognizing that their work is still ongoing, many of them have come to some rather grave conclusions as a result of the disagreement that they have found. They have claimed such things as: "the discipline is in crisis" (Bunge 2001: Title), "it largely focuses on empty ideas" (Unger 2014: 4) "it has made no progress" (Dietrich 2011: Title), "it has produced little to no knowledge" (Kornblith 2013: 268), "it is not actually in the business of seeking rational consensus, truth, or knowledge" (Beebee 2018: 3) "it is bound to produce inconclusive arguments" (Persson 2018: Abstract) "it is not worth pursuing for answers to philosophical questions; it is unreliable" (Brennan 2010: Abstract), "it has come to a dead end"

(Putnam 1985: 28), and so on.[1] Indeed, in virtue of the stakes that appear to be involved, some thinkers have even gone so far as to claim that disagreement is *the* central problem of meta-philosophy.[2,3] But, whether we agree with that claim, or any of these claims for that matter, what is important to recognize nevertheless is that they raise a number of important questions about the discipline - and, arguably, the most important of them are: *why* might contemporary analytic philosophers be right to worry about their disagreement, and *how* might they respond to it? But unsurprisingly, within the philosophical literature, answers to these "core" questions have yet to garner all that much agreement.

1.2 The State of the Philosophical Literature

To date, the philosophical literature has largely focused on addressing the following questions individually and, occasionally, in combination:

Metaphysical Questions: What is a disagreement? What kinds of disagreement are there?

Epistemological Questions: What epistemic significance does one or another type of disagreement have, if any at all - or, alternatively, what does rationality require of anyone,

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[1] See also: Rescher 1985; van Inwagen 1996 and 2008; Hacker 2009; Chalmers 2015; and Lycan 2019 for statements such as the ones above. For such statements from non-practitioners, see, for example: Krauss 2012; Hossenfelder 2016; Hardwick and deGrasse Tyson 2017; and Williams 2018.

[2] See, for example, Lazerowitz 1970 for an explicit statement of this sort. But, for related sentiments, see also Rorty 1961; Rescher 1985; Smart 1993; and Plant 2012.

[3] Throughout this study, most of the usages of "philosophy" can be taken to refer to contemporary analytic philosophy *circa*. 1960 to 2021 when this study was finished. But, just to be clear, usages of "contemporary analytic philosophy" should be taken to refer to analytic philosophy as it has generally manifested after: (1) what might be called the Wittgensteinian "break," as displayed in the substantive differences in thought between Wittgenstein 2001 [1921] and 2009 [1953], (2) the full-blown entry of possible-world semantics into analytic philosophy, as a result of Marcus 1962; and Kripke 1963a and 1963b, and (3) a growing tolerance within analytic philosophy for historicist thinking, as seen in the acceptance of Kuhn 1962 and the temperament of Rorty (ed.) 1967, among others. For more general discussion of these three trends and analytic philosophy, see also Rorty, Schneewind, and Skinner 1984; Glock 2008; and Berto and Jago 2019, among others.

epistemically-speaking, in the face of one or another type of disagreement? Given

disagreement between experts, how might someone tell which experts are credible?

Meta-Philosophical Questions: What disagreement is there within contemporary analytic

philosophy? Why does this disagreement exist? And, what do answers to the metaphysical

and epistemological questions about disagreement indicate about its significance for the

discipline?

Each of these questions has received a great deal of attention, but their answers are also the

subject of some disagreement. Regardless, reading them, what might be noted is that they are

solely concerned with the *nature* and *relations* of the objects in question, and are not at all

concerned with *who* might be asking those questions, let alone *who* might be trying to answer

them, although contemporary analytic philosophers are the obvious candidates. As can be seen,

they are in no way referenced in the questions above and are, as it seems, broadly irrelevant to

them, even though they have a great deal of stake in them. Why is this?

One explanation - which I believe is the best - is that these questions have been

formulated from an "analytic" perspective. I do not have a comprehensive or foundational

characterization of this perspective to offer.[4] But, in outline, what I would suggest is that, at the

very least, this perspective has two facets: (1) a commitment to treating questions as objectively

(i.e. as confined to the objects in question) as possible; and (2) a commitment to inquiring into

those questions conscientiously with "the goal of clarity, the insistence on explicit

argumentation…, and the demand that any view expressed be exposed to the rigors of critical

evaluation and discussion by peers" (European Society for Analytic Philosophy, as quoted in

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[4] Nor do some of the most prominent historians of analytic philosophy either - see for example: Glock 2008; and Beaney (ed.) 2013.

Beaney 2013: 4). And, expanding upon my explanation, it is in light of facet (1) that I would say that the above questions have been formulated so as to be broadly neutral when it comes to who is inquiring into them. As for why such objective treatment is prized, though, there are any number of reasons, including: the maximal applicability of answers, the avoidance of bias, the hope of arriving at mind-independent or subject-independent truths, and so on. Whatever the story is, though, what should be clear nevertheless is that, with any perspective, there are usually going to be some downsides that come with them. And, looking over the recent philosophical literature on disagreement which abides by such a perspective, there are several to be noted.

Primarily, what I would note is that, for each of the questions just outlined, there is still a great deal of disagreement surrounding them which has yet to be resolved. For instance, consider: what disagreement is there within contemporary analytic philosophy? To date, there are a number of different suggestions, some of which decry the limitlessness and persistence of such disagreement, and some of which applaud how little disagreement there is within the discipline. And, something similar can also be said of the following question: what epistemic significance does one or another type of peer disagreement have, if any at all? Again, some thinkers have claimed "quite a bit," while others have claimed "none at all." So, given these impasses, it seems reasonable to ask: what, in the end, are we and the discipline's practitioners to think? What are they to do?

And secondly, I would also note that, because of the rigor of the analytic perspective, there is also a tendency to treat the above questions in a piecemeal fashion, so as to account for as many details as possible within them. And, in many cases, this tendency is immensely beneficial when it comes to the depth and clarity of the discussions that follow. However, as

with many things, the common downside to prioritizing detail and depth of discussion is underemphasizing breadth. And, where there is a lack of breadth, there can also be a lack of comprehensiveness which can inform discussions about various real-world issues - as is, sometimes, felt about a number of discussions within contemporary analytic philosophy, including its own disagreement.

And so, although the literature to date is full of depth and growing, there are still a number of dialectical impasses and gaps which it faces and which, if resolved in some way, might ultimately help contemporary analytic philosophers to better understand the nature and extent of their disagreement, why they might be right to worry about it, and how they might be able to resolve it. And overall, it is with this situation in mind that I think that this study not only has a great deal to offer, but is also called for.

1.3 What This Study Has to Offer

In effect, what I intend to offer in this study is a hybrid perspective on the extant disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy. On the one hand, I am going to take on a perspective which is grounded in both the analytic perspective and the recent 2009 and 2020 PhilPapers Surveys of David Bourget and David Chalmers (2014; and forthcoming). But, on the other hand, I am also going to include elements of a tradition that is often disregarded by contemporary analytic philosophers: Pragmatism. Overall, I call this perspective "*a* pragmatic" one because of its substantial pragmatic elements, which will involve my thinking of contemporary analytic philosophers as inquirers with particular aims and constraints.   But, with this perspective in mind, my aim in this study is to work through the existing philosophical literatures and *all* of the

primary questions on disagreement that I listed in the previous section, in order to evaluate the discipline's own. Throughout, I will clarify and extend this literature - especially, as it applies to the discipline. But, more importantly, I also intend to overcome several dialectical impasses and gaps in discussion. Impasse-wise, I am primarily interested in overcoming (1) the disagreement between those who think that there is more agreement than disagreement within the discipline and those who do not; and (2) the disagreement between those who think that the discipline's disagreement has no epistemic significance and those who think that it does. My preferred pragmatic perspective will be instrumental in accomplishing these tasks. Similarly, it will also be instrumental in overcoming various gaps in discussion, including: what contemporary analytic philosophers might need to accept in order to make sense of their discipline's practices; how disagreement might affect the possession, transferability, and vindication of various collective epistemic/rational goods (for example, collective knowledge or rational consensus - and, by extension, certain forms of collective understanding or wisdom); and what consequences such philosophers might be forced to face - both inside and outside of their discipline - if they are unable to possess, transfer, and vindicate all that many individual or collective epistemic/rational goods.

As a result of this work, what I expect are more grounded conclusions regarding both the nature and extent of the disagreement within the discipline, in virtue of Bourget and Chalmers's surveys, as well as a clearer understanding of why contemporary analytic philosophers might be right to worry about it and how they might be able to resolve it, when they take a pragmatic perspective seriously. However, where such philosophers might be expecting reasons for optimism, I unfortunately have few to offer. For, as will be seen, there is ultimately good reason

to accept that, among contemporary analytic philosophers and specialists in general, and for many of the specialties within the discipline, numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement does, in fact, exist. And, in so far as such disagreement exists, it is questionable at best that such philosophers actually possess and can transfer or vindicate any of the sorts of epistemic/rational goods that I will soon discuss. Accordingly, pessimism seems called for, if anything. But, if the suggestions from my preferred pragmatic perspective are taken seriously, then they should provide for a mitigated pessimism and, maybe, even a *very* cautious optimism. Time and effort on the part of contemporary analytic philosophers will tell.

1.4 How I Will Proceed: Chapter Summaries

With those aims in mind, there is still a great deal of work that stands between this introduction and those suggestions and results. So, by way of connecting them, here is an outline of how I will proceed, chapter-by-chapter.

In Chapter 2, I will start by presenting and discussing the pragmatic perspective that I will take on and employ throughout this study. I will begin by clarifying how this perspective is neither a foundational nor comprehensive characterization of Pragmatism, as a tradition, so much as a way of thinking which is inspired by facets of it. In particular, I will focus on two facets. The first is an interpretation of Charles Peirce and John Dewey from Isaac Levi (2012) which suggests that they viewed inquiry as akin to resolving, through reflection and deliberation, which courses of action an agent (or agents) should implement in order to promote or achieve their aims; and the second is another prominent component of some of Peirce and Dewey's writings which suggests that best scientific/experimental practices are "golden standards," so to speak,

when it comes to reliable and credible methods in inquiry, as well as for gauging the value of other methods (be they existing or prospective). I will then set out a workable conception of contemporary analytic philosophers for the sake of my pragmatic perspective, and highlight two sorts of decision-making from Levi which will be employed throughout this study.

In Chapter 3, I will establish several distinctions regarding disagreement, including the distinction between genuine and merely apparent disagreements and the distinction between merely verbal disputes and metalinguistic disputes - but, more importantly, I will also establish several conceptions of incompatibility which might very well underpin our understanding of genuine disagreements, including: Content Incompatibility, Preclusion of Joint Tenability, Preclusion of Joint Satisfaction, and Preclusion of Joint Accuracy. Then, adopting those distinctions and conceptions, I will transition to discussing the quality of the sources behind the various claims that have been made about the disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy. The first set of sources are casual personal observations (or anecdotal evidence) from the discipline's practitioners, while the second set of sources are Bourget and Chalmers's 2009 and 2020 PhilPapers surveys. Thereafter, I will show that there are various reasons to reject the credibility of findings based on casual personal observation in favor of Bourget and Chalmers's work. And finally, I will evaluate Bourget and Chalmers's 2009 and 2020 survey data itself. Looking to their second set of data, I will come to conclude that it provides good reason to accept that, among contemporary analytic philosophers and specialists in general, and for many of the specialties within the discipline, numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement does, in fact, exist.

In Chapter 4, I will then set out and discuss the various ways in which contemporary analytic philosophers have viewed the circumstances of disagreement - and, in particular, my focus will be on conceptions of epistemic superiority, inferiority, peerhood, and expertise. Considering those conceptions, I will then go on to defend the thought that the disagreement among contemporary analytic philosophers is best characterized - in light of Bourget and Chalmers's surveys - as a slightly modified version of Jennifer Lackey's (2010) conception of ordinary peer disagreement. This disagreement is taken to be genuine, between individuals who are aware that they disagree, and, prior to that awareness, were unaware of any good reason to deny - or, alternatively, were aware that, by their own rational lights, they had good overall reason to accept - that they are roughly broad epistemic peers regarding the sorts of questions that they have considered.

In Chapter 5, I will then set out and discuss two of the most prominent sorts of worries that can be found within the recent philosophical literature regarding peer disagreement: one posed by Hilary Kornblith (2010), and one by Alvin Goldman (1999; and 2001). With Kornblith, it will be seen that, given their extant ordinary peer disagreements, various individual epistemic/ rational goods might be under threat for specialist contemporary analytic philosophers as participants - but, also, that there are a number of critical responses which his worry faces. And, with Goldman, it will be seen that, as *observing* non-experts, philosophical novices' individual abilities to rationally and non-arbitrarily assess the relative credibility of different experts, as well as to receive specialist knowledge (or rational acceptance), might also be under threat. However, following from Sonia Roca-Royes (forthcoming), I will ultimately suggest - albeit from a different perspective - that neither of these worries seem to warrant a deep pessimism

about the discipline, as of yet - that is, a pessimism which accepts the *impossibility* of the discipline's practitioners individual abilities to possess, transfer, or vindicate various individual epistemic/rational goods. I will suggest a pragmatic policy to them, which might warrant a mitigated pessimism - that is, a temporary pessimism about such things. But, if Roca-Royes and I are right in suggesting that specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might ultimately be able to achieve their primary epistemic/rational aims by working more diligently and more in alignment with those aims, then perhaps they might be warranted in maintaining a *very* cautious optimism as well.

In Chapter 6, I will then move on to discuss the various ways in which collective epistemic/rational goods have been thought to work. I focus on three accounts: Deflationary Epistemic Summativisms, Jennifer Lackey's (2016) Group Epistemic Agent Account, and Alexander Bird's (2010) Minimal Functional Account. Firstly, I will argue that collective epistemic/rational goods like those on Bird's Minimal Functional Account - namely, inflationary-like ones - are not going to be available to specialist contemporary analytic philosophers because such philosophers, whether they are acting in a speciality or in a philosophical research group, are not nearly as functionally integrated as scientific research groups and are, thus, not functionally integrated enough to fulfill Bird's account. Then, turning to Deflationary Epistemic Summativisims and Lackey's account, I will try to discern what sort of "significant percentages" groups might need on these deflationary-like accounts in order to possess, transfer, and vindicate any collective epistemic/rational goods. Subsequently, I will introduce a working threshold based on what I call "rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation" which, as I envision it, amounts to a group's oppositional party (or parties) being rationally and effectively discounted in "what is

going on," so to speak, within a group, although they are still members of the group and acting of their own accord. Then, using that threshold, I will claim that, if contemporary analytic philosophy's specialities are going to possess and be able to transfer and vindicate collective knowledge or a rational consensus (as well as collective understanding and wisdom), then as it seems the specialties' "winning" party must, at the very least, have a supermajority of 60% due to rational persuasion and can, thus, rationally and legitimately quasi-assimilate any and all opposing parties. After, I will look back to Bourget and Chalmers's 2020 survey data in order see to what extent rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation may have occurred in various specialties. Overall, what I will find is that the available data appears to provide good reason to accept that, among specialists in general and for many of the specialties within contemporary analytic philosophy, their ordinary peer disagreement is sufficient to warrant worry about the extent to which rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation has not occurred among specialists for a number of their questions.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I will turn to two of the most prominent sorts of worries that can be found within the recent philosophical literature regarding collective epistemic/rational goods: one posed by David Chalmers (2015), and one by Richard Fumerton (2011), Ernest Sosa (2011), and Hilary Kornblith (2013). With Chalmers, it will be seen that, given their ordinary peer disagreement, specialists contemporary analytic philosophers might not be able to possess, transfer, or vindicate, any such goods. I will support his claims in two regards. First, I will suggest that such philosophers should (at least, pragmatically speaking) value various collective goods because of both the demands placed on the discipline, as a whole, to provide goods to others, in addition to their being essential for closing dialectics and furthering inquiry. I will also

suggest that, although Chalmers may not be able to explain why disagreement can undercut various collective epistemic/rational goods, he can ultimately make use of rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation for such purposes. I will then reveal that his worry is substantiated by his and Bourget's 2020 survey data.   But, as in Chapter 5, I will then offer a pragmatic policy to specialist contemporary analytic philosophers which might warrant a mitigated pessimism or, at best, a *very* cautious optimism for them. Still, when it comes to observers of the discipline, there is Fumerton, Sosa, and Kornblith, all of whom make salient that something is not quite right, given the amount of ordinary peer disagreement that can be found among specialists. I will present each of their suspicions as to what might be at fault. But, with further discussion, I will come to claim that each of their suspicions can only provide for the realization that the discipline, as a whole, is collectively unreliable and, consequently, in trouble when it comes to its credibility for observers.   In light of their worry, though, I will suggest that contemporary analytic philosophers should treat generalization based upon anecdotal evidence as an armchair method and should avoid using any armchair method's findings in dialectic when it comes to forwarding or supporting any quantitative contingent claims.

From there, I will then conclude by comparing the results of this study with another important data point about philosophical knowledge from Bourget and Chalmers's 2020 survey data, as well as by pointing out what directions future work might take when it comes to the progress of contemporary analytic philosophers' many inquiries.

And so, going in order, I turn now to Chapter 2.

2

A Pragmatic Perspective

2.1 Introduction

As I have already mentioned in my introduction, my preferred perspective for considering and discussing the extant disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy is a *pragmatic* one. Briefly, I have noted that this way of thinking involves treating contemporary analytic philosophers as inquirers with particular aims and constraints. But, what was missing from that note was a fuller explanation of what aims and constraints I think are relevant for the purposes of answering the questions with which this study is going to be preoccupied and how those questions are going to be pursued, in light of those aims and constraints. In part, these things were missing because I did not want to ambush the reader with too much detail early on, which they would, then, have to remember for the entirety of this study. But, more than anything else, it was because, in so little space, little consideration could be given to the relevant aspects

of the tradition from which this perspective derives: Pragmatism. However, having a chapter to

work with now, what I will offer is a description of the perspective that I have preferred for this

study, as well as some indication of how that perspective will be employed in the chapters to

follow.

2.2 Pragmatism Versus a Pragmatic Perspective

To start, I want to be clear that, although I intend to characterize and take on *a* pragmatic

perspective, what I do not intend is to equate that perspective with either a comprehensive or

foundational characterization of *Pragmatism*.

In the first place, I do not see why a *comprehensive* characterization would be useful,

given the fact that the tradition's adherents have claimed so many different sorts of views - not

all of which are compatible. And, equally, I also do not see how a *foundational* characterization

could be formulated, considering the tradition's own internal disagreements about which views

and persons most exemplify its trajectory.[5] To see why, consider three principles. Firstly, what

has been called Charles Peirce's "pragmatic maxim":

> **(Peirce's Pragmatic Maxim)**: Consider what effects, which might conceivably
> have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then,
> our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object (cf.
> Peirce 1992 [1878]: 132).

Secondly, something like William James's conception of truth:

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[5] As Richard Kraut and Kevin Scharp 2010 have pointed out, pragmatists have stressed such things as "doctrinal
and/or methodological views about truth and reference, the primacy of institutional norms in any adequate picture of
our place in the world, the possibility of epistemically privileged representation, the significance of justificatory
holism, relations between ontology and social practice, and/or the folly of seeking to "ground" institutional practices
in facts about confrontations with ontological realities which somehow "make normative demands" upon our
practices" (Kraut and Scharp, 2010: 3).

(**Jamesian Conception of Truth**): A belief is true just in case it proves to be good, in the way of belief, for life (cf. James 2000 [1907]: 38).[6]

And lastly, what has been called John Dewey's "cultural naturalism":

(**Dewey's Cultural Naturalism**): In light of Darwinian evolutionary theory, philosophy should be treated as inquiry which is directed at assessing the conditions and values of everyday human life for the sake of coping with the various problems that arise within it (cf. Dewey 1948: i-xxv).

Now, of course, all of these positions have been centrally important to various pragmatists. But, it is also important to note: *not all* pragmatists have agreed with *all* of these views and, in some cases, when they have agreed with any one of them, the agreement is more a matter of spirit than form.[7] For instance, there are some pragmatists who have sympathized with a Jamesian conception of truth and who have accordingly devised more sophisticated off-shoots. But, in general, it is hard to say how many pragmatists continue to offer full-blown endorsements of his original conception. And, as can be seen within the history of the tradition, there are even pragmatists such as Peirce who angle away from it.[8] And so, even if I were to put forward my best efforts in attempting to provide a comprehensive or foundational characterization of Pragmatism, it seems to me that, given the tradition's diversity, such efforts are ultimately going to be fruitless.[9]

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[6] See also Schmitt 1995 for different ways of paraphrasing this conception.

[7] For illustrations of agreement in spirit, but not necessarily form, see among others: Misak 2000, 2007, 2013b, and 2016; and Hookway 2012.

[8] For Peirce, see Wiener 1958. For other pragmatists, see: Sellars 1963; Putnam 1987; Haack 1993; Misak 2000 and 2013b; and Aiken and Talisse 2018. I *broadly* sympathize with Peirce and Dewey.

[9] Arthur Lovejoy is, as far as I know, one of the earliest proclaimers of the difficulties associated with characterizing Pragmatism - see Lovejoy 1908. He is also one of the most discerning expositors of the tradition during its formation - see Lovejoy 1963.

And besides, my own expectations for this study are much more modest. I only want to incorporate *a* pragmatic perspective among many possible ones. So, if someone wants to take on a pragmatic perspective which is closer to one or another pre-existing, more specific conception of Pragmatism, then, by all means, they are welcome to do so. However, in my own thinking about the tradition, two of its facets have stood out for me.

What has largely stood out for me - especially, when it comes to how I tend to inquire - is an overarching thought from Isaac Levi (2009; and 2012) which has its roots in both the writings of Peirce and Dewey. His thought is that, for pragmatists like them, inquiry (or "Inquiry") has the "character of practical deliberation aimed at choosing policies suited to promoting the aims of the deliberating agent[s]" (Levi 2009: 378).[10] Or, in other words, inquiry is akin to resolving, through reflection and deliberation, which courses of action an agent (or agents) should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) implement in order to promote or achieve their aims. So, for instance, if my aim is to arrive at a justified true acceptance, say, regarding who invented Legos, after an extensive investigation into the matter, then - as with any practical deliberation - I can reflect and deliberate on my evidence/reasons and my options as to what I should accept in order to achieve my goal: Ole Kirk Christiansen or Hilary Page. And, similarly for overt behaviors, if my aim is to take the quickest car route from New Orleans to Los Angeles, then - as with any practical deliberation - I can reflect and deliberate on my evidence/reasons and my options as to what I should do in order to achieve my aim: take I-10 or take I-40.

But, beyond understanding inquiry as practical in the way that these examples suggest, what I also take Levi's thought to be highlighting is that, whether we are undertaking,

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[10] I am emphasizing "Inquiry" because, in the sense that I intend it here, it is the sum of all particular inquiries.

augmenting, or observing an inquiry, it is essential to consider and answer: who are the deliberating agents involved? What are they like - as in, what are their aims? What constraints do they face, in achieving those aims? What sorts of options are available to them in order to promote their aims? And, in so far as inquirers frame their inquiries in light of answers to those questions, then as it seems to me, they can be viewed as occupying a "pragmatic" perspective with respect to them.

In addition to Levi's thought, though, I also abide by another facet of the tradition which also has its roots in both the writings of Peirce and Dewey. This facet is a preoccupation with methods - and, in particular, a preoccupation with appreciating that the best scientific/experimental practices are "golden standards," so to speak, when it comes to reliable and credible methods in inquiry, as well as for gauging the value of other methods (be they existing or prospective). In Peirce's (1992 [1878]) "The Fixation of Belief," for instance, his appreciation and adherence to such methods is described as akin to a man in his choice of bride where: "He need not contemn the others [that is, other women]; on the contrary, he may honor them deeply, and in doing so he only honors her [that is, his bride] the more. But she is the one that he has chosen, and he knows that he was right in making that choice. And having made it, he will work and fight for her…" (Peirce 1992 [1878]: 123). And similarly, in Dewey's (1917) "The Need For a Recovery of Philosophy," we can see him claiming that "pragmatism is content to take its stand with science" in order to, then, decry the "increased isolation" of philosophy from science, despite their intimate historical ties (Dewey 1917: 55-8). So, call it a "preoccupation" with the sciences or not, there is still something deep to be found. And, although I am unwilling to treat best scientific/experimental practice as a bride, what I will admit in line with both thinkers is

that, in general, such practices are the most reliable and credible available to inquirers and, in so far as any method, inquirer, or discipline ignores or contradicts them, they are ultimately incurring risks (be they epistemic or pragmatic) which can and should be avoided.

And so, when I say that "my preferred perspective for considering and discussing the extant disagreement within contemporary philosophy is a *pragmatic* one," all that I am claiming is that my preference is to include and abide by these two facets of the tradition. Again, I am not going to be dispensing with an analytic perspective altogether. But, as will hopefully become clear, incorporating a pragmatic perspective can, in the context of this study's general topic, go some way in showing how contemporary analytic philosophers as deliberating agents might be able to better understand the nature and extent of the disagreement within their discipline, why they might be right to worry about it, and how they might even respond to it, given their aims. So, by way of establishing this perspective for use throughout this study, the rest of this chapter will be dedicated to two tasks. In the next section, I will suggest answers to the following questions: what are contemporary analytic philosophers like - as in what sort of temperaments, cognitive abilities, constraints, and aims do they possess? Then, in the section after, I will hint at the sorts of decision-making that I will employ and suggest in subsequent chapters.

2.3 A Pragmatic Perspective and Contemporary Analytic Philosophers

Starting on contemporary analytic philosophers themselves, it will help to begin with an appreciation of the fact that, much like pragmatists, they are also a diverse group of inquirers who display a number of different temperaments, cognitive abilities, and aims in their inquiries. Overall, I am not going to be able to account for all of them, individually, and neither do I think

that they can all be accounted for in such a way. But, in so far as we need to have some conception of contemporary analytic philosophers for the purposes of this study and for the sake of the pragmatic perspective, what I am going to offer are working and charitable suggestions as to how anyone might think of them, individually. I will start with their temperaments.

By their "temperaments," the thought is that such philosophers display different inquiry-based personalities, as both Peirce and Dewey have already discussed in relation to scientists and their training. In Peirce's (1955 [1896]) "The Scientific Attitude and Fallibilism," for instance, he suggests such things as: "A scientific man must be single-minded and sincere with himself. Otherwise, his love of truth will melt away, at once. He can hardly be otherwise than an honest and fair-minded man" (Peirce 1955: 44). And, similarly, in Dewey's (2012 [1910]) *How We Think*, he suggests that scientific, reflective thought is characterized by "*active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends*" (Dewey 2012: 6, italics in original). For both thinkers, I can agree with the spirit of what they suggest. But, for the purposes of this study, I am more inclined to think along Dewey's lines about inquiry-based personalities, rather than something like Peirce's "gentlemen of science." Accordingly, I will phrase my question as follows: is the average contemporary analytic philosopher more like an inquirer who is appreciative of collaboration and unwaveringly humble, conscientious, and concerned with producing top-quality research which might have some value or are they more like an inquirer who is dismissive of collaboration and is unwaveringly arrogant, careless, and concerned solely

with their salaries or prestige? And, as will be a common theme in this study, the answer appears

to be: it is hard to decide the matter, as of yet, given so few empirical studies on the matter.[11]

Nevertheless, it stands to be said: contemporary analytic philosophers, in so far as they

abide by the analytic perspective, appear to be committed to striving for the first personality-type

in their inquiries, rather than the second one. And, in so far as they appear to have such a

commitment, I find it hard to doubt their sincerity. For, sure, they may not always live up to that

commitment, given their psychologies or circumstances. But, for the purposes of this study, I

think that the appearance of such commitment is enough in order for them to receive the benefit

of the doubt. And so, throughout this study, I am broadly going to presume and rely upon the

presumption that contemporary analytic philosophers are individuals who, *more often than not*,

inquire with an appreciation for collaboration and with humility, conscientiousness, and concern

for producing top-quality research which might have some value.

When it comes to their cognitive abilities, a similar situation also holds. As will be seen,

particularly in Chapters 4, 5, and 7, there are some empirical studies which might cast some light

on the situation. But, broadly speaking, they are insufficient when it comes to determining: is

the average contemporary analytic philosopher an inquirer who is maximally discerning and

cognitively successful when it comes to their questions, speculations, methods, evidence/reasons,

arguments, and all other aspects of their inquiries or are they an inquirer who is completely

lacking in such discernment and cognitive success?

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[11] Granted, Livengood *et al*. 2010 suggests that contemporary analytic philosophers are especially reflective. And, moreover, there is some empirical evidence based on PhilPapers to suggest that collaboration has increased in philosophy over the past 120 years - see: Bourget, Chalmers, and Weinberg, https://dailynous.com/2021/10/14/co-authorship-in-philosophy-over-the-past-120-years-bourget-weinberg/.

Of course, there is something general that can be said, along the lines of what some pragmatists have already implied about human beings as inquirers, in general - namely, that they are fallible, but not completely lacking in discernment or cognitive success when it comes to the different aspects of inquiry.   But, as I understand this thought, I want to be clear that, by "fallible," what I do not mean is the sort of fallibilism which both Peirce and Dewey have espoused, as well as various other pragmatists and epistemologists - that is, that one's current beliefs might be mistaken, are always subject to revision, and/or are incapable of being absolutely certain.[12,13]   And similarly, what I also do not mean is the sort of fallibilism which contemporary epistemologists have largely discussed - that is, that knowledge does not require certainty or that it can be possessed on the basis of less than conclusive grounds.[14]   Rather, what I mean is akin to what Susan Haack (1978) has identified as "agent fallibilism" - that is, the "thesis that we are liable to hold false beliefs" (Haack 1978: 234).   And, in particular, what I mean is both that inquirers are liable to hold false beliefs, as well as liable to come to false beliefs or, even, to fail to come to potentially viable answers in their inquiries at all. So, in other words, human beings as inquirers are not maximally discerning or cognitively successful in the different aspects of their inquiries. They can and do make cognitive mistakes and, in a variety of cases, can and do cognitively fail in various aspects of their inquiries as a result.

So, by extension, I also think that it is reasonable to say such things of contemporary analytic philosophers. But, for the purposes of this study, I am ultimately going to give them the

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[12] For these sorts fallibilism, see for example: Quine 1953; Peirce 1955 [1896]; Lakatos and Musgrave 1970; Neurath 1973; Lauden 1977; Popper 2002 [1938]; and Dewey 2008 [1938].

[13] I am sympathetic to each of these understandings of "fallible," though.

[14] For discussion of this sort of fallibilism, see for example: Hawthorne 2004; Fantl and McGrath 2009; Reed 2012; and Hetherington 2016.

benefit of the doubt, in so far as I have maintained two things. The first is that there is insufficient empirical studies to suggest to what degree they might individually make cognitive mistakes or fail in different aspects of inquiry, and the second is that, in their inquiry-based temperaments, contemporary analytic philosophers are, more often than not, humble and conscientious inquirers. So, the first point establishes the doubt, while the second suggests that, in so far as they inquire with such a temperament, it is plausible to think that they are, more often than not, generally reliable inquirers. And, if that suggestion is plausible, then I would even go so far as to suggest that, individually, their cognitive mistakes and failures do not tend to outweigh their cognitive successes within inquiry, in general.

However, in thinking about their cognitive successes, mistakes, and failures, as well as their inquiry-based temperaments, the most important question to consider is ultimately: in virtue of what do their cognitive successes, mistakes, and failures matter, or their temperaments? Or, to put it simply, what are their aims, in inquiring? For instance, is it their wanting to achieve various epistemic/rational goods? Various moral/political goods? Or, is it even something such as monetary goods or prestige? And, in response, the obvious answer is: it depends on who is asked. But, for the purposes of this study, I want to raise two points.

Firstly, in so far as contemporary analytic philosophers might be right to worry about their disagreement, I am only going to be concerned with how these worries might be connected to various epistemic/rational goods - so, individual or collective knowledge, rational consensuses, individual or collective rational (or justified) acceptances (or beliefs), individual or collective understanding (- of the sort which requires either knowledge or rational (or justified) acceptance (or belief)), individual or collective wisdom (- again, of the sort which requires

knowledge or rational (or justified) acceptance (or belief)), and so on about any philosophical subject-matter.[15],[16]   Importantly, what I am not suggesting is that disagreement is unrelated to worries about various moral/political goods or even to monetary goods or prestige - on the contrary, it seems obvious to me that it is.   But, within the confines of this study, there would simply be too many avenues of thought to pursue with these goods included and, as will hopefully become evident, carrying out the one before me will already be complex and wide-reaching enough.

And, that being said, the second point that I want to raise is that, regardless of my excluding those avenues, the potential impact of any particular worry concerning disagreement and such epistemic/rational goods will still be quite wide-reaching when it comes to contemporary analytic philosophers.   For, as I have already noted in the previous chapter, I will be appealing to Bourget and Chalmers's 2009 and 2020 PhilPapers survey data throughout this study - and, when the 2020 survey data is considered (as it is presented in Appendix 2), what can be found is that, among the general population of 1785 respondents - most of whom had a strong bias toward analytic or Anglocentric philosophy - the following aims were accepted among the respondents: Other 38.23%; Understanding 29.59%; Truth/Knowledge 17.67%; Wisdom 10.05%; Goodness/Justice 3.11%; and Happiness 1.36%.   So, at the very least, it would seem

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[15] By "epistemic/rational goods," I mean: goods which are epistemic- or non-moral/non-political, but rationality-involving when it comes to finding, suggesting, engaging in dialectic about, or systematizing answers to the various questions that contemporary analytic philosophers ask.   To avoid complexity, I have simply assumed that grasping the truth is related to some such goods.   Moreover, because I am treating individual/collective understanding and wisdom as requiring individual/collective knowledge or rational consensus, I am ultimately taking these goods as "packages," so to speak - so, for short, individual and collective epistemic/rational goods.   And, although I will often focus on just the prior goods - so, knowledge, rational consensus, rational acceptance, and justified belief -, understanding/wisdom/grasping the truth will still be in the background.

[16] "Rational acceptance" is determined by things (e.g. reasons) which are, more or less, *apparent* to agents, and acceptance is a *voluntary* attitude that we can take towards propositions.   "Justified belief," on the other hand, is often taken to be an *involuntary* attitude, and justification is often taken to be determined by things which can, in some cases, be apparent to agents (e.g. reasons) and, in other cases, not (e.g. facts about the world).

that 17.67% of such philosophers might be affected by the sorts of worries that I will consider

due to disagreement. But, assuming that "understanding" or "wisdom" are going to be either

epistemic- or rationality-involving, as I think can be assumed for many contemporary analytic

philosophers, then 57.3% of such philosophers might be affected.[17] And, moreover, because

"other" includes "more than one option," there is also the possibility that many of the

respondents that chose this answer might accept, at least, one of those epistemic/rational goods

as an aim, in addition to a moral/political good or some other good.[18] And so, even with doubts

about which conceptions of those goods are more dominant, what I do not think can be denied in

considering the data is that, if disagreement has any negative effects on various epistemic/

rational goods, then ultimately contemporary analytic philosophers will be widely and negatively

affected with regard to them.

However, looking at Bourget and Chalmers's question, there are two areas of ambiguity

which might affect this study's results in relation to such goods. The primary ambiguity regards

whether contemporary analytic philosophers (who are suggesting that they pursue such goods)

are suggesting that they pursue their possession, transferability, or vindication. By "possession,"

I am thinking along broadly externalist lines where the goods in question can be possessed

without the possessor's being able to access the epistemic/rational grounds, in particular or in

general, for them. Oppositely, by "vindication," I am thinking along broadly internalist lines

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[17] Of course, it is possible that someone who selected "wisdom" might be thinking of wisdom as a form of intellectual humility or as neither epistemic- or rationality-involving. However, it is hard to find anyone who has held such a view within contemporary analytic philosophy. Similarly, it is also possible that someone who selected "understanding" might be thinking of understanding as associated with abilities or ways of being, rather than as epistemic- or rationality-involving. For instance, Martin Heidegger 2010 [1927] seems to have held such a conception of understanding, as both Michael Wheeler 2005 and Mark Wrathall 2013 have suggested. But, again, it is hard to find all that many thinkers who have held such a view within contemporary analytic philosophy.

[18] In my own case, for instance, I would have answered "other" as well because, in so far as I inquire, I seek all of the goods listed.

where the goods in question, in order to be vindicated, must be supported by epistemic/rational grounds to which their possessor has access. And, by "transferability," I am broadly split between externalist and internalist lines of thinking when it comes to a possessor of some epistemic/rational good being able to transfer it to someone else. In general, I am going to assume that possession is broadly sufficient for transferability - although, as will be seen in Chapters 5 and 7, issues can arise in this regard.

But, considering these different relations, the question is: which of them is broadly being pursued by contemporary analytic philosophers? And, in response, I would again say the answer is: it is hard to say, with no empirical studies to rely upon. However, for the purposes of this study, there is an obvious solution: I can simply remain neutral on this question because, whether they are pursuing the one or the other, it will still be important to see how disagreement might affect any one of them and, consequently, whether such philosophers can possess, transfer, or vindicate any one of them. So, throughout this study - and, in particular, in Chapters, 5, 6, and 7 -, each of these different relations should be kept in mind and, in the context of the relevant discussions, I will be sure to highlight and clarify their roles.

The secondary ambiguity, though, regards whether such philosophers are suggesting that they pursue *individual* or *collective* truth/knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and so on. Clearly, it is possible that they only aim for such things in so far as they will individually be able to possess, transfer, or vindicate them - and, if disagreement only negatively affects such things for collective epistemic/rational goods, then so what? And, the same can be said about collective epistemic/rational goods the other way around as well. So, if I were to only focus on one or the

other sort of epistemic/rational good, then possibly I might not consider the set of epistemic/ rational goods that contemporary analytic philosophers actually care about and pursue.

As with the last ambiguity, though, there is also an obvious solution here: just consider both sorts of goods. In the first place, there are contemporary analytic philosophers who have worried about both sorts of goods, as I have already mentioned in the previous chapter. Secondly, even if such philosophers are not concerned with both sorts of goods, there might ultimately be good reasons for thinking that they *should* (in some regard) worry about both of them, as I will suggest in Chapters 5 and 7. And, if those points were not enough, it also seems important that such philosophers be able to appreciate the extent of the effects that disagreement might have, regardless of whether or not they actually suffer any of its effects. On the one hand, the topic might be theoretically informative. But, more importantly, such an appreciation might also provide an incentive to avoid any further disagreement or, perhaps, even an incentive to not worry about it after all. And so, given these reasons, I ultimately see no way around the consideration of both the possession, transferability, and vindication of various individual epistemic/rational goods, as well as various collective ones. Accordingly, I am going to consider both of them.

Now, with those ambiguities clarified, a portrait should finally be emerging of contemporary analytic philosophers as inquirers. Temperamentally, it seems that they are inquirers who are, more often than not, appreciative of collaboration, humble, conscientious, and concerned with producing top-quality research which might have some value. Cognitively, they appear to be fallible inquirers whose cognitive mistakes and failures, nevertheless, do not tend to outweigh their cognitive successes within their inquiries, in general. And, lastly, many of them

appear to have some sort of epistemic/rational good as an aim of inquiry, including such things as: truth/knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. No doubt, this portrait is incomplete, and many more facets of such philosophers might be considered. But, as far as working conceptions go of a discipline's practitioners, it will be more than enough for my pragmatic perspective to get off the ground.

2.4 Deliberate Decision-Making and Routine Decision-Making

With that conception of contemporary analytic philosophers, then, the next thing that I want to offer is some indication of how my pragmatic perspective is going to manifest in this study. To do this, I am going to rely on two conceptions of policies or decision-making which, again, I have borrowed from Isaac Levi (2012). The first is what he calls "deliberate" decision-making - which, as he understands it, occurs when there is a "choice of one among a set of best available actions with respect to the aims of the agent and the agent's beliefs [or available information]" (Levi 2012: 19). And, the second is what he calls "routine" decision-making - which, as he understands it, occurs when there is a "choice of a rule or procedure for responding to external inputs rather than a choice of a course of action" (ibid.: 19). Overall, both sorts of decision-making will be employed and offered in this study for the sake of achieving various suggestions and results. However, before I present how I will incorporate these sorts of decision-making into this study, more generally, let me briefly provide two concrete examples of how I take them to work.

Again, for "deliberate" decision-making, the thought is that, for any matter of reflection or deliberation, there will be different courses of action from which someone can choose, in light

of their available information and in order to further their aims.   So, to illustrate, imagine a simple case:

> **GAMBLER**: Jack has just arrived at the betting office of his local racetrack and, after a string of bad luck, he really needs to win some money on the next race. Bolt, Flew, and Socks are favored to win.   Already, Jack has read about each of their previous races and health.   But, now, he has to decide which horse he will bet on to win, given his best, available information about them.   He decides upon Flew - and, his reasoning is this: Flew has won 2/3rds of his previous races (unlike Bolt and Socks who have only won half), and Flew is in excellent health (just like Bolt and Socks).   So, Jack puts down 100 Pounds for Flew to win.   And, thankfully for Jack, Flew wins.

Now, looking over this case, there is ultimately nothing more to the nature of "deliberate" decision-making, as I understand it, than what Jack has just displayed.   He has an aim, he has a set of choices before him, and he has some information upon which he can base his choice. Importantly, it does not matter that his behavior is the focus of his reflections and deliberations, let alone that his aim is to win money.   His aim might have very well been to correctly accept which horse would win, or to even correctly accept which horse would lose.   And further, with his set of choices, he might have considered just Flew and Socks, or even Bolt, Flew, Socks, and Yeti.   Again, whatever his aim, whatever his set of choices, and even whatever information he might have, it is only the fact that these features were considered which matters for the purposes of "deliberate" decision-making.

Relatedly, with "routine" decision-making, the thought is that, for any matter of reflection or deliberation, agents can also adopt rules for how they will respond to one or another type of future, external input.   So, to illustrate, imagine another simple case:

      GARDENER: Jill is an avid gardener. And, as such, she is keen to take on a rule for when she should cut her lawn. On the one hand, she does not want to cut it when it is too short because, given her best available information, cutting it too short might cause turf damage and she does not want to ruin her lawn. But, on the other hand, she also does not want to wait for when it is too long because her older mower might be damaged and she does not want to buy another one, as of yet. So, she weighs her options: always cut when the grass is 2 inches tall, always cut when it is 3 inches tall, or always cut when it is 4 inches. Given her best available information about her mower and grass care, she decides to always cut her grass when it is 3 inches tall. Now, it is just a matter of time and effort. But, overall, she hopes for the best: both a healthy and continuously maintained lawn and a few more years of cutting out of her mower.

Now, as I understand it, the difference between the above case and GAMBLER is that, whereas the second concerns making a decision which, once made, will (all else being equal) result in an intentional course of action (e.g. to bet for Flew or to accept that Flew will win), this one concerns making a decision which, once made, will (all else being equal) result in some commitment to repeat, be it intentionally or merely habitually, a particular course of action towards a particular type of future, external input whenever it occurs (e.g. to always and only accept one or another proposition when good evidence/reasons are provided for it or to always cut one's lawn when the grass is 3 inches tall). So, in other words, the only salient difference appears to be in what sort of things are being decided upon. Structurally, though, these types of decision-making are the same in being sensitive to an agent's aims, set of choices, and information. However, to further understand them, let me now highlight how I will employ them in this study.

Corresponding to the first sort of decision-making, this study will display a number of instances where, thinking on behalf of contemporary analytic philosophers in light of their best available information and their aims and constraints, I will come to one or another conclusion, as a result of considering what I or they take to be their best, available options. So, for instance, in Chapter 3, two of the more prominent examples will be my concluding that generalizations based on anecdotal evidence are inadmissible in determining the extent of the genuine disagreement among contemporary analytic philosophers, and my concluding that simply majorities are not going to be sufficient to dispel all worries regarding the discipline's extant disagreement.

For the first conclusion, I consider the sorts of methods that are taken to be proper to certain sorts of domains - so, empirical methods for empirical domains, armchair methods for non-empirical domains, and the mix of methods that are used within contemporary analytic philosophy. Then, from there, I suggest that, in so far as Bourget and Chalmers's 2009 and 2020 PhilPapers Survey data is less risky as a basis for generalization and abides by the best empirical methods for the corresponding empirical domain (that is, a sociological one), unlike generalizations based on anecdotal evidence (that is, casual personal observation), inquirers should (at least, pragmatically-speaking, in wanting to further their aforementioned inquiry-based aims) defer to their results and avoid using anecdotal evidence for dialectically challenging them. Overall, I end up abiding by this result and also bring it up, again, in a different form in Chapter 7.

For the second conclusion, though, I simply weigh two ways in which we might read Bourget and Chalmers's 2009 and 2020 survey data. The first is a reading from Thomas Kelly (2016) which maintains that a view's achieving a simple majority is sufficient to waylay worries

about disagreement, and the second one is simply a reading which gives weight to a collection of views' disagreement, as much as to a single view's disagreement. I then point out that there is no non-arbitrary way to disregard a collection of views' disagreement, any more than we can disregard a single view's disagreement. And, as such, Kelly's reading should (at least, pragmatically-speaking, in wanting to further the aforementioned inquiry-based aims) be set aside for the second one.[19] Again, in this case, there are two options, a set of information, a set of aims, and a choice based on reasons - all are involved as deliberate decision-making seems to have it. And, throughout this study, various other examples will arise with a similar form as well.

However, corresponding to the second sort of decision-making, this study will also offer several rules based on my concern for contemporary analytic philosophers and their discipline. Overall, the means by which I will arrive at these rules are deeply embedded in the contexts of such philosophers' recent discussions and debates, as will be seen in both Chapters 5 and 7. I will suggest two rules, out of a number of possible ones. In Chapters 5 and 7, I will suggest an individual and a collective version of the following one:

> **(Disagreement - Pragmatic Significance)**: In the face of their ordinary peer disagreement and their wanting to maximize the possession, transferability, and ability to vindicate individual and collective epistemic/rational goods in their discipline or specialties, specialist contemporary analytic philosophers should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) respond to such disagreement as providing a weighted pragmatic reason in favor of them (1) comprehensively and individually setting out *what they take* their first-order evidence/reasons to be for whatever

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[19] Throughout this study, "at least, pragmatically-speaking" will be used as a shorthand for: "at least, pragmatically-speaking, in wanting to further the inquiry-based aims previously set out."

question is under dispute, to (2) compare their evidence/reasons with one another,
and to (3) evaluate/re-evaluate the methods upon which their evidence/reasons are
based.

Admittedly, there is a lot to parse in this rule - but, I must beg for patience since details and

explanations will be forthcoming in both Chapters 5 and 7. For now, though, what I hope is

evident is that this rule is directed towards contemporary analytic philosophers, given their

situation within inquiry and their inquiry-based aims. And, moreover, it is also a thoroughgoing

pragmatic rule which I am suggesting to them.

Relatedly, following from clause (3) of that previous rule, I will also suggest the

following one in Chapter 7:

(Armchair Limitations): Within dialectic, and in virtue of their wanting to
maximize the possession, transferability, and ability to vindicate collective
epistemic/rational goods, contemporary analytic philosophers should (at least,
pragmatically-speaking) refrain from forwarding claims about non-qualitative
contingent matters in light of their findings from armchair methods - and, in light
of the same, from directly contradicting what empirical data based in best
scientific practice suggests about non-qualitative contingent matters.

Again, there is a lot to parse in this rule - and, again, I must beg for patience since the details will

be forthcoming in Chapter 7. But, for now, what I hope is evident is that this rule is based in my

re-evaluating some of the methods used within dialectic by contemporary analytic philosophers

and is also directed towards them, given their situation within inquiry and their inquiry-based

aims. It is also based in the second facet of the pragmatic perspective that I have set out in

section 2.2 - namely, a preoccupation with appreciating that the best scientific/experimental

practices are "golden standards," so to speak, when it comes to reliable and credible methods in

inquiry, as well as for gauging the value of other methods (be they existing or prospective). For, as is hopefully appreciated about this preoccupation, my aim in using it is to help contemporary analytic philosophers further their own aims.

So, although I might be short on details, as of yet, what I hope is clear is that, throughout this study, my pragmatic perspective will mostly manifest in the first sort of "deliberate" decision-making, while my more substantive suggestions will be formulated according to the second sort of "routine" decision-making. Between the two, the thought is that, if at any point the reader is unsure of *how* I am thinking or *why* I have formulated something in a particular way, they can simply remind themselves that, with a pragmatic perspective, I am relying upon both of these conceptions of decision-making in order to proceed. I will not make it too much of an exercise for the reader since, throughout, I will provide various cues, including: "working," "pragmatically-speaking," "with a pragmatic perspective in mind," and so on. And hopefully, with those cues and what I have set out here, they will be able to realign themselves with the driving-force behind this study and, perhaps, even anticipate it.

2.5 Conclusion

And so, with those two sorts of decision-making in mind, in addition to the facets and details associated with the pragmatic perspective that I have set out, what should be clear is that I am not trying to radically alter philosophical practice or radically reorient the discipline's trajectory as far as its inquiries go. If anything, I largely accept them as they are. All that I want is to take these things into consideration and to use them for the sake of moving existing inquiries along and, also, for improving the discipline. And overall, simply by thinking along the lines that I

have suggested - and will implement throughout this study -, I do not think that anything less (or more) than more grounded and, hopefully, more agreeable conclusions and suggestions will result. So, with that in mind, I will now turn to the core of my discussion.

3

The Nature and Extent of the Disagreement Within Contemporary Analytic Philosophy

3.1 Introduction

As I have already mentioned in the previous chapters, this study is going to incorporate two meta-philosophical perspectives - an analytic and a pragmatic perspective - in its attempt to address the question of whether contemporary analytic philosophers might be right to worry about their disagreement. In part, the hope is that this collaboration will help to work out some of the impasses and gaps that such philosophers have left in their own thinking about disagreement - but, mostly, it is to reorient how they think about *their own* disagreement so that they can better understand why some thinkers have worried so much about it, why they might be right to do so as well, and even how they might respond to it.

But, before I can turn to those matters, some understanding of the extent to which contemporary analytic philosophers have actually disagreed with one another is going to be essential - for, depending on what can be reasonably established, there are almost certainly going to be repercussions for what this study can suggest. And so, by way of gaining this understanding, this chapter is going to address three questions. The first is: how should genuine disagreement be understood, generally-speaking? The second is: what sources of information should be treated (at least, pragmatically-speaking) as credible in order to determine the extent to which contemporary analytic philosophers have genuinely disagreed? And, the third is: what can be concluded about the extent to which contemporary analytic philosophers have genuinely disagreed, given those sources? I will proceed accordingly.

3.2 Varieties of Disagreement

In their thinking about the nature of disagreement, analytic philosophers have often relied upon two observations.[20,21] The first is that we have often called something a "disagreement" when two (or more) individuals (or groups) possess and, perhaps, express attitudes which are incompatible in some way, and the second is that we have often called something a "disagreement" even when there is no underlying incompatibility, but two (or more) individuals (or groups) earnestly express opposition to one another.[22] In turn, the philosophical literature has

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[20] See for example: Stevenson 1963; Cappelen and Hawthorne 2009; Cohnitz and Marques 2013; Jenkins 2014; and MacFarlane 2014.

[21] It almost goes without saying that, outside of analytic philosophy, the study of the nature of disagreement has not always focussed on these tendencies. See, for example, Grimshaw (ed.) 1990; and Scott 2002.

[22] By "attitudes," I mean both doxastic attitudes, such as belief or acceptance, as well as non-doxastic attitudes, such as desire or intention. By "expressions," I mean both actions based on doxastic attitudes, such as assertion or acting upon a belief, as well as actions based on non-doxastic attitudes, such as voicing disapproval or acting upon a desire.

largely accepted that these observations are indicative of two different types of disagreement: *genuine* disagreements and *merely apparent* disagreements - where, broadly speaking, the difference is that, whereas genuine disagreements have participating attitudes (or expressions) which are incompatible with one another in some way, merely apparent disagreements (or disputes, for short) are ultimately *not* genuine disagreements, seeing as their participating attitudes are not actually incompatible, so much as fodder for participants who are simply bickering or "talking past one another."[23] So, if anything, the key to this distinction is in having a clear conception of *incompatibility* - and so, by way of trying to characterize it, we will ultimately need to consider: which conception of incompatibility works in trying to capture the various disagreements that are acknowledged as genuine?

Well, to think through the matter, take a simple case of genuine disagreement to start:

GAME: After watching an intense back-and-forth on the table-tennis table, Jack and Jill have both come to different conclusions as to whether or not Hill hit the ball with his handle and has, consequently, lost the game. Jack accepts and claims that he did, while Jill accepts and claims that he did not. Fortunately, they can both agree that they want to get at the fact of the matter and that Hill's handle is comprised of both his hand and any part of the paddle not covered in rubber.

Now, as far as I can tell, what makes Jack and Jill's attitudes and expressions incompatible in this case is the fact that their contents cannot, on pain of inconsistency, both be true. As can be seen, if it is true that <Hill hit the ball with his handle (as commonly understood)>, and also true that

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[23] Following Cappelen and Hawthorne 2009, we can either *have* a disagreement with someone - or something (e.g. attitudes and expressions) can *be in* disagreement with someone or something. The first is an activity we engage in with other actual and present agents (- typically), while the second is a state that something can be in with regard to all sorts of things - including, past, present or future agents, as well as actual or possible agents, and even inanimate things which bear information, such as a report. For our purposes, I am going to work with attitudes and expressions and their *being in* disagreement - but, importantly, the extension of "attitudes and expressions" for me includes past, present, future, actual, possible, implicit, explicit, conscious, or unconscious attitudes and expressions of some entity or as recorded (or simply left for display) by some entity.

<Hill did not hit the ball with his handle (as commonly understood)>, then clearly what will follow is that it is true that <Hill both hit and did not hit the ball with his handle (as commonly understood)> - which is straightforwardly inconsistent. So, short of arguing that contradictory states of affairs are metaphysically possible or that inconsistencies are rationally permissible to accept or claim, then what this case appears to suggest is the following conception of incompatibility:

> **(Content Incompatibility)**: Two (or more) attitudes (or their expressions) are incompatible *just in case* the contents of those attitudes (or expressions) cannot both be true, without inconsistency, given the attitudes' (or expressions') shared standard(s) of evaluation.

And, to all appearances, this conception is adequate for GAME. But, as can be seen, it also highlights that the participating attitudes (or expressions) must have a shared standard (or set of standards) of evaluation.

I have included this feature because, as is imagined in GAME, no inconsistency need follow, for instance, if it were accepted and claimed that <the ball did hit Hill's handle> in response to one question (or standard of evaluation) and, also, that <the ball did not hit Hill's handle> in response to another.[24] In GAME, of course, it was simply assumed that the question under discussion was: did the ball hit Hill's handle, given an understanding of Hill's handle as constituted by both his hand and any part of the paddle not covered in rubber? But, surely, I can relativize my acceptances and expressions to different questions - so, the first acceptance and expression to the question in GAME, and the second acceptance and expression to the following:

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[24] I take it that, for any disagreement whatsoever, there will either be a question or a set of questions under discussion, be it implicit or explicit. And, moreover, I also take it that, for any standards of evaluation at play in a disagreement, the corresponding question or set of questions will be informed by and responsive to changes in those standards.

did the ball hit Hill's handle, given an understanding of Hill's handle as constituted by any part of the paddle not covered in rubber? And, obviously, these two questions are different since correct answers to them are not necessarily going to be the same or entail anything about one another. But, where that much is true, then clearly the contents of these acceptances and expressions are not necessarily going to be incompatible with one another as well. And so, despite appearing to be inconsistent, the contents of these attitudes and expressions are ultimately going to be consistent because of their differing standards of evaluation - and, equally, the attitudes and expressions themselves are ultimately going to be rationally permissible for someone to hold in tandem, unlike Jack and Jill's attitudes and expressions in GAME.

But, what about a case like the following:

GOSSIP: Jack, Jill, and Hill have been gossiping about Will to their table-tennis colleagues. Jack has expressed approval of Will's behavior on the table, whereas Jill has expressed disapproval - meanwhile, Hill has suspended judgement on the matter.[25] But, oddly enough, Jack, Jill, and Hill all have the same, unambiguous standard for play.

In GAME, it appeared that Jack and Jill's attitudes (and expressions) were incompatible because they had inconsistent contents. But, looking at GOSSIP, it appears that Jack, Jill, and Hill's expressions are not inconsistent, but still incompatible. They do not appear to be inconsistent because their expressions are non-doxastic and, thus, do not appear to have contents which can be inconsistent in virtue of their being neither directed towards a proposition nor entailing a

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[25] In agreement with Friedman 2013, I take it that suspension of judgement is an attitude of committed neutrality - and not just the absence of either acceptance or denial, belief or disbelief, and so on.

particular belief.[26]   But, nevertheless, it still seems *incoherent* for Jack, Jill, or Hill to express

their own attitudes as well as another's, given their shared standard for play.   Jack would

obviously be incoherent if he were to express, given his one standard of play, both his approval

and disapproval of Will's behavior on the table - and, the same goes for Jill.   But, equally, Hill

would also be incoherent if he were to express, given the same standard of play, both his

suspension of judgement and either approval or disapproval of Will's behavior on the table since,

as can be worked out, to express either of those attitudes would amount to his contradicting his

own commitment to neither express approval nor disapproval.   So, although it seems wrong to

suggest that these attitudes and expressions are incompatible because their *contents* are

inconsistent, it still seems right to appreciate - in light of them - that the following conception of

incompatibility might be acknowledged:

> **(Preclusion of Joint Tenability)**: Two (or more) attitudes (or expressions) are
> incompatible *just in case* those attitudes (or expressions) cannot, on pain of
> incoherence, be held (or expressed) simultaneously by an agent (or a group),
> given the attitudes' (or expressions') shared standard(s) of evaluation.[27,28]

Clearly, Preclusion of Joint Tenability has a larger extension than Content Incompatibility - but,

what should be clear, nevertheless, is that Content Incompatibility is a species of Preclusion of

Joint Tenability.   And, as such, if it is ever unclear whether or not a set of attitudes (or

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[26] Maybe, some non-doxastic attitudes are propositional attitudes - but, in this case, I find it hard to believe that Jack or Jill's attitude are propositional, rather than objectual, seeing as they are directed towards Will's behavior, and not a proposition. Nevertheless, I will admit the possibility of a propositional correlate, despite my not knowing what this correlate might look like.

[27] This conception of incompatibility is informed by MacFarlane 2014: 121-3.

[28] For this conception of incompatibility, the "cannot" in its formulation should be given both a capability reading as well as a metaphysical reading.

expressions) are doxastic, then at the very least I can always rely on Preclusion of Joint Tenability in order to determine whether or not a set of attitudes (or expressions) is incompatible.

But, what about a case like the following:

> **GUILTY**: As a judge who pursues justice, Jack approves of punishing all those who have committed a crime, but also approves of not punishing anyone who is under the age of 17. One day, though, his commitments are put to the test. Hill comes before Jack in court for having stolen Jill's ping-pong table and, as it turns out, Hill is only 16.[29]

In this case, it seems as if the underlying conception of incompatibility is not necessarily going to be either Content Incompatibility or Preclusion of Joint Tenability. On the one hand, it can be seen that Jack's attitudes are non-doxastic and, thus, do not have the appropriate contents for Content Incompatibility. But, equally, it can also be seen that his commitments are not necessarily incoherent since, if no minors were to exist or only adults were to commit crimes, then Jack would be able to coherently hold (or express) those commitments simultaneously. For, as GUILTY shows, it is only when those commitments are coupled with certain facts - namely, Hill's age and theft - that they cannot be jointly satisfied (or executed). If Jack punishes Hill, he will upset his commitment to not punish anyone who is under the age of 17 - but, equally, if he does not punish Hill, then he will upset his commitment to punish all those who have committed a crime. So, given Jack's predicament, it appears that another conception of incompatibility is:

> **(Preclusion of Joint Satisfaction)**: Two (or more) attitudes (or expressions) are incompatible *just in case* those attitudes (or expressions) cannot be jointly satisfied (or executed), given the attitudes' (or expressions') shared standard(s) of evaluation, without one attitude (or expression) undermining the other's

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[29] This case is informed by Alchourrón 1991.

satisfaction (or execution), and so forth for however many attitudes (or expressions) are involved.[30]

And, as should be clear, Content Incompatibility and Preclusion of Joint Tenability are, somewhat loosely-speaking, species of Preclusion of Joint Satisfaction: Content Incompatibility precludes the satisfaction of two (or more) contents in terms of their truth, while Preclusion of Joint Tenability precludes the satisfaction of two (or more) attitudes (or expressions) in terms of their rational acceptability (or expressibility). However, the key question is: is this conception of incompatibility appropriate for a conception of disagreement? And, as will be seen further below, I take it that the answer is: yes.

I am not quite done, though. The last sort of case that I want to consider is a slightly more complex one inspired by John MacFarlane (2014):

> **GOURMET**: Suppose that, in 1800, Jack believes the centered proposition that <I am eating a sandwich>, while in 1900, Jill believes the centered proposition that <no one ate sandwiches a hundred years ago>. Also, suppose that, by "sandwich" they both mean the same things (Adapted from MacFarlane 2014: 125).

Now, as MacFarlane identifies, Jack and Jill's beliefs clearly cannot both be accurate, although their contents make it coherent for either Jack or Jill in their respective times to hold both of those attitudes simultaneously. It can be seen that, when Jack believes in 1800 that <I am eating a sandwich> and, also, that <nobody was eating a sandwich a hundred years ago>, he is obviously believing coherently and will continue to be coherent, so long as he does not live to be a hundred years old and believes in 1900 that <nobody was eating a sandwich a hundred years ago> and that <I was eating a sandwich in 1800>. And, similarly, when Jill believes in 1900 that

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[30] This conception of incompatibility is informed by MacFarlane 2014: 123-4.

\<I am eating a sandwich\> and, also, that \<nobody was eating a sandwich a hundred years ago\>, she is also believing coherently and will continue to be coherent, so long as she does not live to be a hundred years old and believes in 2000 that \<nobody was eating a sandwich a hundred years ago\> and that \<I was eating a sandwich in 1900\>. But, clearly, it is either the case that someone was eating a sandwich in 1800 or not. So, either Jill is right in 1900 in believing that \<nobody was eating a sandwich a hundred years ago\> - that is, in 1800 - and, thus, Jack's belief in 1800 that \<I (Jack) am eating a sandwich\> is false or Jack is right in 1800 in believing that \<I (Jack) am eating a sandwich\> and, thus, Jill's belief in 1900 that \<nobody was eating a sandwich a hundred years ago\> is false. Ultimately, the answer does not matter. But, what is important is that the attitudes in question are doxastic, they can be coherently held (or expressed) simultaneously by Jack and Jill in their own times, and they do not appear to be sets of attitudes (or expressions) which *necessarily* preclude each other's satisfaction (or execution) - and, still, their appears to be incompatibility in the air, in virtue of the fact that Jack and Jill cannot both be right. So, perhaps, I might also need to acknowledge a conception of incompatibility like the following:

> **(Preclusion of Joint Accuracy)**: Two (or more) attitudes (or expressions) are
> incompatible *just in case* those attitudes (or expressions) cannot both be accurate
> or, alternatively, their holders cannot both be right.[31,32]

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[31] Again, this conception of incompatibility is informed by MacFarlane 2014: 125-8.

[32] As MacFarlane notes, it is important to treat truth and accuracy as distinct for this conception of incompatibility. He notes: "when we're considering whether to assert or believe something ourselves … it will be correct to judge the assertion or belief accurate just in case it is correct to judge its content true. But, the distinction [between truth and accuracy] matters a great deal when we are considering the speech acts and attitudes of others, or our own earlier speech acts and attitudes. A past assertion need not be retracted if it was accurate, even if its content is one we now take to be false. Conversely, it ought to be retracted if it was inaccurate, even if its content is one we now take to be true" (MacFarlane 2014: 127). For, again, as he notes: "to say that the attitude or speech act is accurate is, roughly, to say that it is true relative to the circumstance that matters" (MacFarlane 2014: 126).

If so, then ultimately there will be something like a cross-temporal conception of Preclusion of Joint Satisfaction in virtue of the fact that, despite being held at different times, Jack and Jill's attitudes *at a particular time* will preclude each others' satisfaction in terms of accuracy. And, in agreement with MacFarlane, this conception appears to be one of the most general conceptions of incompatibility in virtue of the fact that, when attitudes (or expressions) are taken to be incompatible with one another, the base impression is that the participating attitudes (or expressions) cannot both be accurate or, alternatively, that their holders (- whenever they might be) cannot both be right.

To illustrate, contrast that impression to the one produced by the following case:

GARBAGE: While dumpster-diving, Jack finds what appears to be a blue table-tennis table. Impressed with his find, he yells over to Jill: "I've found a table-tennis table!" However, looking over the table, Jill replies: "that's not a table-tennis table; its a ping-pong table!" For, as it turns out, Jill understands and uses "ping-pong" for what Jack calls "table-tennis," but understands and uses "table-tennis" for ping-pong that is played on red tables. Jack, on the other hand, simply uses the two names interchangeably.

In this case, it appears that Jack and Jill both have accurate attitudes and are both right, despite their seeming to disagree with one another. If anything, they appear to be engaging in what authors have called a *merely verbal dispute* - that is, a *faultless* and, thus, merely apparent disagreement wherein the individuals involved are not actually forwarding incompatible attitudes about the substantive question under discussion (i.e. what game the table was made for), so much as have "divergent uses of language" which give them the impression that they have

incompatible attitudes about it (Jenkins 2014: 21).[33,34,35]   For, clearly, Jack and Jill have divergent uses and understandings of what "table-tennis" means. But, what also seems clear is that, if Jill were to realize that Jack uses "ping-pong" and "table-tennis" interchangeably - and takes them to mean the same thing - and does not share her idiosyncratic understanding of what "table-tennis" means, then hopefully Jack and Jill would both realize that their disagreement is essentially predicated on this difference and, best-case scenario, both of them would also realize that they are both right about what the table was made for - namely, ping-pong.[36]

However, there is an alternative realization that Jack and Jill could have. They could realize that what they are actually disputing is *how to understand* and *use* "table-tennis." Or, in other words, they could be having a dispute which is not *merely* verbal, but verbal in so far as it is a *meta-linguistic* dispute about "table-tennis."[37] But, even if it is such a dispute, there is still a difficult question to consider: would this dispute - let us call it "GAB" - amount to anything more than another sort of faultless or merely apparent disagreement?   And, as far as I can tell, it seems not. In the first place, it does not seem as if either Jack or Jill need be wrong about how they understand and use "table-tennis" if, for instance, they also happen to differ in their

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[33] Importantly, such disputes are *merely* verbal. Verbal disputes, I take it, can be genuine if, for instance, a standard of evaluation is decided upon, such as: coherence with other aspects of the language, coherence with speakers' ordinary usages, coherence with scientific terminology, and so on. *Merely* verbal disputes, on the other hand, are not bound by any standard of evaluation and are, as a result, free-floating and pointless.

[34] The conception of a verbal dispute that I prefer is from both Jenkins 2014; and Vermeulen 2018. However, there are other conceptions available - see, for example, Hirsch 2005; Sider 2011; and Chalmers 2011. But, for issues with those conceptions (and reasons for why I have preferred Jenkins and Vermeulen's conceptions), see, for example, Chalmers 2011; Jenkins 2014; Belleri 2018; and Vermeulen 2018.

[35] An important facet of Jenkins 2014 and Vermeulen 2018's conceptions of verbal disputes is that the dispute in question operates at the level of speaker meaning - so, following upon Grice 1991, what a speaker intends to convey (or to be understood) by using some term, sentence, or expression.

[36] In this case, it appears that Chalmers's (2011) method of elimination would be sufficient for Johnny and Andy to dissolve their disagreement.

[37] My treatment of metalinguistic disputes as verbal, but not *merely* verbal (and, perhaps, genuine in some cases) can be found, among other places, in: Plunkett 2015; Plunkett and Sundell 2019; and Mankowitz 2020.

standard(s) of evaluation. And, secondly, it is also hard to see *to what* they might appeal in general in order to show that the other is wrong about their understanding and use of "table-tennis." Among other things, there does not appear to be a fact of the matter to which Jack and Jill might appeal and, moreover, they also do not appear to agree on any particular standard(s) of evaluation by which they can adjudicate between their understandings and uses. So, if anything, Jack and Jill appear to be arguing pointlessly over what could simply be arbitrary conventions. And, although different and, occasionally, at odds in what they identify as "table-tennis," it still does not appear as if any incompatibility need exist between these conventions in this case.

But, regardless of which realizations they come to and how they respond, the point is that the impressions from GARBAGE and GAB should hopefully lend credence to the thought that "what is going on," so to speak, in GOURMET is the result of some incompatibility and, more importantly, that this sort of incompatibility does, in fact, constitute disagreement. So, in a somewhat indirect way, I am actually returning to my original question: which conceptions of incompatibility work in capturing the various disagreements that can be acknowledged as genuine? But now, at least, I can also ask: do all of the conceptions that I have just discussed count or do only some of them?

And, in response, what I would answer is: it depends on what is prioritized about genuine disagreements. For instance, if I prioritize the fact that many genuine disagreements have involved a conflict between attitudes (or expressions) which can only be resolved or avoided by a change in those attitudes (or expressions), then as it seems the net is ultimately going to be cast too wide - this prioritization seems to countenance merely verbal disputes, seeing as there are conflicts in such cases and they can only be resolved or avoided as a result of changes in how

language is understood or used. But, alternatively, if I prioritize the fact that many genuine disagreements have involved a *logical incompatibility* which requires a change in the contents of the participating attitudes (or expressions), then as it seems the net is ultimately going to be cast too narrowly - with this prioritization, I am going to be excluding cases like GOSSIP and GUILTY where the attitudes (or expressions) are not necessarily doxastic. And, even further, if I prioritize the fact that many genuine disagreements have involved conflicts between attitudes (or expressions) which go beyond what Richard Chappell has called "dinnertime 'disagreements' between a predator and its prey" (Chappell 2009: Relativism and Genuine Disagreement), then as it seems the net is ultimately going to be cast too haphazardly - with this prioritization, it is unclear to what extent I am excluding the possibility of genuine disagreements which are implicit or unconscious to its participants, seeing as it is possible that some states of mind between a predator and its prey may be unconscious, non-doxastic, conflict, and have a shared, albeit implicit and unsophisticated, standard of evaluation (- perhaps, the law of the jungle). So, overall, I think that care is needed - for, although impressions of genuine disagreements do seem to rely on certain prioritizations, this reliance does not mean that these prioritizations are correct.

But, that being said, I still need some guidance for what is to follow in sections three and four, as well as the rest of this study. And so, as far as a working conception of genuine disagreement might go, it seems to me that the best that can be done is to treat each of the conceptions of incompatibility that I have previously discussed as acceptable - and to accept something like the following:

> **(Genuine Disagreement)**: Two (or more) attitudes (or expressions) genuinely
> disagree *just in case* those attitudes (or expressions) satisfy *either*:

(1) Content Incompatibility,

(2) Preclusion of Joint Tenability,

(3) Preclusion of Joint Satisfaction, *or*

(4) Preclusion of Joint Accuracy.

For, as far as I can tell, it is only when I have all of these conceptions in mind that I might be able to *charitably* render many of the disagreements that contemporary analytic philosophers have had with themselves, each other, historical agents, future agents, merely potential agents, and so on, as genuine ones. Of course, if I am missing any other ways in which their attitudes or expressions might be incompatible and which can also render more of their disagreements genuine, then chances are: I will accept them. But, for the purposes of this study, more hinges on what evidence there is for any sort of disagreement among contemporary analytic philosophers than necessarily whether it is genuine or merely apparent. And so, as a *working* conception, I take it that the above is, at the very least, more than adequate for considering: what sources of information should be relied upon in order to determine the extent to which contemporary analytic philosophers have disagreed with one another and, also, what can be concluded, given those sources?

3.3 What Sources of Information Should be Relied Upon?

Overall, within the philosophical literature to date, a number of claims have been made about the extent to which contemporary analytic philosophers have disagreed with one another. Some of them have expressed pessimism at how wide-spread the disagreement appears to be, while others have expressed optimism in the belief that agreement is actually more prevalent; others still have expressed indifference. And yet, for all their claims, some thinkers have only relied upon

anecdotal evidence - that is, casual personal observations - in order to produce and justify them.[38]

They could have relied upon the data from Bourget and Chalmers's 2009 PhilPapers Survey or their 2020 PhilPapers Survey, both of which have been produced through standard methods in the social sciences. But, for some reason, they have largely been ignored or challenged in favor of anecdotal evidence, and the result has been a number of conflicting accounts as to how much disagreement actually exists within the discipline.[39] But, as I hope to establish in this section, the work from Bourget and Chalmers's (2014) paper, "What do Philosophers Believe?," and their (2020) paper, "Philosophers on Philosophy: The 2020 PhilPapers Survey," are the only *credible* sources of information at our disposal.

To begin, I want to be clear that, by a "credible source of information," all that I mean is: a *generally reliable* and *intersubjectively employable* means of either producing or gathering accurate information - and, that is it. I am open to such information being propositional (in alignment with Williamson (2000); and LittleJohn (2012), among others) or phenomenal (in alignment with Huemer (2001); Conee and Feldman (2004); Skene (2013); and Smithies (2019), among others). But, concretely, I take it for granted that methods within the natural and formal sciences are generally the *most credible* sources of information available, while guessing is generally the *least credible* source available. I also presume that, in between these two sorts of sources, there are a host of different ones to which we might appeal, but which will vary in their

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[38] Some authors have provided out-of-date, historical evidence, such as disagreements between Hume and Kant, Plato and Aristotle, Epicureans and Stoics, and so on. But, given the discussion at hand, it seems to me that such evidence is broadly irrelevant for trying to determine the extent to which there is either agreement or disagreement within *contemporary analytic* philosophy. The only way that I can see such evidence being relevant is if those authors are providing an inductive argument to the effect that, where philosophers have disagreed or agreed on quite a bit in the past, they are likely to disagree or agree on quite a bit in recent times. But, if that is how they are using their evidence, then, among other things, substantial worries about cherry-picking will need to be addressed.

[39] In particular, I am thinking of: Decker 2015; Cappelen 2017; Daly 2017; and Frances 2017.

degree of credibility. So, expert testimony, for example, I take to be generally more credible than guessing, non-expert testimony, or personal observation, but at the same time I also take it that anecdotal evidence is generally more credible than guessing. Hopefully, none of these presumptions are too controversial.

In broad scope, though, I take it that there are ultimately two ways in which information might be gathered in response to a particular question: through empirical methods or broadly non-empirical methods (i.e. "armchair methods"). Empirical methods, I maintain, are the sorts of methods that the natural, social, and cognitive sciences have predominately employed and, although the particulars of those methods may be a matter of dispute, I take it that some sort of general conception of them as a result of, say, something like primary or secondary school tutorials which discuss and rely upon scientific methods is sufficient. And, alternatively, broadly non-empirical methods are, I maintain, the ones that have been predominately employed in formal sciences, such as: logic, mathematics, statistics, theoretical computer science, information theory, game theory, decision theory, theoretical linguistics, and so on - and again, although the particulars of those methods may be a matter of dispute, I take it that some sort of general conception of them as a result of, say, something like primary or secondary school tutorials in mathematical reasoning is sufficient. But, in noting this difference, my only point is that, for some disciplines, empirical methods are going to be proper to them, whereas for other disciplines, the opposite is going to be the case.

Now, it might have been noticed that contemporary analytic philosophy has not been mentioned, along with a host of other disciplines such as: history, film studies, theology, ancient and modern language studies, musical theory, law, and so on. The reason for this omission is

because these disciplines are what I would call "hybrid" disciplines, in that they use results and methods from other disciplines, but also take themselves to have methods and subject-matters which are particular to them. And, in that regard, they are also supposed to be "independent" and "autonomous" disciplines - that is, disciplines which are distinct from other disciplines and have control over their own inquiries. Traditionally, such disciplines have been called "the humanities" because of their emphasis on human affairs as well as their claims to special methods and subject-matters which are purportedly not employed or discussed in either the empirical or formal sciences. But, looking over these disciplines and their histories, what can be found is a great deal of diversity in which methods are used and which subject-matters are discussed and, even, some disagreement as to whether their disciplines should be understood as part of the humanities or the sciences, given their methods and aims.[40]

Contemporary analytic philosophy is a case in point. Some of its practitioners have claimed that, given its methods and aims, the discipline is closer to the humanities; whereas, others have claimed that, given its methods and aims, the discipline is actually or, at least, should be closer to either the empirical or formal sciences.[41] In general, it is hard to say who is right. But, there are some things, I think, which both sides can generally agree upon. And, in particular, I think that they can generally agree that not all methods are going to be apt for all questions and, further, that some methods *should not be used* for some questions, given certain standards of evaluation - especially, when other, better-suited methods exist and have been

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[40] See for example: Bod 2016; and virtually any Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of X or Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of X in order to see how the literatures of discipline X have shifted according to variations in method.

[41] For team humanities, see for example: Danto 1985; Rorty 1999 and 2007; Williams 2005; Brandom 2009; Nussbaum 2010; and Van Noorden 2017. And, for team sciences, see for example: Quine 1960; Churchland 1986; and Williamson 2006 and 2018. For a general discussion of the issue, see Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood (eds.) 2013.

used.[42]   So, for instance, when asking about whether black holes actually exist, I take it (and I hope other thinkers can agree) that empirical methods are going to be the most apt for determining the answer to this question, although broadly non-empirical methods might help. And, relatedly, when asking whether a particular inference is valid, I take it (and I hope other thinkers can agree) that broadly non-empirical methods are going to be the most apt, although empirical methods might help. But, the big question for this section is: what about this chapter's primary question - namely, what disagreement is there among contemporary analytic philosophers? For instance, should empirical or broadly non-empirical methods be used in order to inform and determine the correct answer to it? And, more specifically, should contemporary analytic philosophers rely on anecdotal evidence (- that is, casual personal observations), as some have done, as a means of producing and justifying their answers? Or, should they only rely upon the best, available data which has been produced by methods in the empirical and formal sciences?

Well, hopefully, the answer to the first question was empirical methods, the answer to the second question was "no," and the answer to the third question was "yes" - for, although casual personal observation is an empirical method, I find it hard to treat any reliance upon such observation as anything but a questionable practice when it comes to general, quantitative, and contingent claims - especially, given the existence of Bourget and Chalmers's work which has used the best, available methods in the empirical and formal sciences. But, for those who disagree, what I can offer in response are a handful of reasons for why they should agree in this case - that is, in the case of this chapter's primary question.

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[42] The sort of thinking that I am suggesting is akin to what Jessica Brown 2013 claims in response to Weinberg 2007 and Weinberg *et al*. 2001 on the hopelessness of intuition. In Chapter 7, a related discussion will also arise.

One reason is that, despite their best efforts to do otherwise, contemporary analytic philosophers can and do, sometimes, misunderstand what their peers accept.[43] In general, there is no sure method of avoiding such misunderstandings and, equally, all researchers, like all humans, are fallible. We cannot expect them to get things right all of time - especially, considering the fact that practicing analytic philosophy makes considerable intellectual demands on its practitioners which can easily lead to mistakes in comprehension. And, moreover, not all philosophers share the same languages. So, although we might want to believe that contemporary analytic philosophers can always tell what their peers are trying to communicate or, even, what they accept, there is something to be said for taking their casual personal observations about such things with a grain of salt and to, instead, only admit methods like those used by Bourget and Chalmers which allow such philosophers to report *for themselves* - namely, through surveys.

Another reason is that, contemporary analytic philosophers can and do, sometimes, make claims or arguments which they do not actually accept and, also, provide no indication of their actual attitudes. There is no explicit prohibition against doing so and, moreover, there are even some thinkers who are now claiming that it is rationally permissible in a host of cases.[44] But, equally, one might also think that it is called for, given certain aims. For instance, intellectually-speaking, it might be needed in some cases in order to better understand what we happen to accept or to better understand how to refute opposing positions. And, pragmatically-speaking, it might be a necessary strategy for newly inducted members of a discipline so that they can both

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[43] One can find a number of examples in either Patrick Greenough and Duncan Pritchard 2009; or Derek Parfit 2017.

[44] See for example: Barnett 2019; Plakias 2019; and Fleischer 2020.

keep up in the sort of publish-or-perish paradigm that currently exists in many areas of

Anglophone academia, but also play around with new thoughts or argument-styles that they have

recently discovered.[45]   So, in general, it is important to distinguish between what an author

accepts and what an author writes or defends in speech, as well as to recognize that not everyone

in contemporary analytic philosophy puts their own views on public display. At best, what might

be done in order to receive their actual views (or, at the very least, to minimize the likelihood of

their reporting inauthentic views) is to ask them under conditions of confidentiality or

anonymity, as Bourget and Chalmers have done in their surveys.[46]

A third and related reason is that, even if contemporary analytic philosophy is supposed

to be a rigorous discipline where many of its practitioners aim for various epistemic/rational

goods, there are still pressures put on some practitioners to conform to certain views, without

either sufficient argument or reason. For instance, in defending modal realism, David Lewis

reports having received the proverbial "incredulous stare" by a number of his colleagues and

having, subsequently, to point out to them that an incredulous stare is not an argument.[47] And,

similarly, in trying to get any article, book, or book review published, reviewers can and do,

sometimes, hold particular views and *may* ultimately consider all other views to be obviously

false, regardless of their having good or bad reasons for thinking as much. And, the result for

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[45] For data on the publish-or-perish paradigm, see for example: Slaughter and Leslie 1999; Levidow 2002; Slaughter and Rhoades 2009; Small 2013; and Briggle and Frodeman 2016.

[46] They have collected their data under conditions of confidentiality - not anonymity. Confidentiality insures that personal, identifying information is not revealed by the data, while anonymity insures that no personal information is obtained in collecting the data.

[47] See Lewis 2001a and 2001b.

some philosophers' work: rejection.[48],[49] So, given these sorts of pressures (which appear to exist within all academic disciplines) and the common enough need to advance professionally, I think it is important to recognize that, although colleagues may print or say something publicly, there is ultimately good reason to suspend judgement on what they actually accept, until conditions of confidentiality or familiarity will allow them to express themselves freely. And, as we can see in Bourget and Chalmers's surveys, they opted for conditions of confidentiality in order to insure that participating philosophers would not have to worry about or suffer any consequences based on their responses.

A fourth reason is that it is also important to realize that, when we form impressions about something, we can and do, sometimes, cherry-pick what things to focus on in forming those impressions based on certain biases or our, sometimes, only having a rather restricted sample to work with. I presume that many thinkers have tried their best to avoid doing so and to gather as much information as possible. But, biases can be unconscious and, even with a significant amount of time and dedication, there is still only so much information that anyone can glean from their experiences of a discipline: there are only so many books and papers that they can read, so many seminars and conferences that they can attend, so many colleagues that they can have coffee with, and only so many natural, formal, or jargon languages that they can understand.[50] So, the idea that any one of a discipline's members has a thorough understanding of all of their biases, has read all of *a* literature, let alone perfectly understood it, and has a

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[48] Informal surveys, although not the best way of making this point, still indicate that some practitioners have experienced this phenomenon. In particular, I am thinking of: Marcus Arvan's informal survey from 2018 on his blog - https://philopherscocoon.typepad.com/blog/2018/11/survey-results-on-peer-review.html#more.

[49] For more problems of peer review, see also: McKeever 2019.

[50] See, for example, Michael Brownstein and Jennifer Saul 2016.

familiarity with the views of all of their colleagues, is highly suspect. And thus, even if casual personal observation is an empirical method, there is still plenty of room to worry that any given individual's observations are ultimately not going to be *extensive enough* or *impartial enough* in order to produce accurate information about a larger set of individuals.[51] But, alternatively, when the sorts of methods that Bourget and Chalmers have used are employed, what is standard is for biases and inadequate sample sizes to be rooted out by design and, at the very least, afford other researchers the opportunity to spot them and challenge them.

And finally, the last reason that I want to bring up is that using casual personal observations is particularly questionable when they do not take into account, or are meant to be responses to, findings from the best, available methods in the empirical and formal sciences. For, perhaps, someone might say that, given no findings from such methods, the best that they could do was produce and justify their claims through casual personal observation - which may be rationally permissible in some such circumstances.[52] But, considering the existence of the data from Bourget and Chalmers, I do not see how it could be anything but rationally *impermissible* for anyone to either appeal to casual personal observation in order to produce and justify their own claims or to use it as a means of challenging the data from Bourget and Chalmers. Perhaps, if they had good reason to doubt or dismiss the methods used by Bourget and Chalmers or to worry about the quality and analysis of their findings, then maybe there would be room for their casual personal observations to step in. But, as far as I am concerned, this strategy would require someone to either show that Bourget and Chalmers have applied

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[51] I should also note that the worry just presented can be connected to worries about confirmation bias and, in informal reasoning, the fallacies of hasty generalization and anecdotal evidence.

[52] As Brown 2013 notes about intuitions, for instance.

faulty or idiosyncratic methods - which, to all appearances, they have not - or that they have somehow not analyzed their data appropriately - which, to all appearances, they have not. In the first case, they have simply used standard, scientifically-informed methods from the social sciences.[53] And, in the second case, their analysis has broadly been based in the use of an interpretative method (- in particular, explanatory factor analysis) which has been used and defended for its efficacy in generating tentative, explanatory theories in both the social sciences and the sciences in general.[54] So, given Bourget and Chalmers's work and findings, I do not see why anyone would ignore them or challenge them through casual personal observation. Ultimately, it seems that no discipline should tolerate such a practice in so far as it wants to make general sociological claims, while still sincerely caring to avoid risking falsity. And, if anything, I would say that contemporary analytic philosophers should take Bourget and Chalmers's work as standard practice and also treat their findings as a baseline for subsequent discussion - which is precisely what I am going to do for this coming section as well as the rest of this study.

3.4 The Extent of Genuine Disagreement Among Contemporary Analytic Philosophers

And so, taking Bourget and Chalmers's work as a baseline for our discussion, my aim in this section is to present their main results, as well as several critical points about them, so that I can come to a working understanding of the extent to which contemporary analytic philosophers have actually disagreed with one another.

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[53] See for example Bryman 2015 for a basic appreciation of the methods used within the social sciences.

[54] See for example Cattell 1978 and Haig 2005 for discussion of the value of explanatory factor analysis as a method for generating explanatory theories in both the social sciences and the sciences in general.

There are two surveys available to us. Setup-wise, 931 members of various philosophy faculties provided confidential responses to 30 philosophical questions in the 2009 survey and 1785 members of various philosophy faculties provided confidential responses to 40 main questions, and 1/6th of them provided confidential responses to 60 more questions, in the 2020 survey.[55] The questions focused on five "core" areas of analytic philosophy, including: epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind - but questions were also included from such areas as: aesthetics, decision theory, logic, meta-philosophy, philosophy of action, philosophy of science, political philosophy, meta-philosophy, history of philosophy, and so on.[56,57] Overall, the target groups (i.e. the 931 respondents for 2009 and the 1785 respondents for 2020) had a strong bias toward analytic or Anglocentric philosophy.[58] And so, by extension, their responses should indicate something about contemporary analytic philosophers, as I have already briefly indicated in Chapter 2. For the full sets of data for the general populations, there are Appendices 1 and 2. Appendix 1 sets out the 2009 survey results for the 30 questions sent to the general population, while Appendix 2 sets out

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[55] For more detailed information on how the 2009 survey was formulated and administered, see Bourget and Chalmers 2014. And, for more detailed information on how the 2020 survey was formulated and administered, see PhilPapers>2020 PhilPapers Survey>Editor's Thoughts - https://survey2020.philpeople.org/survey/design/thoughts.

[56] Bourget and Chalmers identify these areas as "core" ones.

[57] For the 2009 survey, the questions were chosen through three-rounds of beta-testing with about 50 philosophers from various backgrounds and specializations (Bourget and Chalmers 2014: 470). So, as I will mention later, worries about cherry-picking questions on which contemporary analytic philosophers mostly agree or mostly disagree should not hold in this case. Similar remarks hold about 2020 survey's questions because they largely overlap, with the exception of ten questions which were added later. But, even with these added questions, the impetus to add them was predominately due to their importance for both those within the discipline as well as outside of it.

[58] Bourget and Chalmers note: "It should be acknowledged that this target group has a strong (although not exclusive) bias toward analytic or Anglocentric philosophy. As a consequence, the results of the survey are a much better guide to what analytic/Anglocentric philosophers (or at least philosophers in strong analytic/Anglocentric departments) believe than to what philosophers from other traditions believe" (Bourget and Chalmers 2014: 468).

the 2020 survey results for the 40 main questions (in addition to one speciality follow-up

question) sent to the general population.[59]

Broadly speaking, the results are not exactly obvious in what they indicate. Nevertheless,

what can be seen in the 2009 survey data is that:

> Only one view (non-skeptical realism about the external world) attracts over
> 80% support. Three views (a priori knowledge, atheism, scientific realism)
> attract over 70% support, with significant dissent, and three more views attract
> over 60% support. On the other 23 questions, the leading view has less than
> 60% support. Admittedly, not all of the questions are among the "big
> questions" of the past, but certainly some are: the questions about the external
> world, free will, god, knowledge, meta-ethics, meta-philosophy, mind, and
> normative ethics, for example. Only two of these (external world, god) have
> views with over 60% support (and in the case of the external world question,
> the consensus is somewhat misleading, since arguably the biggest question is
> *how* we know about the external world) (Chalmers 2015: 9-10).

And, looking over the 2009 data in total, we can see that, out of 30 questions, there are 14

questions with winning views *over* 50% agreement (- inclusive of those with over 60%, 70%,

and 80% support), and 16 questions with winning views *under* 50% agreement.

For the 2020 survey, there are 47 questions in total to consider because, as Appendix 2

notes about the questions and results from the survey, I have split one question into six questions

in order to make it clearer - namely, the question on philosophical methods. And, moreover, I

have also added one speciality follow-up question in light of Chalmers's last comment in the

above quotation - namely, the question on the solution to skeptical paradoxes. So, taking these

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[59] For more information on the other 60 questions posed to 1/6th of the target population, I must refer one to Bourget and Chalmers's complete 2020 survey data on PhilPapers.

parameters into account, we can see that, out of 47 questions, no questions have winning views over 80% agreement, 5 questions have winning views with over 70% agreement, 11 questions have winning views over 60% agreement (- inclusive of those with over 70% agreement), 19 questions have winning views with *over* 50% agreement (- inclusive of those with over 60% and 70% agreement), and 28 questions have winning views *under* 50% agreement.

But, what exactly can we conclude from these findings? For instance, are these findings good reason to claim that there is more disagreement than agreement within contemporary analytic philosophy? Or, are they only good enough reason to claim that there is some disagreement within the discipline? And, to answer, what I would say is that this data provides good reason to accept that, among contemporary analytic philosophers, *numerically significant* disagreement does, in fact, exist over *many* of the *central* questions that they have considered.[60] However, I do not presume that this response is obvious. And so, by way of motivating it, I will work through several points which might be lurking in the background of those who might or have disagreed with it.

In the first place, I want to address a critique from Herman Cappelen (2017) in his "Disagreement in Philosophy: An Optimistic Perspective" which tries to undermine the sort of conclusion that I have just suggested. Essentially, his critique is that Bourget and Chalmers's survey does not screen for verbal disputes or disputes in which there is no fact of the matter - which as section 3.2 has shown may or may not be merely apparent, depending on how the dispute is framed within a standard of evaluation - and, thus, does not tell us a great deal about how much *genuine* disagreement there actually is among contemporary analytic philosophers.

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[60] By "numerically significant," what I am indicating is that the disagreement is such that an absolute majority (over 50%) or a supermajority (over 51%) has not been achieved for a particular question.

For instance, among the disagreement that the surveys reveal, there could be equal parts verbal disputes, "fact-less" disagreement, and genuine disagreements or, maybe, even more verbal disputes and "fact-less" disagreements than genuine ones. And clearly, if either of those things is true, then ultimately there will be less genuine disagreement than what the surveys indicate.[61]

However, as appropriate as this critique may be, if it is right, then as far as this study is concerned, there might be just as many worries lurking for contemporary analytic philosophers as with their genuine disagreements. For, on the one hand, it is certainly true that, if a majority of their disagreements on the correct responses to the surveys' questions do happen to be verbal disputes or "fact-less" disagreements, then ultimately there will not be so much genuine disagreement among contemporary analytic philosophers as pointless arguing and, possibly, agreement couched in verbal disputes. But, as can hopefully be appreciated, this outcome is also far from ideal. In effect, it would reveal (1) that, in various cases, contemporary analytic philosophers are simply talking past one another and do not recognize that they might actually agree (not unlike Jack and Jill in GARBAGE from section 3.2), (2) that, in various cases, they are simply arguing pointlessly, and (3), depending on how many of their disagreements are actually verbal disputes or "fact-less" disagreements, that their work might actually be comprised mainly of engaging in pointless disagreements and trying to come to terms with each other on how various bits of language should be understood and used (perhaps, not unlike Jack and Jill in GAB from section 3.2).[62] And, overall, I take it that none of those things are what many of the discipline's practitioners have in mind when they engage in dialectic with one another and

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[61] Cappelen 2017 only discusses verbal disputes, but "fact-less" disputes should also be taken into consideration.

[62] If contemporary analytic philosophers do not have an unambiguous and shared standard of evaluation for their disagreements and debates about how various bits of language should be understood and used, then they will ultimately be like Jack and Jill in GAB

purport to seek the possession, transferability, and vindication of various epistemic/rational goods.   Rather, what I suspect is that they take themselves to be debating and seeking the fundamental nature of morality, physical laws, time, knowledge, personal identity, mind, proper names, and so on. But, if the other picture is right instead, then as it seems they will ultimately not be debating, seeking, and offering such things, so much as exerting themselves on fact-less debates and debating what uses of the language surrounding a subject-matter they should have, despite their not having an unambiguous and shared standard of evaluation.

So, regardless of whether the surveys reveal either that there is a great deal of genuine disagreement or verbal/fact-less disagreement among contemporary analytic philosophers, the potential for worry does not go away. It is just that, in one case, the potential for worry revolves around contemporary analytic philosophy's ability to possess, transfer, and vindicate various epistemic/rational goods; while, in the other case, the potential for worry revolves around the use of a discipline which does little more than engage in fact-less or aimless, meta-linguistic disputes. So, for the purposes of this study and for the sake of the discipline, I am largely going to assume that the disagreement among contemporary analytic philosophers is mostly genuine.[63]

However, even if the disagreement revealed by the surveys is mostly genuine, there is still a big jump to be made from the surveys' data on only 30 to 47 philosophical questions to generalizing about many of the discipline's central questions. For instance, as Bryan Frances (2017) has noted in his "Extensive Philosophical Agreement and Progress," many conditional and basic philosophical claims associated with particular specialities have garnered significant agreement among the relevant specialists, and the same also goes for reasons claims about what

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[63] This point will arise again in Chapter 7.

things count for and against different philosophical views. To illustrate, here are examples of each sort:

(1) **Example of a Reasons Claim**: Epistemicism faces a serious objection regarding how sharp meanings are fixed (Frances 2017: 47).

(2) **Example of a Basic Philosophical Claim**: Knowledge requires truth - you can't know something unless its true (ibid.: 50).

(3) **Example of a Conditional Philosophical Claim**: If anti-realism about a priori knowledge is false, then there is a priori knowledge (ibid.: 51).

And, ultimately, I think that there is something powerful about this sort of response to my conclusion because, if there is any legitimate concern about the disagreement within the discipline, it will not simply be based on whether there is *any* disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy, but whether or not there is more numerically significant disagreement on many of the discipline's central questions than agreement. And, when we consider all of the questions that the discipline's practitioners (particularly, specialists within their specialities) can agree upon, it begins to look as if the data on the surveys' 30 to 47 questions might slightly misrepresent the extent to which they actually disagree. For, as Frances points out, there are numerous claims which can garner the sort of wide support that the ones just presented have garnered.[64] So, perhaps, he is right in thinking that "the reason the PhilPapers survey showed so much disagreement is entirely a result of the choice of the survey questions" (ibid.: 52).

However, there are two quick objections that can be made to this sort of response. The first is that Frances's challenge is based upon casual personal observation - which, again, is questionable as a challenge to empirically informed sociological methods and data, no matter

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[64] Frances 2017 lists about 10 claims for each sort.

how plausible the challenge might seem. And, secondly and relatedly, it is ultimately misleading to claim that there is more agreement than disagreement on the sorts of claims that Frances has pointed out, given the vast number of related claims which might instead admit of numerically significant disagreement. For instance, consider the following:

(1) **Example of a Reasons Claim**: Disagreement with an epistemic peer is no good reason to conciliate with regard to one's views.

(2) **Example of a Basic Philosophical Claim**: Knowledge requires belief; we cannot know something unless it is believed.

(3) **Example of a Conditional Philosophical Claim**: If communication is possible, then Radical Contextualism (i.e. the view that a sentence expresses a content only in the context of a speech act) is false.

And, to use Frances words to opposite effect, a "group of a couple dozen philosophers whose areas of expertise cover a large number of subfields of philosophy could come up with *thousands* of similar claims" (Frances 2017: 48). However, Frances has nothing to say about them or their relation to the number of claims which, as he points out, have garnered wide-spread agreement among contemporary analytic philosophers. So, as far as I can tell, either cherry-picking worries or issues of his having a representative sample based on his casual personal observations appear to arise. For, although he has experience within the discipline, the question is: to what extent is his experience representative of everyone else's experiences of the discipline? And, immediately, I find this question to be unanswerable by Frances' without some form of sociological study upon which he can base a comparison.

But, to be fair to Frances, his discussion is primarily directed towards showing that there is progress within contemporary analytic philosophy and not that there is more agreement than disagreement within the discipline or, even, that there is numerically significant agreement on

many of its central questions. So, really, my conclusion and his conclusion are not necessarily in conflict. And, if anything, I can agree with Frances that contemporary analytic philosophy probably has made progress in so far as its practitioners might widely agree on some of the sorts of claims that he has identified. But, in light of Frances's work and an alternate reading from Thomas Kelly (2016), there are still three points which I think are important to address for the sake of the conclusion that I am putting forward. The first point is about the selection and sort of questions in Bourget and Chalmers's surveys, the second point is about the difference between specialist and non-specialist responses, and the last point is about how to read the specialist data.

Going in order, I want to begin by claiming that Frances's thought - that "the reason the PhilPapers survey showed so much disagreement is entirely a result of the choice of the survey questions" (Frances 2017: 52) - is quite right, although he seems to intend this statement as an indictment of the surveys' questions rather than a vindication. More or less, he seems to be saying something akin to what I have just pointed out - namely, that cherry-picking is rationally impermissible. But, what he fails to mention is that these surveys' questions were not chosen based on a bias towards questions upon which contemporary analytic philosophers mainly disagree. Rather, they were chosen for (1) their stature within the discipline and researchers' work, (2) their general accessibility to analytic or Anglophone philosophers, and (3) the canonicity of the views associated with them.[65] So, unlike Frances's claims, Bourget and Chalmers's questions were not chosen based on whether they would reveal more disagreement or

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[65] For explanations and discussion of the choice of survey questions, see: PhilPapers>More>PhilPapers Surveys>On the Conception and Design of the PhilPapers Survey. Also, see: PhilPapers>More>PhilPapers Surveys>Questions and Answer Options.

agreement. And, moreover, they were also not chosen and formulated solely by Bourget and Chalmers. For, as they note in their Editors' Thoughts, they:

> … designed the Philosophical Survey at first through conversations with a number of other philosophers, and then refined it through three rounds of beta testing by many professional philosophers and graduate students (Bourget and Chalmers 2009: https://philpapers.org/surveys/designthoughts.html).

So, short of denying either the credibility of their methods or Bourget and Chalmers's credibility in what they report, there appears to be little to no basis upon which Frances can charge them with cherry-picking.

Still, what is more important for the purposes of this study is the difference between the sorts of claims that Frances lists and the sort of questions that Bourget and Chalmers have identified and asked. The difference is that, while most of Frances's claims only play a supporting role in the discipline's work, all of Bourget and Chalmers's questions appear to play a central role. Granted, Bourget and Chalmers hedge their questions by pointing out that they may not be the "big" questions of the past. But, what I think can still be said of them in virtue of the selection process that Bourget and Chalmers used for them is that they are all "big" or "central" questions of the present - namely, for contemporary analytic philosophers. And, more importantly, the reason they are "big" or "central" questions is because of their centrality to the discipline's work in various specialities. To illustrate, consider the debate between empiricists and rationalists about knowledge. This debate is at the center of a number of important questions which such philosophers ask, including:

(1) How do we gain justified beliefs/knowledge?
(2) How do we gain the mental representations that we use in order to think?

(3) Do our mental representations carve at the joints of reality?

(4) What are the limits of thought?

(5) What are the limits of our ability to know? And so on.

And, moreover, each of these questions intersects with a number of other questions from different areas within contemporary analytic philosophy, including: epistemology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, metaphysics, philosophy of science, meta-philosophy, and so on. So, where there is numerically significant disagreement about rationalism or empiricism about knowledge, there is almost certainly going to be substantive disagreement "down the road," so to speak, in a variety of other related areas. And, for each of the thirty to forty-odd questions that Bourget and Chalmers have surveyed, there appears to be similar breadth and depth in their scope. So, to all appearances, where there is numerically significant disagreement on many of their questions, it is more than likely that a number of other areas of interest are also going to be beset by numerically significant disagreement as well.[66]

But now, contrast some more of Frances's widely agreed upon claims, particularly focusing on the basic claims:

(1) **More Examples of Reasons Claim**:

(A) The thesis that our belief contents are fixed by the internal goings−on of our bodies faces a serious challenge from Putnam's elm−beech story, in which the two terms counterfactually switch meanings while the protagonist is the same from the skin in.

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[66] I have not presented the data concerning the other 60 questions that Bourget and Chalmers have asked in the 2020 survey. But, I recommend looking to the different specialties' responses to the relevant questions in this set of questions, as what I have found is that, indeed, there is about as much agreement and disagreement (if not more disagreement) surrounding these related questions as in the initial specialties' sets. And, moreover, it can also be seen that, where a question has well-known arguments underlying the answers to it (as with the question on a god's existence or whether skepticism holds), there are follow-up questions about these arguments which display numerically significant disagreement as to which arguments are the best ones for a particular answer. So, overall, I really do not think that a charge of a hasty generalization is ultimately going to be workable here. At most, it will simply push the dialectic further into the data, which - again - provides little relief for those looking for it.

(B) Solving the problems of material composition will probably require solutions to various puzzles about vagueness, such as the forced‒march sorites paradox.

(2) **More Examples of Basic Philosophical Claims From Epistemology**:

(A) Some beliefs are true while others are false.

(B) Evidence can be positive or negative. Positive evidence for a belief B is evidence that suggests B is true; negative evidence regarding B is evidence that suggests B is false.

(C) In some cases suspension of judgment is temporary; other times it is permanent.

(3) **More Examples of Conditional Philosophical Claims**:

(A) If there is sharable belief content, then content externalism is true for such content.

(B) If consequentialism and deontology are false, then virtue ethics is true.

(C) If propositions exist, then they contain concepts as parts (Frances 2017: 47-51).[67]

Now, looking over all of these claims, what I can accept is that Frances might be right that contemporary analytic philosophers are progressing when it comes to agreeing upon more and more supporting claims within their chosen specialties - that is, conditional and reasons claims within those specialities which indicate which answers might be the right ones to the discipline's central questions and what things might logically follow from them. But, what I do not accept is that Frances is right about such philosophers making progress on the basis of their answering the *central* questions of their discipline or their specialities because, as can be seen, the only claims that constitute unconditional answers to their questions are the basic claims that he points out. And, although these basic claims may number in the thousands for each speciality, what Frances

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[67] I have not included negative claims as they can fall into basic claims.

does not mention is that none of the claims that he cites - both in his text and the ones that I have listed - are the products of contemporary analytic philosophers. They can all be found in philosophical texts as both discoveries and as basic, agreed upon presumptions from Western antiquity up to the middle of the 19th century, before analytic philosophy was ever conceived.[68] So, presumably, contemporary analytic philosophers cannot take credit for such basic claims when they themselves did not produce them and, also, when such claims have largely been presumed throughout the history of philosophy. If anything, I take it that Frances and other specialists within the discipline will need to show what they have produced (or what they have uniquely come to vindicate and agree upon) by way of basic or central claims in order to claim progress for their discipline as it has been practiced *in contemporary times*. Otherwise, I think it is a fair question to ask: what have contemporary analytic philosophers done or vindicated/ agreed upon which has not already been done and vindicated/agreed upon? For again, looking over Frances's examples, it seems the answer is: very little.

Still, there is also Frances's concern about the difference between specialist and non-specialist disagreement.   Frances conjectures that there will be more agreement among specialists than non-specialists - but, again, he does not offer any concrete support for this conjecture.   Fortunately, though, Bourget and Chalmers do offer data on how specialists answered their specialities' questions for both the 2009 and 2020 surveys - see Appendix 1 and 2.[69] So, we can independently assess Frances's claim.

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[68] I am only considering the examples that Frances cites from epistemology, but each of these claims can, at the very least, be found or found to be presumed in Mill 1905 [1843].

[69] This data was presented by Bourget and Chalmers on: PhilPapers> PhilPapers Surveys> The 2009 PhilPapers Survey: Results.

There is a question of how to assess his claim, though. For instance, should we assess the responses of different specialists in relation to their particular sets of questions - so, for instance, what disagreement is there among aestheticians' responses to their relevant question, and so on and so forth for each speciality? Or, should we simply assess the disagreement/agreement within the discipline as a whole in light of its specialists' responses - so, for instance, how many winning views have over 50% agreement among specialists' out of the 30 questions in the 2009 survey? And, in response, I would say that the first option is preferable, seeing as some specialties might have either more or less agreement than others. Granted, one downside is that some specialties are going to be quite short on relevant questions, such as aesthetics, decision theory, philosophy of action, and several others. But, in most of those cases, given the centrality of the questions under consideration, I still think that there is some room for generalizing about the effects that they might have for agreement or disagreement about the specialties' other questions down the road, so to speak. Additionally, there are also two other parameters that I should mention, given Appendix 1 and 2. Firstly, I have assigned questions and answers to various specialities based on whether or not they engage in substantive discussion of that question.[70] And, the second parameter is that, although we have both the 2009 and the 2020 survey data to work with, I am ultimately only going to work with the second set of data (- except, for when the authors' in question use the 2009 survey data) because both the target, general population size is larger - and, presumably, more representative as a result - and there are more questions for some specialities where, previously, there were only a few.

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[70] So, for instance, I have included both the question about vagueness and the question about truth for logicians and philosophers of logic, based on the presence of papers in this speciality which extensively discuss these topics. For the question about truth, see: PhilPapers>Logic and Philosophy of Logic>Paradoxes>Liar Paradox. And, for the question about vagueness, see: PhilPapers>Logic and Philosophy of Logic>Paradoxes>Sorites Paradox or >Non-Classical Logics.

So, looking to the 2020 survey data, here is what can be found. Among aestheticians, only one question is relevant, and the winning view has 50% agreement. Among decision theorists, only one question is relevant, and its winning view has over 70% agreement. Among general philosophers of science, two questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has over 60% agreement, while the other question's winning view has over 50% agreement. Among logicians and philosophers of logic, three questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has 50% agreement. Among epistemologists, six questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has over 70% agreement, while another question's winning view has over 80% agreement. Among meta-ethicists, five questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has over 60% agreement, another question's winning view has over 70% agreement, and yet another question's winning view has over 80%. Among normative ethicists, five questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has over 60% agreement, another question's winning view has over 70% agreement, and yet another question's winning view has over 80%. Among philosophers of mathematics, two questions are relevant, and both of their winning views have over 50% agreement. Among philosophers of race, gender, and sexuality, two questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has over 50% agreement, while the other's winning view has 60%. Among philosophers of action, one question is relevant, and its winning view has over 50% agreement. Among philosophers of physical science, three questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has over 70% agreement. Among philosophers of religion, two questions are relevant, and both questions' winning views have over 60% agreement. Among social and political philosophers, five questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has over 50% agreement, and another question's winning view has over 60% agreement. Among

meta-philosophers, eleven questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has 50% agreement, three question's winning views have over 50% agreement, and two question's winning views have over 60% agreement. Among metaphysicians, twelve questions are relevant, and four of the questions' winning views have over 50%, two question's winning views have over 60% agreement, and one question's winning view has over 70% agreement. Among philosophers of language, five questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has over 60% agreement, while another question's winning view has over 70% agreement. Among philosophers of mind, four questions are relevant, and two questions' winning views have over 50% agreement. And, finally, among applied ethicists, seven questions are relevant, and two questions' winning views have over 60% agreement, while another's winning view has over 70%.

It is also important to note substantive conflicts between different specialties on overlapping questions. Looking at the data, we can see that metaphysicians disagree (atheism 61.35%) substantively with philosophers of religion (theism 68.79%) on the question of whether a god exists. Social and political philosophers disagree (winning view: subjective 33.45%) substantively with meta-ethicists (winning view: other 37.16%) and both of those specialties disagree substantively with philosophers of religion (objective 65.71%) on the meaning of life. And, logicians and philosophers of logic (tie: Classical Logic 37.5% and Non-Classical Logic 37.5%) substantively disagree with philosophers of mathematics (winning view: Classical Logic 55.1%) on the nature of logic.

So, all-in-all, it does not appear as if the discipline is in all that much better shape even when we consider the specialties' responses. Not taking into account the overlaps in their

questions, they answered 77 questions and, of those questions, 39 had winning views with either 50% agreement or more which did not have substantive conflict between specialties - so, 50.6% of questions had winning views with 50% agreement or more. 23 questions had winning (and non-conflicting) views with 60% agreement or more - so, 30% of questions had winning views with 60% agreement or more. 11 questions had winning (and non-conflicting) views with 70% agreement or more - so, 14% of questions had winning views with 70% or more. 3 questions had winning (and non-conflicting) views with 80% agreement or more - so, 4% of questions had winning views with 80% or more. And, no questions had winning (and non-conflicting) views with 90% agreement or more.

Alternatively, taking into account the overlaps in their questions and averaging the responses of overlapping specialities, specialist contemporary analytic philosophers answered 47 questions and, of those questions, 23 of them had winning views with either 50% agreement or more which did not have substantive conflict between specialties - so, 48.9% of questions had winning views with 50% agreement or more. 11 questions had winning (and non-conflicting) views with 60% agreement or more - so, 23.4% of questions had winning views with 60% agreement or more. 8 questions had winning (and non-conflicting) views with 70% agreement or more - so, 17% of questions had winning views with 70% agreement or more. 2 questions had winning (and non-conflicting) views with 80% agreement or more - so, 4% of questions had winning views with 80% agreement or more.   And, no questions had winning (and non-conflicting) views with 90% agreement or more.

Moreover, of the 18 specialties that I considered, given Bourget and Chalmers specialty breakdowns, eight of them had 50% agreement or more on their winning views - where those

winning views did not substantively conflict with other specialties - for *more than* half of their relevant questions, while ten of them had 50% agreement or more on their winning views - or which had winning views which conflicted substantively with other specialities - for half or less than half of their relevant questions.[71]

And so, really, the only other point that I have found which might be able to cast the specialist data in a better light are comments made by Thomas Kelly (2016) on the basis of how he has compared the numbers on display in the 2009 survey and to what standard he holds them. Overall, he concludes that the 2009 data shows that the questions with more disagreement within the survey are actually "much more the exception than the norm" (Kelly 2016: 386). But, as it appears, his conclusion depends on a reading of the data which only compares the top view in every question to the next best view. For, on this sort of reading, what we can find is that 25 out of 30 questions have winning views in the 2009 data which are greater than their next best competitor by, at least, 5%.

However, there is a case to be made for rejecting his conclusion and this sort of reading of the data, be it for the 2009 survey *or for the 2020 survey*. In the first place, we need to recognize that, on average, each answer to the 30 questions in the 2009 survey were ± 1.1%, given the calculated error (- for the 2020 survey, calculated error is still forthcoming). And, even on his reading, 10 out of 30 questions still had under 10% advantage over their next best competitor - which, as far as I am concerned, given the calculated error for each answer and the stability of each winning view's lead, does not really support his claiming that more or less

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[71] Importantly, I only considered specialities for which the main questions being considered were clearly relevant and which could be taken straightforwardly to be related to contemporary analytic philosophy. So, for instance, I unfortunately did not consider specialities such as: 17/18th century philosophy, 19th century philosophy, ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, Asian philosophy, and so on.

evenly divided opinion is *much more* the exception than the norm. Still, I can agree: it is not the norm. But, secondly, I also worry: is a comparison between the top view and the next best competitor really a suitable way of reading the data? Or, in other words, is a simple majority on a view sufficient to waylay many of the worries regarding the disagreement surrounding that view?[72]

Well, given his standard for interpreting the data - namely, whether it reveals a preponderance of controversial issues where informed philosophical opinion seems to be more or less evenly divided - then, perhaps, it is suitable. But, on another way of interpreting the data, collective disagreement to a view is still substantive disagreement, regardless of how that disagreement breaks down individually.[73] So, for instance, if philosophers of mind in the 2009 survey who accept the qualia theory (17%), disjunctivism (17%), sense-datum theory (4%), and other (19%) can agree that representationalism (43%) alone is not right about the nature of perception, as they seem to do in not choosing it, then why is their collective disagreement to representationalism not also substantive? Again, sure, such philosophers might disagree about what the right view is. But, *various sorts of attitudes or claims by specialists* might require that a view not only "win" against its competitors individually, but also against all those who collectively disagree with it as well. Or, in other words, perhaps, various sorts of attitudes or claims by specialists might require absolute majorities over and above simple ones. Otherwise, as in the example above, representationalists might be able to possess and vindicate that their view is collectively known or has a rational consensus, despite the fact that 57% of surveyed

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[72] Simple majorities are relative majorities - that is, majorities which are greater than their next-best competitors, but which do not constitute absolute majorities. Absolute majorities are majorities which are greater than all of their competitors combined.

[73] This way of reading the data is how, for instance, Chalmers 2015 appears to have done so.

philosophers of mind would find it disagreeable. And, the same would hold for many of the questions which have a winning view over the next best competitor by, at least, 5% (- by my count 10 out of 30). So, the difference in reading is not inconsequential. It would problematize 10 out of the 25 questions which "win" against their next best competitor. And, as far as I can tell, there is ultimately no good reason to dismiss this result. Eventually, in Chapter 5, I will discuss this matter in further detail as it relates to particular individual epistemic/rational goods.

But, for now, assuming that any view will likely need either an absolute majority or some sort of supermajority among specialists in order for them to possess/transfer any epistemic/ rational goods or to vindicate them, then, again, the previous findings seem to stand. And, of course, as I have already mentioned, where there is numerically significant disagreement on many of these central questions, then likely there are bound to be more. So, I do not think that we can reasonably deny what Bourget and Chalmers's data has to offer - namely, a good reason to accept that, among contemporary analytic philosophers and specialists in general, and for many of the specialties within the discipline, numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement does, in fact, exist.

3.5 Conclusion

And so, all of the questions that I originally aimed to answer in this chapter are now more or less settled. In section 3.2, I established several distinctions regarding disagreement, including the distinction between genuine and merely apparent disagreements and the distinction between merely verbal disputes and metalinguistic disputes - but, more importantly, I also established several conceptions of incompatibility which might very well underpin our understanding of

genuine disagreements, including: Content Incompatibility, Preclusion of Joint Tenability, Preclusion of Joint Satisfaction, and Preclusion of Joint Accuracy. All of these distinctions and conceptions will need to be kept in mind for the coming chapters.

Then, adopting those distinctions and conceptions, I transitioned in section 3.3 to discussing the quality of the sources behind the various claims that have been made about the disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy. The first set of sources were casual personal observations from the discipline's practitioners, while the second source was Bourget and Chalmers's 2009 and 2020 PhilPapers surveys. And, as I have hopefully showed, there are various reasons to reject the credibility of findings based on casual personal observation and for us to favor Bourget and Chalmers's work which, unlike the first, is based on standard methods from the social sciences which have tended to minimize or, at least, make it easier to detect any error or bias that might affect their findings.

And finally, in section 3.4, I turned to Bourget and Chalmers's 2009 and 2020 survey data itself. I looked to the second set of data and concluded that it provided good reason to accept that, among contemporary analytic philosophers and specialists in general, and for many of the specialties within the discipline, numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement does, in fact, exist. And, using criticisms/observations from Cappelen (2017), Frances (2017), and Kelly (2016), I then hopefully motivated this conclusion by responding to them.

4

Peer Disagreement Within Contemporary Analytic Philosophy

4.1 Introduction

As the last chapter has shown, there is good reason to accept that there is numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement among specialist contemporary analytic philosophers. However, this finding is only the beginning of a discussion into whether or not such philosophers might be right to worry about it, and how they might be able to resolve it. The next step is to consider whether or not their disagreement is such as to reveal any potential significance for the various individual or collective epistemic/rational goods which specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might seek.

Standardly, within the literature on the epistemology of disagreement, such philosophers have been sensitive to a number of different conceptions and conditions regarding disagreement. In many cases, the conceptions and conditions in focus have been based on the nature and relations between participants and their epistemic resources; but, in other cases, they have been based on the nature of the participants, their epistemic resources, and their relations and judgments regarding one or another threshold of achievement. Both varieties have been used in order to discuss the potential significance of disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy. And so, before I turn to any associated worries, it will help to begin by introducing some of the more prominent conceptions and conditions regarding such things, as well as to

situate specialist contemporary analytic philosophers, as they stand in the context of Bourget and Chalmers's surveys, into one or more set of them.

4.2 Disagreement Among Epistemic Superiors, Inferiors, and Experts

As a baseline, it has broadly been taken for granted within the epistemological literature that cases like the following are ultimately ones where the distinction between *epistemic superiors* and *inferiors* is apt and where the disagreement's *epistemic* significance is obvious - consider:

> **PUB QUIZ**: Jack and Jill are good friends who are competing together in a pub quiz. Along with a rival group, with whom they are tied, they have just been asked their final question: what was the name of the Assyrian city where the royal library of Ashurbanipal was located? And, within seconds, Jack whispers that he thinks it was Babylon, while Jill whispers back that she thinks it was Nineveh. As it happens and as they know, both of them have the same cognitive abilities, are equally reliable in using them, and are equally diligent in inquiry. But, Jill is a highly regarded, accredited, and highly knowledgeable Assyriologist who researches the antiquities of Assyria, while Jack is a highly regarded, accredited, and highly knowledgeable linguist who unfortunately knows next to nothing about Assyria.

Now, hopefully, what is obvious about this case is that, when it comes to the question under discussion, Jack is clearly an epistemic inferior to Jill - and, equally, Jill is clearly an epistemic superior to Jack. It can be seen: they have the same sorts of cognitive abilities, are equally reliable in using them, and are equally diligent in inquiry. But, as can also be seen, Jill is an accredited, highly regarded, and knowledgeable Assyriologist. So, presumably, she is going to be better informed than Jack about Assyrian history, all else being equal - and, that being the case, it would also seem that Jack (as Jill's epistemic inferior in that subject-matter) should,

epistemically-speaking, accept that his answer is less likely to be right and should, consequently, defer to Jill's answer.[74] Of course, he should not defer to her on all subject-matters since, given his own accreditation, regard, and knowledge concerning linguistics, he is clearly an epistemic superior to Jill when it comes to linguistic subject-matters. But, where Jack's best information is bested by Jill (or whoever else) in a subject-matter, then as it seems he should defer. So, in general, what seems rationally acceptable is that, in so far as a participant to a disagreement bests another in their best information concerning a subject-matter, then not only will the bested party end up being an epistemic inferior, but equally they should also defer to the epistemic superior on that subject-matter. But, again, these responses are what appear to be *epistemically required* of them, in light of their resources and how they compare to one another, and not, for instance, what appears to be morally, prudentially, or aesthetically required of them, in light of the very same.

And, similar points can also be made for cases where someone has better (or more) cognitive capacities, has better (or more) intellectual virtues, or has used better methods than someone else, as in the following case:

> **PUB CALCULATION:** Jack and Jill have just finished their drinks after the pub quiz and, now, they need to calculate whether they have enough for a late night snack and cab home. They started off with 25 pounds between them and they each had a 5 pound drink. They know that a late night snack will collectively cost them 8.5 pounds, that the cab will cost 75 pence per mile, and that they live 5 miles away. So, they do their calculations, and Jill comes to claim that they are

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[74] For the case under discussion and others like it, I stand by this judgement. But, at the same time, I do not rule out the possibility of cases where "epistemic renegades," despite their epistemic inferiority, can rationally retain their initial attitudes (or expressions) in the face of their disagreeing with an epistemic superior. See, for instance, Frances 2013.

25 pence short, while Jack comes to claim that they have just enough. As it turns out, Jill is better at maths than Jack and is also more diligent in just about everything. But, moreover, whereas Jack has done some quick mental maths, Jill has taken the more reliable route: she has written the maths out and has checked her work as she went. Still, neither of them are amateur mathematicians or have the ability to do maths past the sort that they did in secondary school.

Now, at first glance, without even having done the maths, it appears that Jack should again defer to Jill. As can be read, she is not only better at maths, she is also more intellectually diligent and has used a generally more reliable method than quick mental maths. So, even if Jack might be quite good at maths himself, might be more diligent than most people in carrying out any intellectual task, and might be slightly more right than wrong in his mental maths, the facts are: both of them have the same (accurate) information available to them, and Jill has better cognitive capacities, is more intellectually virtuous, and is using a more reliable method. So, in all relevant regards, it is hard to see in what way Jack might best Jill, epistemically-speaking. And, of course, where he does not, then presumably he will be Jill's epistemic inferior and should again defer to her result.

But, notice that PUB QUIZ and PUB CALCULATION are both cases where a disagreement's participants *are measured against one another* in light of their unequal epistemic resources and not, for instance, measured against a particular threshold of achievement. So, to illustrate the difference, take PUB QUIZ to mind again. Perhaps, another way of unpacking this case is not to categorize Jack and Jill as epistemic inferior and epistemic superior, but as non-expert and expert when it comes to the question at hand. Jack is accredited, highly regarded, and knowledgeable as a linguist, but Jill is accredited, highly regarded, and knowledgeable as an

Assyriologist - so, presumably, she is an expert when it comes to questions about Assyria, while Jack is not. But, in virtue of what is she the expert and Jack the non-expert? Is it because Jack is neither highly regarded nor accredited within the field and Jill is? Or, is it because Jack is not all that knowledgeable about Assyriology, while Jill is? And, to respond, what I would say is that, agreeing with Alvin Goldman (1999; and 2001) and Hilary Kornblith (2013), there appear to be, at least, three things to be recognized. The first is that there is a threshold-based distinction between being an expert and not being an expert, but expertise and lacking expertise come in degrees - so, some people have more expertise than others, and some people are less expert-like than others (Goldman 2001: 89). The second is that sufficient accreditation and regard might constitute a threshold for some conceptions of the distinction between experts and non-experts, but what ultimately matters on a substantive epistemic conception of the distinction is a person's epistemic position with regard to a subject-matter (Kornblith 2013: 267). And, the last thing is that, although we might be able to establish a coarse-grained distinction between experts and non-experts (or novices), it is ultimately going to be quite tricky figuring out a particularly fine-grained distinction which will be able to capture all subject-matters. But, agreeing with Goldman, the following appears to be the best working conception available:

> (**Expert-def**): An expert in a domain [i.e. subject-matter] is someone who possesses an extensive fund of knowledge (true belief) and a set of skills or methods for apt and successful deployment of this knowledge to new questions in the domain (Goldman 2001: 92).

For sure, I and others can ask: how extensive does that person's knowledge have to be, how reliable do their skills or methods have to be, and how many new questions do they have to be able to work with and address in order *to be* an expert? And, no doubt, there will be a spectrum

of more particular conceptions to which different thinkers might adhere. But, even without precise answers to these questions, there are still going to be many cases where some sense can be had - albeit vague - of whether someone is an expert or not. In PUB QUIZ, for instance, I think it can safely be said that Jill, but not Jack, is an expert in subject-matters related to Assyria - and, thus, Jack as a non-expert should defer to Jill as an expert. And, extending to PUB CALCULATION, I also think that it can safely be said that Jack and Jill in that case are both non-experts in mathematics - so, whoever is the more expert-like novice (- Jill, it seems) will presumably be the person to whom the other should defer. But, where the cases become more complex, I do not doubt that more fine-grained conceptions of the distinction between experts and non-experts will be needed.

Nevertheless, what should still be clear is that the distinction between experts and non-experts does not necessarily align with the distinction between epistemic inferiors and superiors in all cases, although they can overlap in some cases.

4.3 Peer Disagreement and the Nature of Epistemic Peerhood

So, changing gears slightly, the more complicated set of conceptions and conditions that I want to consider are those related to cases which do not overlap with either of the previous distinctions. These cases are cases of disagreement between "epistemic peers" - that is, cases of disagreement where the participating individuals are in some sense equal in their epistemic resources. So, extrapolating from PUB QUIZ and PUB CALCULATION, equals with regard to resources like: the reliability of their cognitive capacities, the extent to which they are familiar with the best information or arguments related to their disagreement's subject-matter, the extent

to which they are intellectually virtuous, the extent to which they use good epistemic practices, and so on. But, as even a cursory look over the literature will show, thinking about the epistemic significance of disagreement between epistemic superiors and inferiors, or experts and non-experts, is much more straightforward than that between epistemic peers. In the first place, there are various sorts of conceptions and conditions involved in such thinking, and not all of them are going to be suitable for every sort of theorizing.[75] And, secondly, as will be seen in section 4.3, even if I can decide on the appropriate or the working conceptions or conditions for a particular way of theorizing, there is still the question of *what* epistemic significance the resulting disagreements might have for anyone who faces them. Ultimately, both points will be discussed. But, for now, I am only going to introduce some of the more prominent conceptions and conditions that have been forwarded surrounding such disagreements.

So, to start, consider what many in the literature would now call an "ideal" peer disagreement:

> **WORK PRESENTATION**: Jack, Jill, and Hill are working on a group-presentation for their head curator. It is about a site that they have recently excavated near Amarna, and each of them has worked equally as hard in order to be accurate in describing it. However, despite establishing conclusively the fact that all of them have the same (correct, but inconclusive) information, cognitive abilities, background beliefs, epistemic virtues (and vices), and track records in the correctness of their conclusions, they are still having a hard time agreeing on whether the site was initially abandoned during the Graeco-Roman period or the Late period. Jack claims that it was the Graeco-Roman period, while Jill claims that it was the Late period. Hill, in the meantime, has simply suspended

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[75] See for example: Gutting 1982; Kelly 2005 and 2010; Lackey 2010 and 2018; Gelfert 2011; Frances 2014; Matheson 2014; and Lougheed 2020.

judgement on the matter because, as he tells Jack and Jill, the available information could go either way.

Now, importantly, what makes this case of disagreement "ideal" is *not* the fact that Jack, Jill, and Hill have all been graced with ideal epistemic resources (seeing as I have stipulated that they were not), but the fact that they are all *exactly alike* when it comes to those resources and have also managed to establish as much conclusively. So, the first dimension is a metaphysical one which appears to suggest an idealized conception of epistemic peers - namely, that:

> **(Ideal Epistemic Peers)**: Two (or more) subjects are epistemic peers regarding a question just in case they are exactly the same when it comes to the relevant epistemic resources associated with answering that question.

And, the second dimension is a normative one which appears to require disagreeing subjects to have an ideal rational/epistemic position with regard to their epistemic peerhood - namely:

> **(Ideal Acknowledgement Condition)**: Two (or more) subjects can rationally acknowledge each other as epistemic peers regarding a question just in case they are aware of a conclusive reason for acknowledging each other as such regarding that question.[76]

So, combined, it appears that something like the following is held more generally:

> **(Ideal Metaphysical/Acknowledgement Peer Disagreement)**: Two (or more) disagreeing subjects are in a rationally acknowledgeable peer disagreement over a question just in case their disagreement is genuine, they are aware that they disagree, they are exactly alike when it comes to the relevant epistemic resources

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[76] I am following King 2012 in calling such a condition an "acknowledgement condition."

associated with answering that question, and they are aware of a conclusive reason for acknowledging such likeness regarding this question.[77]

But, clearly, both the normative and metaphysical dimensions of this sort of peer disagreement are quite extraordinary. The ideal acknowledgment condition is so because, to all appearances, any plausible way of conclusively establishing the fact of ideal epistemic peerhood is almost certainly going to be complex and, perhaps, too difficult for anyone in our current epistemic situation to describe or effect. And, metaphysically-speaking, the stringency of an ideal conception of epistemic peerhood is even more extraordinary because of the likelihood of any three people, or of anyone for that matter, ever disagreeing and having all the same epistemic resources at any given time. Of course, to the first point, some may want to remain open to any suggestions as to how Jack, Jill, and Hill in WORK PRESENTATION might have investigated all of their epistemic resources and, thereafter, managed to establish conclusively such likeness. But, when it comes to the second point, I do not think that we can treat their case as anything but extraordinary - no one has ever had the same histories or physiognomies and, presumably, the likelihood of anything like the above case ever occurring is almost certainly going to be quite low.[78]

Accordingly, many within the literature have tended to ease the idealization on one or another of these dimensions. For some, the idealization is eased on their conceptions of epistemic peers. For others, it is easing on the normative conditions that the disagreement's

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[77] Requiring that the disagreement be genuine follows straightforwardly from assuming that only genuine disagreements over a proposition are going to be potentially epistemically significant to the subjects' entertaining that proposition. But, requiring that both subjects be aware of their disagreement has rightly, I think, been endorsed by Lackey 2010 in order to avoid cases where, for instance, we are having to reckon with the potential epistemic significance of disagreements with individuals we have never encountered or are completely unaware of our disagreeing with them.

[78] For issues associated with ideal epistemic peers, see for example: King 2012; Elgin 2018; and Lougheed 2020.

participants have to meet in order for their disagreement to be rationally acknowledgeable as a peer disagreement. And, for others still, the easing is on the necessity of the fact of any sort of epistemic peerhood in order for a "peer" disagreement to be acknowledgeable as such.

For the first sort of easing, Jonathan Matheson (2015) is a prime example of someone who has preferred a more relaxed conception of epistemic peerhood over an ideal one. In his own case, conceptions like the ideal one are called "narrow" conceptions. But, in agreement, he has also pointed out that they are ultimately quite difficult to appreciate because of their "extraordinariness." So, in response, he has opted for what he calls a "broad" conception, which is more like the following:

> (**Broad Epistemic Peers**): Two (or more) subjects are epistemic peers regarding a question just in case they are in an equally good epistemic position regarding that question (Matheson 2015: 2-3, online).

So, the shift is from a conception which requires exact similarity in epistemic resources to a conception which requires exact likelihood, given a set of epistemic resources, of being correct. And, to all appearances, this shift does go some way in mitigating the "extraordinariness" of what he calls "narrow" conceptions. With a broad (- more like a broader) conception, variability in epistemic resources will not necessarily undermine subjects' epistemic peerhood. Among other things, it allows for different cognitive capacities, different amounts of the best information, different intellectual virtues, or even different epistemic practices. And, so long as these resources - in combination - are equally likely to produce the correct responses to a question, then epistemic peerhood regarding that question will be secured. But, as a quick counterpoint, consider: can it be readily said whether theorizing with this sort of less idealized conception will ultimately lead to results about more ordinary disagreements? Admittedly, I do

not know. If anything, they might allow for a greater variety of cases in which subjects will turn out to be epistemic peers. But, it is another question entirely whether those cases will be more ordinary - and, it is this question which does not appear to be readily answerable and gives me pause. So, perhaps, even if we were to follow Matheson in theorizing with disagreements involving broad conceptions of epistemic peers, there might still only be something like idealized theorizing to engage in - and, were results demanded on more ordinary peer disagreements, then as it seems even further easing on these conceptions would ultimately be required.[79]

But, even with a less stringent conception of epistemic peerhood, there is still the other extraordinary dimension to "ideal" peer disagreements - namely, the normative conditions that the disagreement's participants have to meet in order for their disagreement to be rationally acknowledgeable as a peer disagreement. For, just consider: in theorizing, is it really required of participants that they be able to conclusively establish their peerhood in order for their disagreement to be rationally acknowledgeable as a peer disagreement? Well, I would hope not if the primary aim is to produce interesting results for the sake of *our* peer disagreements. And, as it seems, many within the literature would agree. Among others, David Christensen (2007), Thomas Kelly (2010), and Kornblith (2013) have all accepted something like the following, which has a more relaxed conception of such a condition:

> **(Relaxed Metaphysical/Acknowledgment Peer Disagreement)**: Two (or more)
> subjects are in a rationally acknowledgeable peer disagreement over a question
> just in case their disagreement is genuine, they are aware that they disagree, they
> are broad epistemic peers regarding the question under discussion, and, in

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[79] No doubt, there will be a spectrum of options available. However, in thinking about *all* of the available options, a basic question is: how relaxed can a conception of epistemic peerhood be before it is no longer intelligible as such? And, with this question, I suspend judgement and leave it to those who either have or would worry about potentially overly relaxed conceptions of peerhood in others' inquiries.

investigating and reflecting on the question of whether they are peers, they are, by their own rational lights, aware of more good, even if defeasible and non-decisive, reasons to accept - rather than deny - that they are epistemic peers *or* they are simply unaware of any good reason to deny that they are epistemic peers regarding the question under discussion.

So, for this sort of easing, the shift is from a requirement for the disagreeing parties to be aware of a conclusive reason for thinking that they are epistemic peers to a less-optimal requirement for them to have, by their own rational lights, either good overall reason to accept as much or no good reason to deny as much.[80],[81],[82] And, as should be clear, such a shift is quite substantive. With this sort of condition, the bar for rationally acknowledging a disagreement as a peer disagreement is much more attuned to ordinary epistemic situations, which are typically - if not always - less than ideal and bound by various limitations (e.g. time, energy, ability, and so on). On the one hand, it seems to admit that what it is rational for us to do or to accept in such situations is bound by our own rational lights and, thus, will not require anything as optimal as an awareness of a conclusive reason. But, on the other hand, it also does not completely ignore rational considerations altogether. So, with this sort of condition, it appears that we might be

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[80] Conclusive reasons, as I understand them, are reasons which, if a subject were aware of them in conjunction with whatever attitude or action that the reasons promote, then ultimately that subject could not be wrong or mistaken in their attitude or action and would also have no further rational grounds for doubting their attitude or action. See, for instance, Dretske 1971.

[81] Good, even if defeasible and non-decisive, reasons regarding what to do or accept - or *pro tanto* reasons - are, as I understand them, normative reasons which count in favor of or count against accepting or doing something, but which may be defeated by an awareness of other normative reasons and which, in virtue of the previous point, may be inconclusive with regard to what we *ought* to do or accept. Further, overall reason, as I understand it, is the combined normative support that a collection of normative reasons-for and -against confers on doing or accepting something, given the weights of those reasons (- however they turn out to be weighted). For a fuller discussion of the sorts of understandings that I am adopting, see for example: Lord and Maguire (eds.) 2016; Wedgwood 2017; and Kiesewetter 2017.

[82] By "by their own rational lights," I mean: given the various things, of which they aware, pertaining to the rationality of doing or accepting something. So, things such as: normative reasons, values, intentions, the weights of those normative reasons, and so on.

able to capture more ordinary peer disagreements, while also keeping a rational connection between the disagreeing parties and the question of whether (on some conception) they are actually epistemic peers. Of course, more (or less) stringent normative conditions could be held for the disagreeing parties, including: that each of them knows that the other is an epistemic peer or that each of them is aware of good reasons to accept that they are peers and can explain away the existing reasons to deny that they are peers. But, at the very least, what I can say is that, in so far as thinkers are trying to theorize about the epistemic significance of ordinary peer disagreements, then - as it appears - a bounded rational condition, rather than an optimal one, will almost certainly be called for.

But, perhaps, maybe an even weaker overall conception of peer disagreement is still going to be called for, as Jennifer Lackey (2010) has maintained. To illustrate, here is an example of what she thinks of as a straightforward "ordinary" peer disagreement:

> **TIME PIECE**: Jack and Jill are trying to figure out the time. However, for fun, they have decided to only allow themselves the use of the sun in the sky. Both of them have taken some account of each other's epistemic features and have, subsequently, come to the conclusion that they are, roughly-speaking, epistemic peers when it comes to telling the time with the sun. So, they go for it. The results: Jack claims with a fair amount of confidence that it is 2 PM, while Jill claims with a fair amount of confidence that it is 2:15 PM.

Now, for this case, it is important that no mention has been made of whether Jack and Jill are actually epistemic peers. All that is highlighted is that Jack and Jill are willing - as a result of their initial assessments of each other's epistemic resources and prior to their disagreement - to accept that they are roughly epistemic peers. And in explanation: perhaps, this willingness is the result of neither of them being aware of any good reason to not acknowledge that they are

epistemic peers - or, perhaps, it is the result of both of them having good overall reason to accept that they are and are willing, as a result, to both accept each other as epistemic peers, although they may not in fact be. For example, perhaps, Jack's eyesight is better than Jill's and this perk makes it easier for him to see the contours of both the sun and the ground and, thus, also makes him slightly more precise at judging the relevant distances needed for figuring out the time. But, assuming that they are unaware of this fact and also have no other good reason to suspect that they are not epistemic peers, then, as far as they are concerned, why would they not treat each other as epistemic peers? Immediately, it is hard to say from their limited perspectives. Of course, if they were aware of a number of good reasons to suspect otherwise, then perhaps they should not treat each other as such. Or, alternatively, if they were adamant about accepting the correct thing when it came to whether or not they *are* epistemic peers, then perhaps they should not acknowledge each other as such. But, without an awareness of such reasons or the possession of such stringent aims, then at the very least, their acknowledgement seems to be rationally permissible.[83],[84]

So, perhaps, as Lackey suggests:

> **(Ordinary Acknowledgment Peer Disagreement)**: Two (or more) subjects are in
> a rationally acknowledgeable peer disagreement over a question just in case their
> disagreement is genuine, they are aware that they disagree, and, prior to that
> awareness, they are unaware of any good reason to deny - or, alternatively, are
> aware that, by their own rational lights, they have good overall reason to accept -

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[83] For cases of this sort, the notions of blameworthiness and blamelessness and its ties to rational permissibility and impermissibility appear to be key. But, I am not currently in a position to expand upon these ties. So, for now, I am going to hold-off on the details. Still, for more discussion on both sets of notions, see for example: Gibbard 1990; and Brown 2018 and 2020.

[84] Lougheed 2020 accepts a conception which is in a ball park next to the one just presented. However, his conception does not require an awareness of the circumstances that Lackey points out, just that they obtain.

that they are roughly epistemic peers regarding the question under discussion

(Adapted from Lackey 2010: 303-4).[85]

For, mirroring Jack and Jill's situation in TIMEPIECE, this conception of peer disagreement - unlike the previous two - does not require that putative peers be genuine epistemic peers (of one variety or another) in order for the disagreement to be rationally acknowledgeable as a peer disagreement. Instead, it only requires that, given minimal rational conditions, they be willing to accept - by their own rational lights and prior to their disagreement - that they are roughly epistemic peers regarding whatever question is under discussion. And, as Lackey maintains, it is this sort of conception of peer disagreement which can ultimately do justice to the sorts of disagreements that we ordinarily have with our colleagues, as well as with acquaintances who are seemingly knowledgeable.

Still, what I find slightly peculiar about Lackey's conception is that, by "roughly-speaking epistemic peers," she seems to be thinking of subjects who are roughly *ideal* epistemic peers (or *narrow* epistemic peers, using Matheson's language) - so, again, subjects who are roughly the same in their epistemic resources (Lackey 2010: 301-4). But, when I consider the sorts of disagreements just mentioned, it ultimately seems to me that even a rough conception of ideal epistemic peerhood is still going to be too extraordinary a target for the disagreeing subjects' rational considerations. Rather, what I think should be expected instead is something like Matheson's *broad* conception of epistemic peerhood, seeing as it is more feasible for ordinary subjects. Again, on his conception, the thought is that so long as subjects' epistemic

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[85] TIME PIECE and the cases that Lackey 2010 presents are all cases where the disagreeing parities are unaware of any reason to deny that they are epistemic peers. However, it seems to me that, if we are aware that, by our own rational lights, we have good overall reason to accept that we are epistemic peers, then surely we should also be willing to accept that we are epistemic peers as well.

resources - in combination - are equally likely to produce the correct responses to a question, then epistemic peerhood regarding that question will ultimately be secured. So, on the one hand, his conception is similar to an ideal (or narrow) conception in demarcating one way in which subjects can be *epistemic equals*. But, unlike an ideal (or narrow) conception, his conception allows for variation in subjects' epistemic resources, which is almost certainly going to be the case for most, if not all, ordinary subjects. Accordingly, given Lackey's focus on ordinary peer disagreements, I suspect that she would also agree: a more feasible target for ordinary subjects' rational considerations would be something like a correct judgement on whether they are *roughly* equally likely to produce the correct responses to a question, given their resources.

4.4 Specialist Disagreement as Ordinary Peer Disagreement

Now, having introduced some of the more prominent conceptions and conditions associated with disagreeing subjects and their circumstances, where does the disagreement among specialist contemporary analytic philosophers fit in, given the previous set of classifications? For instance, is their disagreement best characterized as between epistemic inferiors and superiors, or experts and non-experts, for which there is usually an obvious answer as to what epistemic significance such disagreement has - namely, that the inferiors and non-experts should defer, epistemically-speaking, to their superiors or to the experts? Or, is it best characterized as between epistemic peers, for which there are several options as to how it might be construed, but no obvious answer(s) as to what epistemic significance it might have?

In response, what I would say is that, to all appearances, such disagreement is ultimately best characterized by Lackey's slightly modified conception of ordinary peer disagreement. For,

although Bourget and Chalmers's surveys do not tell us anything about the disagreeing subjects, individually-speaking, Lackey's conception still appears to be the best fit overall, given its accommodation of the limited and imperfect epistemic resources of specialist contemporary analytic philosophers, as well as its ability to charitably capture how such philosophers will or should have related to one another, given the context of the surveys.

With the first point, I think that it almost goes without saying that, regardless of whether they are specialists or not, no contemporary analytic philosopher has ever had either perfect or exhaustive epistemic resources. Already, I have made points to this effect in Chapter 3 in connection to whether such philosophers can legitimately rely upon their casual personal observations in order to produce or justify their answers to the question of how much disagreement there is within their discipline. But, as I intend the point here, I only want to make two suggestions. The first is that Lackey's normative conditions within her conception of ordinary peer disagreement seem to be plausible enough, in so far as we accept that some sort of non-optimal and bounded conception of rationality is the most appropriate for specialist contemporary analytic philosophers. And, the second, more obvious suggestion is that I think that it can broadly be taken for granted that no one in the discipline is an epistemic superior in virtue of the perfection or exhaustiveness of their epistemic resources. Both suggestions, I take it, are fairly uncontroversial.

But, with the second point, things are slightly more complex, seeing as some specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might ultimately be reluctant to accept Lackey's conception as an accurate depiction of the circumstances of Bourget and Chalmers's surveys. Easily, I think that it can be taken for granted that they would not suggest that disagreements among specialist

colleagues are more akin to those between experts and non-experts. But, perhaps, what they might accept as a more accurate depiction instead is something closer to PUB QUIZ or PUB CALCULATION, where the disagreements in question are between epistemic superiors and inferiors. Offhand, this position does seem to have some plausibility, considering the likelihood of most specialist contemporary analytic philosophers being roughly equally likely to arrive at the correct answers to their affiliated questions. And, secondly, it also seems to have in its favor the ability to countenance something like a presumption that specialists with more experience in their discipline are, on average, more likely to be epistemic superiors to those who have less. But, in so far as I have considered these reasons, the personal experiences of specialists, and the circumstances of Bourget and Chalmers's surveys, I fail to see a *good* reason for accepting conceptions closer to PUB QUIZ or PUB CALCULATION, rather than accepting Lackey's modified conception.[86]

In the context of the surveys, there realistically would have been no way of determining what epistemic resources other respondents actually had, seeing as there was no relevant test or data provided to them beforehand and no means by which they might have even known who answered the surveys before they were ever conducted. And, even if anyone might purport to have had reasons outside of and before the surveys for suspecting that the respondents were mostly going to be made up of epistemic superiors and inferiors, I doubt that these reasons could have been anything but "bad" ones. For, short of testing a random and representative sample (or

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[86] By "good" and "bad" reasons, I am simply thinking of reasons in the context of an argument and to what extent they are either relevant to that argument or partake in supporting a particular conclusion. So, in particular, I take it that "good" reasons are premises in an argument which are relevant and partake in strongly supporting or entailing its conclusion, while "bad" reasons are premises in an argument which are either irrelevant or partake in not strongly supporting or entailing its conclusion. For further elaboration of such a view, see for example: Schroeder 2007; and Way 2015.

all) of a disciplines's specialists for what epistemic resources they might have, I fail to see how such reasons could have been generated and still be "good."

Consider the two reasons that I mentioned a few paragraphs back. Initially, they might have seemed like good ones. But, why? There does not appear to be a single study which would lend credence to either of those claims and, moreover, I also cannot imagine how anyone might lend credence to either of them without an empirical study of some sort. For instance, when it comes to the likelihood of a sizable group of specialists being roughly broad epistemic peers in comparison to not, it would appear as if no such comparison can be made rationally without an empirical study, seeing as there are an indefinite number of ways for either of these circumstances to potentially manifest.[87] And similarly, when it comes to the presumption of, with more experience in a discipline, comes epistemic superiority, and the fact of most specialists having different levels of experience, it would also appear as if empirical studies are ultimately going to be essential, given the fact that not all aspects or even the lengths of anyone's experience in a discipline are going to be beneficial in making them more likely to be correct about their affiliated questions. Although I do not think that they are the norm, there are still numerous things which might stunt either the growth of specialists' epistemic resources or their appreciation of them, including: professional rivalries which might lead them to ignore or downplay certain arguments, answers, or sets of evidence, perceived professional expectations which might make it hard for them to take seriously certain arguments, answers, or sets of

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[87] This point is just to say that, unlike a die with six sides, there is ultimately no principled way of arriving at a finite number from the armchair for how many possible outcomes there are where the specialists end up being rough epistemic peers and how many possible outcomes there are where they are not. As far as I can tell, both are going to be infinite - so, determining from the armchair the probability of one option over the other is simply going to be impossible: such a probability will be undefinable. And, again, what will be needed is either a set of empirical data to proceed with a relative-frequency approach or a set of relevant experiences in order to update on one's non-informative priors, given a subjective approach.

evidence, and even aging which might reduce either their cognitive flexibility or capacity. So, presumably, some sort of empirical work associated with specialists' experiences would have been necessary before any such presumption could have been made rationally.

But, beyond just those reasons, I especially want to quash any reasons associated with casual personal experience for roughly the same sorts of pitfalls that I have pointed out in Chapter 3 - namely, misunderstandings, facades, limited sampling, and cherry-picking. In Chapter 3, the thought was that, given those obvious sorts of pitfalls, contemporary analytic philosophers' personal experiences should not be treated as good reason for any of their general sociological claims about the extent to which they disagree, given the existence of Bourget and Chalmers's surveys. But, here, the thought is that such philosophers' personal experiences - in light of similar sorts of pitfalls - should also not be treated as good reasons for any of their general sociological claims about whether their colleagues are mostly made up of epistemic superiors and inferiors or peers, given Bourget and Chalmers's data. Just consider two of those pitfalls: misunderstandings and limited sampling. Misunderstandings can and have led colleagues to mistake either the extent or the quality of each other's epistemic resources, including: when colleagues use jargon differently and misinterpret each other as making numerous false claims; when colleagues misinterpret each other's behaviors as the product of cognitive defects rather than mere idiosyncrasy; and even when colleagues misinterpret each other's behaviors as the products of intellectual vices (e.g. intellectual laziness or arrogance) rather than the products of certain cognitive constraints or the constraints of busy/difficult circumstances. And further, when it comes to limited sampling, it also appears as if specialists

cannot deny that there are only so many other specialists that they can meet and "test" for whatever epistemic resources they might have.[88]

So, although some specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might claim to have had good reason to regard their colleagues as epistemic superiors and inferiors rather than peers in the context of Bourget and Chalmers's survey, I simply do not see how they could have supported such claims without some appeal to standard social scientific practices. And, as such, I would suggest that, in so far as they had *no* good reason to deny that their colleagues were roughly broad epistemic peers, such specialists could have readily granted this status to each other. But, even further, I would also maintain that they should have.

Perhaps, they might have instead suspended judgement on the matter. But, why would specialists have chosen to suspend judgement rather than give each other the benefit of the doubt, given their prior ignorance of the surveys' respondents and results? My own suspicion is that they would not have. But, just to sure up the claim, I also think that they *should* (at least, pragmatically-speaking) not have, given something like the following norm:

> (**Inquiry-Based Benefit of the Doubt**): Do not *generally* doubt the quality of
> fellow inquirers' epistemic resources in so far as you *generally* rely upon the
> products of those resources and, by one's own rational lights, have no good reason
> to *generally* deem the quality of their resources as either inadequate or faulty.[89]

And, as far as I can tell, this norm should be accepted. For as fallible and collaborative inquirers, it is inevitable that specialists are generally going to rely upon the products of fellow inquirers

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[88] I have put "tests" in quotation in order to suggest my doubts about such tests being performed all that rigorously.

[89] The emphasis of "generally" in this norm is important for a reason that I will mention in a moment. But, just to clarify, I am not making any claims about whether inquirers should or should not doubt a particular fellow inquirer's resources, given their reliance upon the products of that fellow's resources and their having no good reason to particularly deem the quality of that fellow's resources as either inadequate or faulty.

from both their own disciplines as well as others. And, more importantly, I ultimately do not see how - by their own rational lights - specialists could avoid irrationality if they were to either generally rely upon the products of their fellow inquirers' epistemic resources while also generally doubting the quality of those resources themselves or, relatedly, if they were to have good overall reason to generally deem the quality of their colleague's resources as inadequate or faulty and, yet, were to still generally rely upon the products or generally trust in the quality of those resources.

But, to put things in context, consider specialists contemporary analytic philosophers as they relate to Bourget and Chalmers's surveys. As I have already suggested, it appears that such specialists did not have good reason to *generally* deem the quality of their colleagues' resources as either inadequate or faulty. Perhaps, they might have had good reason to deem the quality of this or that particular colleague's resources as such. But, it almost goes without saying: although some specialists may have good reasons to reject the quality of *some* fellow inquirers' resources, such reasons are not necessarily (and are likely not) going to comprise good overall reason for a general claim about all or most fellow inquirers' resources. Also, as I have already suggested, it is inevitable - as fallible inquirers - that such specialists are generally going to rely upon the products of fellow inquirers from both their own fields as well as others. So, considering the norm in the previous paragraph, it would appear that such specialists are in a position to satisfy it. And, if the norm is in good-standing, as I think it is, then accordingly such specialists *should* not have *generally* doubted the quality of their fellow inquirers' epistemic resources. Instead, what they should have done - and might very well have done - was to give each other the benefit of the doubt and to regard each other as broad epistemic peers in the context of the surveys. And

so, to be charitable, it seems only right that we should consequently regard them as if they did as well.

4.5 Conclusion

I will now maintain two conclusions. Based on Chapter 3, I will maintain that Bourget and Chalmers's data provides good reason to accept that, among specialist and non-specialist contemporary analytic philosophers, significant (genuine) disagreement does, in fact, exist over many of the central questions that they have considered. And, based on this chapter, I will now maintain that this disagreement is best characterized as a slightly modified version of Lackey's conception of ordinary peer disagreement - that is, disagreement which is genuine, between individuals who are aware that they disagree, and, prior to that awareness, were unaware of any good reason to deny - or, alternatively, were aware that, by their own rational lights, they had good overall reason to accept - that they are roughly broad epistemic peers regarding the sorts of questions that they have considered. Both of these conclusions, I take it, are non-trivial.

But, they are still not enough to answer my core questions. What is needed now are some reasons that specialist and (non-specialist) contemporary analytic philosophers might have for worrying about such disagreement, if there are any to be found.

5

Where Might the Worry Reasonably Lie - in Individual Epistemic/Rational Goods?

5.1 Introduction

Given the conclusions that I have set out in the previous chapters, I am now in a position to consider: what significance might the ordinary peer disagreement among specialist contemporary analytic philosophers have?

Already, I have mentioned that I will focus on two avenues of thought: one which is concerned with how such disagreement might affect the possession, transferability, or vindication of various epistemic or rational goods *for and to individuals* (e.g. individual knowledge, justified belief, rational acceptance, understanding, or wisdom), and another which is concerned with how it might affect the possession, transferability, or vindication of various epistemic/rational goods *for and to groups* (e.g. collective knowledge, collective justified belief, collective rational

acceptance, rational consensus, collective understanding, and collective wisdom). But, in following these avenues, my intention is to not only incorporate my pragmatic perspective, but to also incorporate two sorts of significance which disagreement might have - namely, significance for its *participants* or for its *observers*. In Chapter 7, I am going to explore how disagreement might affect the possession, transferability, or vindication of various epistemic/rational goods *for groups*. But, in this chapter, I am going to work through two of its potential effects on such things for participating or observing individuals.

And, in particular, I am going to work through the sorts of worries that Hilary Kornblith (2010) and Alvin Goldman (1999; and 2001) have raised.[90] Both concern what significance peer disagreement might have.[91] But, whereas Kornblith's worry focuses on its *epistemic* significance for the *possession* and *vindication* of contemporary analytic philosophers' epistemic/rational goods as participants in their own ordinary peer disagreements, Goldman's worry focuses on its *epistemic* and *practical* significance for an individual's ability - as an *observing* novice or non-expert - to rationally and non-arbitrarily assess the relative reliability and credibility of different experts and to be *transferred* those experts' epistemic/rational goods. In sections 5.2 and 5.3, I am going to discuss Kornblith and his critics and, then, in section 5.5, I am going to discuss Goldman. Again, both discussions will incorporate observations from the pragmatic perspective

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[90] I should note that Sanford Goldberg (2013) has also defended worries akin to Kornblith's own. However, whereas Kornblith is unclear about whether his worry applies to the possession or the vindication of philosophical knowledge, Goldberg is clear that his worry applies to the vindication of philosophical knowledge. It is because of Kornblith's priority in publication and the potential for his master argument to apply to both the possession and vindication of philosophical knowledge that I have focused on him.

[91] Kornblith is not specific about what sort of peer disagreement he thinks pervades contemporary analytic philosophy, but what he is clear about is that he is targeting ordinary varieties of peer disagreement, regardless of what sort of peers might be involved. Similarly, Goldman is also not all that specific about what sort of peer disagreement he has in mind. But, what he does claim (particularly, about scientific disciplines) is consistent with his targeting all sorts of peer disagreement, including ordinary peer disagreement.

that I have set out in Chapter 2, as well as the findings from Chapters 3 and 4. But, as we will see throughout, various other factors will also come into play.

5.2 Kornblith's Conciliation-Based (Individual) Philosophical Skepticism

And so, starting on Kornblith's worry, two components are going to be essential to appreciating it. The first is his belief that there is persistent, numerically significant, and wide-spread disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy, and the second is his acceptance of a particularly stringent version of the Equal Weight View towards peer disagreements.

The first component I can partially vouch for in virtue of Chapter 3, in which it was suggested that we have good reason to accept that, among contemporary analytic philosophers and specialists in general, and for many of the specialties within the discipline, numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement does, in fact, exist. But, when it comes to the second component, things are slightly less straightforward.

More or less, the view that he has in mind for his second component is a conciliatory one - that is, one which rationally requires, epistemically-speaking, that peers conciliate on their attitudes in the face of their disagreeing with one another. But, unlike other conciliatory views and, also, other versions of the Equal Weight View, he has maintained that *suspending judgement* is the *only* rational way for disagreeing peers to conciliate because such disagreement acts as an *undermining* defeater for the grounds of their attitudes/claims - that is, their more or less

equivalent, pre-existing sets of evidence/reasons.[92],[93],[94] And so, thinking back to cases like

WORK PRESENTATION and TIME PIECE from Chapter 4, the thought is that, in both cases,

the participating peers should suspend judgement in the face of their disagreeing with each other

because their disagreement undermines the epistemic/rational support that their more or less

equivalent, pre-existing sets of evidence/reasons provide for for their attitudes/claims - which, as

far as I can tell, is the most stringent story that we can tell on the Equal Weight View.

Accordingly, I am going to call this view "strict conciliationism."

But, as Kornblith might use it in conjunction with the fact of numerically significant,

widespread, and genuine ordinary peer disagreement among specialist contemporary analytic

philosophers, what will result is something like the following argument:

(Kornblith's Master Argument):

(1) If there is persistent and/or numerically significant, widespread, and genuine
ordinary peer disagreement on a philosophical question and strict conciliationism
is true, then the only rational response to that question for any given practitioner
is to suspend judgement on the matter.

(2) There is numerically significant, widespread, and genuine ordinary peer
disagreement among specialist contemporary analytic philosophers and strict
conciliationism is correct.

(3) So, the only rational response to such questions for any given specialist is to
suspend judgement on them (Adapted from Kornblith 2010: 44-7).

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[92] Other versions of the Equal Weight View, for instance, do sometimes only call for peers to "split the difference" between their credences. This point will be explored shortly.

[93] Among other places, defenses of conciliatory views (including the Equal Weight View) can be found in: Feldman 2006b; Christensen 2007, 2009, and 2010; Elga 2007; Bogardus 2009; and Kornblith 2010 and 2013.

[94] Note: I have characterized Kornblith 2010 as treating ordinary peer disagreement as an undermining defeater and not as an overriding defeater. Overall, this characterization is the product of Kornblith's taking disagreement, in his 2010 paper, as "indirect evidence," rather than direct evidence, for whether p or not-p (Kornblith 2010: 31-2).

And, of course, where suspension of judgement is the only rational response to such questions, then presumably specialists cannot vindicate any claim to individually know (or rationally accept) the answers to those questions and neither can they vindicate their claims to expertise - in the substantive epistemic sense from Chapter 4 - on them.[95]   But, moreover, regarding the *possession* of individual knowledge (or rational acceptance), it also appears that, if suspension of judgement is the only rational response, then either specialists can, in fact, take on such an attitude and consequently lose their philosophical knowledge (or rational acceptance) because they will no longer believe (or accept) the answers to their related philosophical questions - or they can refrain from such an attitude and consequently lose their knowledge (or rational acceptance) because they will lose whatever justification they might have for it.[96,97]

If anything, what they might be able to vindicate or possess is, for instance, expertise in *navigating* and *understanding* the dialectic surrounding such questions on the basis of their acquaintance with the relevant literatures.   But again, this sort of expertise is ultimately not equivalent to the sort of expertise that comes with being able to possess or vindicate knowledge (or rational acceptance) as a result of *engaging in* such dialectic.   So, although there may be one or two senses in which specialist contemporary analytic philosophers can vindicate or possess expertise (or knowledge/rational acceptance), there are still the more substantive senses for which they cannot.

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[95] For a fuller explication of how exactly these points follow, see Goldberg 2013.

[96] For now, I am simply assuming for the sake of the argument that specialist contemporary analytic philosophers can will such changes of attitude into being. But, as far as I am concerned, the extent to which we can will changes in our attitudes is a matter for empirical investigation.

[97] Further discussion of this point will arise in connection to claims made by Sonia Roca-Royes (forthcoming) on Kornblith.

5.3 Responses to Kornblith's Master Argument

It almost goes without saying, though: Kornblith's argument is far from uncontroversial. Numerous authors have presented a host of suggestions for how specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might be able to respond to it. And, generally, these suggestions have fallen into one of seven sorts. The first sort are what might be called "suggestions of evidential privilege," the second "suggestions of self-trust," the third "suggestions of epistemic permissiveness," the fourth "suggestions of right reason," the fifth "suggestions of alternative conciliationisms," the sixth "suggestions of non-uniform and non-independence-based significance," and the seventh "suggestions of non-attitudinal significance." But, in order to have a sense of their merits and faults, without having to read the entirety of the relevant literatures, I will briefly outline what each of these suggestions are and how they seem to generally fare in the context of our discussion.

5.3.1 Suggestions of Evidential Privilege

Going in order, suggestions of evidential privilege are essentially comprised of potential ways of denying *evidential symmetry* between *purported* epistemic peers as a result of *special* and *sufficient* differences in their evidence. One of its more prominent proponents, Peter van Inwagen (1996; and 2010), has presented it as the suggestion that, perhaps, there are types of first-order evidence, such as intuitions and other types of incommunicable or private cues or experiences, which are special and particular to a given agent and which might, as a result, break any and all symmetries between purported epistemic peers. He points to such things as the cues

that alert him to his wife's being angry, which only he knows about, and the sorts of cues which inform certain individuals of a chicken's sex, which only they can reliably detect. Similarly, for Alvin Plantinga (2000), the suggestion is that there might be aspects of both purported peers' shared first-order evidence which, in light of their unique phenomenologies, might make things *seem* different to them and which might, as a result, break their evidential symmetry, given the qualitative differences in their evidence. So, to illustrate, think of the spinning dancer or other examples of the silhouette illusion. Perhaps, the dancer seems to you to be spinning clockwise, although for me it seems to be spinning counter-clockwise. Or - more recently - perhaps, *The Dress* seems blue and black to you, but white and gold to me.[98] Whichever it is, the point is that there appear to be inter-individual differences in how things seem to us, and it is in virtue of these differences that Plantinga seems to doubt just how many of us are ever actually going to be evidential equals in any given case. And, van Inwagen seems to have the same doubt.

For both authors, the target of their suggestions are purported *ideal* epistemic peers or, at the very least, forms of peerhood which require *exact* evidential symmetry. So, although these suggestions might hold weight in relation to those sorts of peers, the more important questions for Kornblith and our purposes are: can these suggestions hold any weight against ordinary peer disagreements and roughly broad epistemic peers, especially as they pertain to specialist contemporary analytic philosophers? And, also: how pervasive are the sorts of evidence or "seemings," to which they are gesturing, in contemporary analytic philosophers' intellectual repertoire? Because, depending on what their answers are, their suggestions may or may not be

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[98] For those who do not know, *The Dress* is an image which sparked wide-spread debate on the internet and social media about its colors. As of now, scientific explanations as to why (and whether) the image led to different color perceptions among its viewers are still being debated.

pointing to phenomena which are sufficient to undermine the rationality of such philosophers'
claims to roughly broad epistemic peerhood. Still, even if we can grant that their suggestions
might hold weight against the rationality of such philosophers claiming to be roughly broad
epistemic peers - if the differences they are describing are sufficient to significantly change those
peers' likelihood of arriving at the right answer -, I still do not see how they might be able to
support any answer to the second question, without any appeal to some form of empirical work.
And, unfortunately, no such work has been done.[99] So, although their suggestions might create
serious doubts about the actuality of *ideal* epistemic peerhood among contemporary analytic
philosophers, it does not appear as if van Inwagen and Plantinga have what they need in order to
create the same doubts for the numerically significant, wide-spread *ordinary* peer disagreement
among specialist contemporary analytic philosophers.

5.3.2 Suggestions of Self-Trust

As for the second sort of suggestions, suggestions of self-trust, it is worth noting that they are
similar to the previous in focussing on certain privileges that specialist contemporary analytic
philosophers, as individuals, might enjoy. But, rather than enjoying evidential privileges, what
these suggestions claim is that, given the right conditions, they all enjoy a particular rational
privilege - namely, to be able to trust themselves individually over their specialist colleagues in
the face of ordinary peer disagreement, despite their having initially claimed to be roughly broad
epistemic peers. One of its more prominent proponents, Richard Foley (2001), has presented it

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[99] I also doubt whether or not any such work *can be* done, given the privileged nature of the sorts of things to which
they are appealing. But, for now, I am not going to belabor this point.

as the suggestion that, even in the face of peer disagreement, it is epistemically rational for us to trust and hold steadfast to our "cognizings" in so far as (1) they enjoy a high-degree of our confidence; (2) they are capable of withstanding our own critical reflections; and (3) we do not have any special reasons to trust our peers' "cognizings" over our own (adapted from Foley 2001: 25-45 and 110-2).[100]   And, relatedly, Ralph Wedgwood (2010) has presented it as the suggestion that:

> [In some cases], it may be rational for you [in facing a disagreeing peer of some sort] to think to yourself: "at least, probably p; but he believes that it is *not* the case that p; so, he is probably wrong" (Wedgewood 2010: 243).

But, whereas Wedgewood claims that this sort of thinking may be rational in some cases because "it is rational to have a sort of *egocentric* bias in forming beliefs" - or, in other words, to "fundamentally trust" in our own intellectual apparatus over others (ibid.: 242-3) -, for Foley, the basis of his view is the necessity of such trust in order for inquirers to overcome more global skeptical worries associated with, for example, the reliability of their most basic "cognizings" (Foley 2001: 21-5).[101]   Both claims have been repeated within the literature in a variety of ways.[102]

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[100] For Foley 2001, critical reflection is an introspective process whereby we assess the reasons for and against an attitude (or expression) and consider: Do I have sufficient support to accept it? And, can anything specific be said against the attitude or my support for it? If "yes" to the first question and "no" to the second question, then it is epistemically rational for us to trust the outputs of our "cognizings."

[101] For this section, I have focussed on two of the most straightforward proponents of this sort of suggestion: Foley and Wedgewood. However, it should be noted that Lackey 2010 can also be seen as partially defending this sort of suggestion because her view is non-uniform and suggests that we can hold steadfast to our initial attitudes in cases of ordinary peer disagreement "where there is a symmetry breaker between one's epistemic peer and oneself that is provided by the presence of personal information combining with a highly justified confident belief" (Lackey 2010: 318). And, as we can see, this sort of condition is similar to aspects of both Foley and Wedgewood's own ones.

[102] See for example: Peacocke 2004; Wright 2004; Fumerton 2010; Zagzebski 2012; Fricker 2015; and Pasnau 2015.

Still, there are lingering questions for both authors' claims. For instance, for Foley, one of the more important lingering questions - especially as it pertains to contemporary analytic philosophers - is: how much and what sort of critical reflection will any given specialist need to pursue before they can vindicate their attitudes in light of such reflection - especially, considering the extent to which many specialists can critically reflect and the numerous ways in which they might?[103] And, for Wedgewood, I wonder: why is it not *merely* a bias for a specialist to fundamentally trust themselves over other specialists? And, further still, I also wonder as Catherine Elgin (2004) does: how much should any given specialist generally trust in their own intellectual capabilities over others, given the fact that empirical studies have shown that human beings are susceptible to defective reasoning and are, also, susceptible to biases like the overconfidence bias or blinds spots about biases?[104] For instance, are specialist contemporary analytic philosophers exceptions to such studies? Or, do they just as easily fall prey to such defects and biases in their own work?[105] And, moreover, to what extent can self-monitoring/ critically reflective/introspective specialists, in light of these sorts of studies, actually avoid falling prey to these sorts defects and biases?

All of these questions pose interesting lines of discussion, and each of them have been pursued within the philosophical literature.[106] But, in large part, it does not appear as if anything in that literature nor the empirical literature can straightforwardly decide them - especially, as

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[103] This question hearkens to a criticism that Elgin 2004 has made to the view.

[104] For an overview of work on the overconfidence bias and its varieties, see for example: Moore and Schatz 2017. And, for work on blinds spots about biases, see for example: Pronin, Lin, and Ross 2002.

[105] These questions are difficult because of how I am treating specialist contemporary analytic philosophers. I am treating them as specialists on the questions that they specialize in and not the questions of contemporary analytic philosophy in general. So, although epistemologists might be reliable in reasoning about Gettier cases, they might not be all that good at reasoning about trolley problems.

[106] See for example: Nisbet (ed.) 1993; Foley 2001; Wright 2004; Kornblith 2019; and Bach 2021 among others.

they relate to specialist contemporary analytic philosophers. Primarily, it seems as much because the empirical work to date has yet to be extensive enough and specific enough to show that such specialists do, in fact, suffer from the sorts of issues that many of us face.[107] But, equally, it is also hard to see how anyone could have *good* reason in cases of ordinary peer disagreement to trust *ourselves over others*, merely in virtue of what thinkers like Foley and Wedgewood have offered. Again, it appears as if more is needed - and, in particular, it appears that more is needed by way of empirical research into whether and which self-monitoring/reflective/introspective strategies *are effective* at overcoming defects and biases and whether specialists actually employ them. But, even still, I cannot help but worry: why is trust in oneself over others not *merely* a bias, rather than a *rationally permissible* bias, especially when those others are specialist peers who may be just as critically reflective as oneself?

And so, what I will say is that, although this sort of suggestion is an interesting and open one to develop against Kornblith's strict conciliationism, I still do not see why he needs to worry all that much about it when, as of yet, there is still so much to show, one way or another.

5.3.3 Suggestions of Epistemic Permissiveness

Moving on, the third sort of suggestions that I want to flag, suggestions of epistemic permissiveness, are essentially tied to a debate about how our bodies of evidence rationally support our attitudes/claims.[108] The apparent view, or the "Uniqueness Thesis" as it has come be

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[107] Of course, I appreciate the empirical work of Yancy 2011; Draper and Nichols 2013; and Schwitzgebel and Cushman 2015, among others. But, following Bach 2019, it is important to recognize that their studies do not discriminate enough in their populations to show, for instance, that moral ethicists exhibit defective reasoning or biases when it comes to moral ethics or that epistemologists exhibit such things when it comes to epistemology.

[108] Conceptions of the nature of evidence vary widely. For now, I am taking up a common-sensical one.

known in the literature, has been defended by a number of thinkers.[109] Typically, they have preferred their own distinctive versions.   But, for our purposes, it is enough to consider something like the following:

> **(Uniqueness Thesis - Interpersonal)**: For a given total body of evidence and a given proposition, there is at most one doxastic attitude that any agent [at any time] with that evidence can adopt towards the proposition in question without being irrational with respect to it (Adapted from Titelbaum and Kopec 2016: 190-1; and).[110]

There are two aspects of note in this version of the thesis. Firstly, it is *personal* because it bears on the rationality of agents with the relevant body of evidence and attitudes towards the given proposition, unlike propositional or attitudinal versions of the thesis which do not include any reference to agents.[111]   And, the second thing is that this version is *inter*personal because the scope of the rational requirement extends to all agents at any time with the available evidence and not just to an individual agent at any time with the available evidence, as an *intra*personal formulation would have it.[112]

Both of these aspects have been adopted because of the parameters of our discussion. The natural interpretation of Kornblith's strict conciliationsim is that it is a view about *peer*

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[109] See for example: White 2005, 2007, and 2013; Feldman 2006 and 2007; Christensen 2007; Matheson 2011; and Greco and Hedden forthcoming.

[110] As Matthew Kopec 2015 notes, the "at most one" in the formulation of this thesis is important because it makes the thesis logically weaker than if it were to use "exactly one," which some thinkers have preferred. But, perhaps, there are cases where there is no rational attitude to take toward a proposition, given a body of evidence (see, for example, Kukla 1994's "Oracle" case). So, just to cover the possibility of such cases as well, I have opted for Kopec's formulation.

[111] For characterizations of these alternatives, see Titelbaum and Kopec 2016: 190-1.

[112] *Intra*personal versions usually propose that: For a given total body of evidence, proposition, and agent, if the evidence is that agent's total evidence, then there is at most one doxastic attitude that they can adopt [at any time] towards the proposition in question without being irrational with respect to it (Adapted from Titelbaum and Kopec 2016: 191).

disagreement - so, disagreements with others and not just with oneself. Accordingly, for ease of reading, I have presented a personal version of the Uniqueness Thesis, although a propositional or attitudinal version would also apply to the sorts of peer disagreements under discussion as well. And, secondly, I have also presented an interpersonal version of the thesis, rather than an intrapersonal version, because - again - peer disagreements are with others and not just with oneself and, equally, defenders of the (Uniqueness Thesis - Interpersonal) are also, by extension, going to be committed to an intrapersonal version of the thesis as well. So, nothing is lost by focusing on this version of it.

As far as it applies to our discussion, though, what is important to note about this thesis is that, if it is true, then not only will it be true that two or more disagreeing specialists *cannot* all be rational in responding to roughly the same available evidence, it will also be true that their disagreement will obviously call for some conciliation, seeing as only one of them will be rational after all.[113] But, if it is false, then ultimately some version of what has come to be called "Permissivism" within the literature will consequently be true - and, for our purposes, it will be enough to consider the following version:

> **(Permissivism - Interpersonal)**: For a given body of evidence and a given proposition, there can be more than one doxastic attitude that any agent [at any time] with that evidence can adopt towards the proposition in question without being irrational with respect to it (Adapted from Titelbaum and Kopec 2016: 190-1).[114]

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[113] In the next subsection, I will go into further detail as to why Kornblith seems to think that suspension of judgement is the right sort of conciliatory response.

[114] For different formulations of Permissivism and defenses of them, see for example: Douven 2009; Titelbaum 2010; Decker 2012; Kelly 2013; Schoenfield 2014; Kopec 2015; and Sharadin forthcoming.

And, in the context of our discussion, the thought is that, if (Permissivism - Interpersonal) is true, then not only can two or more specialists be rational in their responses to their available evidence, but moreover it might also be the case that no specialist will be rationally required to conciliate.

To illustrate such a possibility, imagine the following case:

POLLUTION?: Jack, Jill, and Hill are all environmental regulators investigating whether a nearby fertilizer plant is leaking waste into the Mississippi River. They are all roughly broad epistemic peers, in that they are more or less likely to arrive at the right answer, and they have good reasons to think as much. However, their processes for arriving at their answers are different: Jack is using a tacit form of inductive reasoning, Jill is using an explicit hypothetico-deductive method, and Hill is making use of his own hybrid method. Their conclusions: Jack claims that the plant is not leaking, Jill claims that it is, and Hill claims that the evidence could go either way.[115]

Now, in light of this scenario, there are several questions to consider. Firstly, is this scenario genuinely possible? Secondly, are Jack, Jill, and Hill equally rational, epistemically-speaking, in claiming their conclusions? And, lastly, in virtue of responses to the previous two questions, can Jack, Jill, and Hill rationally hold steadfast to their claims, epistemically-speaking? Well, if the answers to all three questions are "yes," then cases like POLLUTION? appear to provide a straightforward counterexample to the Uniqueness Thesis and, by extension, a good explanation of why something like Kornblith's strict conciliationism is false.

But, as with the other two sorts of suggestions, this one is also not without its own controversies as well. For instance, associated with the second question, a defender of the

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[115] This case is derived from suggestions made by Kelly 2013 and a case from Kopec 2015.

(Uniqueness Thesis - Interpersonal) might maintain that epistemic rationality is only concerned with our bodies of evidence, and not with our conceptions of what our evidence is. For, if we assume that epistemic rationality is only so concerned, then why would Jack, Jill, and Hill be equally rational, epistemically-speaking, if their evidence (and not their conceptions associated with their evidence) just so happen to only bear one such relation to one of their claims? Sure, they might have equally reliable ways of interpreting their evidence and, thus, equally rational conceptions of what their evidence indicates - but, why does that matter when it comes to the evidence itself and what conclusion it ultimately supports? Overall, as Titelbaum and Kopec (2015) both note, this issue is one which has yet to be worked out within the literature - namely, what the various parties engaged in this discussion mean by *evidence*? And, as it seems, until this question is resolved, no quick resolution of the discussion itself is going to be available. But, moreover, even if that question is resolved, there is still plenty of debate as to whether or not all conciliatory views are necessarily committed to the (Uniqueness Thesis - Interpersonal), as some have thought.[116] So, although this sort of suggestion has promise as a response to Kornblith, a great deal of work still needs to be done, seeing as it is not necessarily going to be as easy as simply showing that the (Uniqueness Thesis - Interpersonal) is false in order to show that his view is also false.

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[116] For those who argue that conciliatory views are committed to the Uniqueness Thesis, see for example: Kelly 2010; and Frances 2014. And, for those who argue the contrary, see for example: Ballantyne and Coffman 2012; Cohen 2013; Lee 2013; and Christensen 2016.

5.3.4 Suggestions of Right Reason

Continuing, the next sort of suggestions that I want to introduce, suggestions of right reason, are essentially claims to the effect that, although disagreement might be epistemically significant in some regard, it is ultimately *not* epistemically significant when it comes to the truth of whatever proposition is under dispute.[117] So, following Thomas Kelly (2005), let us begin by taking in three claims:

(1) Proposition, *p*, is true.

(2) My total evidence is good evidence that *p* is true.

(3) An epistemic peer accepts that p is true (Kelly 2005, 186-7).

Now, as he views these claims, (3)'s truth is evidence for (2)'s truth, but not for (1)'s truth. The thought is that (3) might, in rational deliberation, seem reasonable to submit as a reason for (2), seeing as we would subsequently learn that our bodies of evidence (being roughly the same) have both led us to accept (1). But, alternatively, why would the fact that you and I both believe the same thing on the basis of roughly the same evidence be a good indication of (1) over-and-above our evidence for (1)? The distinction, as Kelly has submitted, is that, while there is the evidence *for* (1), which we might call "first-order" evidence, there is also evidence *like* (3), which we might call "higher-order" evidence. And, presumably, when we are deliberating on whether or not *p* is true, it is the first-order evidence for *p* that matters, epistemically-speaking, and not the higher-order evidence like (3). Here is Kelly's reasoning:

> **P OR NOT-P**: At t_1, your total evidence leads you to accept that *p* and, as it turns out, this evidence does support this acceptance. Meanwhile, at the same time, my

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[117] For those who have defended the Right Reasons View, see for example: Kelly 2005; Weatherson 2013; and Titelbaum 2015.

total evidence (which happens to be roughly the same as your's) leads me to accept that *not-p* - which, as it turns out, is not supported by my body of evidence. Now, presumably, at t_2, when we both come to realize that we have come to different attitudes whether *p* on the basis of roughly the same evidence, these facts (the one about me, and the one about you) will ultimately leave the first-order evidence intact, but will also add higher-order evidence relating to our disagreement. And, surely, in our subsequent debate about whose attitude is justified or rational to hold, it is the first-order evidence that will make the difference and not the facts about what we have accepted on the basis of our evidence, seeing as they contradict one another and "cancel each other out," so to speak (Adapted from Kelly 2005: 188-90).

Still, as even Kelly (2010) admits, things are likely not as straightforward as what P OR NOT-P sets out, let alone the right way to formulate the sorts of evidence changes that he is interested in. Speaking to the first point, he has now come to prefer his own Total Evidence View, which I will introduce in a few sections, on the basis of his accepting that the relevant higher-order evidence does not simply "cancel each other out." And, as Jonathan Matheson (2009; and 2015) has pointed out in relation to the second point, cases like P OR NOT-P do not take into account the fact that, if the truth of claims like (3) bear on claims like (2), then the facts in such cases (i.e. the higher-order evidence) seem to suggest suspension of judgement (or something akin) on claims like (2) in those cases. But, presumably, if that much is right, then not only will we have to suspend judgement on whether or not our evidence is good evidence for *p*, we will also have to suspend judgement on whether *p*. For, as it appears, if we suspend judgement on the value of our

evidence that *p*, then should we not also suspend judgement on a proposition based on that evidence? It seems so.[118]

But, for our purposes, I think it is enough for the time being to just recognize that, if suggestions like Kelly's are correct, then ultimately how specialist contemporary analytic philosophers should respond to their disagreement will depend solely on the nature and quality of their evidence and not at all on the fact that they disagree with one another. And clearly, where that much is correct, then presumably what we should be asking is not whether they should worry about the disagreement within their discipline, but whether they should worry about what they consider to be their first-order evidence and how they interpret it.

5.3.5 Suggestions of Alternative Conciliationisms

By far the most sympathetic suggestions within the literature, though, are what I call "suggestions of alternative conciliationisms."   Collectively, they comprise different ways in which authors have cast conciliationism so as to avoid Kornblith's view of what sort of conciliation is necessary - namely, suspension of judgement. But, in terms of their makeup, they broadly agree with Kornblith that some sort of conciliation is called for. For our purposes, I will briefly point to two suggestions of this sort: one from Sanford Goldberg (2013), and another from David Christensen (2007; and 2009).

For Goldberg, the overall thought is that, although Kornblith might be right about the widespread/persistent/non-local (or, as Goldberg calls it, systematic) disagreement within

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[118] Not applied to Kelly 2010, this point has also been made by Feldman 2006b as a general point in favor of something like Kornblith's strict conciliationism.

contemporary analytic philosophy and, also, might be largely right about the need for conciliation among practitioners on the questions to which they significantly disagree, he is ultimately wrong to think that suspension of judgement is what is rationally called for because such philosophers can rationally *regard-as-defensible* some answers to those questions.[119] Here is how Goldberg conceives of this attitude:

> The attitude of regarding a view as defensible stretches a long way across a confidence interval. At one extreme, S [i.e. a subject] regards a view as defensible when S regards it as true (perhaps because she has what she regards as decisive evidence in favor of the view). At the other extreme, S regards a view as defensible when, although S acknowledges that the reasons and evidence bearing on the question do not settle matters, and so do not warrant outright belief, still, the balance of reasons supports p over not-p (Goldberg 2013b: 284).

As his suggestion goes, though, it is that:

> One might take the latter sort of attitude [i.e. regarding-as-defensible] in the face of acknowledged systematic disagreement. It is when one does so, I submit, that one's doxastic attitude should be seen as a species of (attitudinal) speculation—at least with respect to one's assessment of the evidential situation (ibid.: 284).

And, as Goldberg understands attitudinal speculation, it is a viable alternative because:

> It is consistent with one's (attitudinally) speculating that p that one acknowledges that the total set of reasons and evidence bearing on whether p fail to warrant belief either way. To be sure, one who speculates that p will regard the balance of reasons as tipping in favor of the truth of [p], as against its negation. Still, such a

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[119] Goldberg thinks of the disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy as being systematic - that is, as being widespread, non-local, and persistent. Heretofore, by "numerically significant and widespread disagreement," I have meant: disagreement involving a significant number of specialist and non-specialist contemporary analytic philosophers, as well as a substantive number of interconnected questions. So, this understanding of "significant and widespread" disagreement encompasses both Goldberg's sense of "widespread" and "non-local." However, to generate the sorts of worries that Kornblith presents, I think it is sufficient that the disagreement be significant and non-local (as Bourget and Chalmers's data seems to show in Chapter 3).

person might happily concede that this balance in favor of [p] is not sufficiently strong as to warrant outright belief in [p]. Hence the attitude of speculation that p: one who attitudinally speculates that p regards [p] as more likely than [not-p], though also regards the total evidence as stopping short of warranting belief in [p]. It should be obvious that one's attitude on this score can be more or less reasonable: it is more reasonable to the degree that the evidential situation is as one takes it to be, namely, such as to make it more likely that [p], even as the evidence stops short of being supportive enough to warrant outright belief in [p] (ibid.: 283-4).

And so, as I read Goldberg, he seems to think that Kornblith is right because, in the face of numerically significant and widespread disagreement, only a speculative attitude (or claim), which is akin to suspension of judgement in neither amounting to outright belief nor disbelief, can be rationally maintained. But, on the other hand, he also seems to think that Kornblith is wrong because suspension of judgement is not the only attitude which neither amounts to outright belief nor disbelief. Regarding-as-defensible is another such attitude, and it also happens to be one which still allows contemporary analytic philosophers to be sensitive - albeit in a hedged way - to their assessments of their reasons/evidence, despite the disagreement that might surround the proposition in question.

In theory, Goldberg's view does allow that, when such philosophers' assessments of their reasons/evidence end up being balanced as to whether p or not-p and they are aware of widespread disagreement on the matter, then Kornblith will ultimately be right to suggest that such philosophers should simply suspend judgement. But, alternatively, when their assessments reveal that their reasons/evidence *for* a proposition's truth outweigh their reasons/evidence *against* its truth and they are aware of significant and widespread disagreement on the matter,

then regarding-as-defensible can and *should be* the attitude to take. Primarily, it *should be* taken because it still allows such philosophers' assessments of their reasons/evidence to count for something and, thus, does not render philosophical practice completely incomprehensible or moot - at least, with regard to their practices of defending and asserting various philosophical views.[120] But, secondly, it also pays heed to something like Kornblith's worries regarding the discipline's disagreement, albeit in a less damaging way. For, if Goldberg is right, then as it appears Kornblith's Master Argument will be unsound (due to the falsity of his first premise) and will, thus, - at the very least - not trouble the rationality of contemporary analytic philosophers' defenses and assertions regarding particular views. But, nevertheless, Kornblith will still have been successful at undermining their possession and vindications of either knowledge or rational acceptance. But, what about Christensen?

Well, with Christensen, quite a different suggestion is on offer. Broadly speaking, I have classed it with Goldberg's suggestion because it is sympathetic to a conciliatory stance. But, rather than suggesting that Kornblith is right in some way and wrong in another, Christensen appears to be neutral with regard to what significance the ordinary peer disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy has, and negative with regard to Goldberg and Kornblith's particular conciliatory stances. More or less, his position is that, if conciliationism is true, as he thinks, then ultimately what is required in the face of peer disagreement is not suspension of judgement or some other attitude of speculation, but for the parties involved to "split-the-difference" in their credences. So, take a case like the following:

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[120] Goldberg provides a Gricean-Inspired Account of how these practices can be accounted for. Given its depth, I will not be able to go into details here. But, do see (Goldberg 2013b: 286- 292).

> **PREDICTION**: Suppose Jack is a meteorologist who has access to current weather data provided by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Weather Service, and so forth, and that he has learned to apply various models to use this data in making predictions…. After thoroughly studying the data and applying the various models that he knows, he comes to have a 0.65 level of credence in rain tomorrow. But, then, he learns that his classmate, Jill, from meteorology school - who has thoroughly studied the same data, knows the same models, and so on - has arrived at only a 0.55 level of credence. Overall, both of them have accumulated extensive track records of past predictions, and both of them have done equally well. And, in light of their appreciation of each other, both before and after their disagreement, both of them are quite confident (say, 0.85) that they are both equally likely to arrive at the right answer (Adapted from Christensen 2007: 193-4).

In response, Christensen has maintained that, given their disagreement and their confidences in each other, Jack and Jill should both revise their credences. But, rather than suspend judgement on the proposition in question, as Kornblith seems likely to recommend, what they should do instead, according to Christensen, is again: split the difference between their credences.[121] So, Jack should lower his credence in rain tomorrow to 0.6, while Jill should increase her credence to 0.6. In the first place, this result seems more apt in virtue of the fact that both Jack and Jill are *not* completely confident that they are both equally likely to arrive at the right answer - they are only 0.85 confident. Secondly, it also seems apt in virtue of the fact that Jack and Jill both afforded credences over 0.5 to the proposition in question - so, perhaps, Kornblith's requiring that they suspend judgement would be an overkill, seeing as they can both agree that rain tomorrow is more credible than not. And, lastly, it also does not follow on Christensen's

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[121] Adam Elga 2007 also promotes a similar view.

conciliationism, given its sensitivity to Jack and Jill's confidences in each other, that they are rationally required to revise their credences if, for instance, they both have special reasons to *not* be confident that they are both equally likely to arrive at the right answer or if they are extremely confident that the other has arrived at the wrong answer. In those cases, Christensen maintains that Jack and Jill can, if not should, stick to their initial credences.

So, given its contours, it can be seen that Christensen's conciliationism - if true - is *not necessarily* going to result in specialist contemporary analytic philosophers' being rationally required to suspend judgement, in the face of their numerically significant, widespread, and genuine ordinary peer disagreement. If anything, as Kelly (2016) argues, they *might be* rationally required to do so, depending on their credences to the answers to their associated questions, the individual confidences that they have in each other, given their reasons/evidence, and the extent of their disagreement on those questions. But, whether or not specialist contemporary analytic philosophers' disagreements, confidences, and credences are sufficient to demand suspension of judgement on them is, as Kelly claims, unlikely. For, as I have already mentioned in Chapter 3, he maintains that Bourget and Chalmers's data shows that specialist contemporary analytic philosophers are clearly not *evenly* divided on all that many of their views because, in fact, most views are clearly favored by a simple majority of specialists, unlike what either Kornblith or Goldberg have claimed.

But, as I have also already pointed out in Chapter 3, Kelly's reading of the data treats all answers to a question as stand-alone and in need of only a simple majority to "win," so to speak, rather than as treating them as inter-related and in need of an absolute majority to "win." On the first sort of reading, what we found was that 25 out of the 30 questions asked on Bourget and

Chalmers's 2009 survey had a simple majority over their next best competitor. But, on the second sort of reading, what we found was that the 2009 data shows that specialists could only eke out absolute majorities on 15 out of the 30 questions asked. I then briefly mentioned that, in Chapters 5, I would discuss whether and, if so, why the second sort of reading was preferable because of the various sorts of epistemic and rational goods that specialists seem to want to possess, transfer, and vindicate. And so, following up on that promise, what I will say about whether a simple majority on an answer to a question is enough, for our present purposes, for a specialist to retain the possession of their individual knowledge (or rational acceptance) or to vindicate their individual knowledge (or rational acceptance) and expertise is that: it is hard to say.

In the first place, we are not going to be able to make a decision on such a question independently of the debate on the epistemic significance of ordinary peer disagreement. We are going to need an answer as to whether such disagreement does rationally call for conciliation or not. For, if it does, then there will be a substantive question to ask as to whether a simple majority or an absolute majority are needed to bypass worries about ordinary peer disagreement's effects on the possession, transferability, or vindication of individual knowledge (or rational acceptance) and, subsequently, expertise. But, if not, then whence the worry? It will not be epistemically significant. But, as we can clearly see, there is still an ongoing and lively debate surrounding this question which has yet to be resolved. And so, although we might have our preferred views, it still seems only right that we should hesitate in light of the current state of the debate.

But, following Kelly (2016), let us say we did have an answer regarding the debate on the epistemic significance of peer disagreement: Christensen's conciliationism is right. Even still, I would say that it is hard to say *how much* disagreement is needed in order to undermine the possession or the vindication of individual knowledge (or rational acceptance) and expertise. On the one hand, I can agree with Kelly that more or less *even splits* between specialists are, if anything is, needed in order to undermine such things. But again, this response still does not answer the question: is a simple majority on an answer enough to head off the negative effects of disagreement, even though - as is the case of Representationalism, for instance, in the philosophy of mind - one's colleagues might be able to largely agree that one's answer is wrong?

Well, perhaps, it is enough to head off the effects on the possession of individual knowledge (or rational acceptance) (- more to come on this point in section 5.3.7). And, perhaps, it is enough to head off the effects on the vindication of those things. But, in order for both sorts of effects to be headed off, as Christensen's conciliationism might allow, it seems that the simple majority would need to have had a credence in the proposition in question which, upon conciliation with those who collectively disagree with that proposition's truth, would still be high enough for either the possession or vindication of knowledge (or rational acceptance) and expertise. So, for the sake of argument, let us say that 0.51 credence is the minimum when it comes to possessing or vindicating individual knowledge (or rational acceptance), and let us take one of the best case simple majority questions from the 2009 survey: philosophers of physical science on time. On this question, 49% of philosophers of physical science agree that the A-theory is correct, while 51% of them collectively disagree about its being the correct view. So, really, there is not all that much of a difference in the number of philosophers on either side. But

now, consider: what sort of circumstances would A-theorists need in order for them to end up with 0.51 credence in their view, after conciliation? Well, if non-A-theorists have, on average, a very low credence (say, 0.1) of the view, then A-theorists will need to, on average, have a very high credence (at least, 0.92) in the view. But, if non-A-theorists have, on average, a slightly less than 0.5 credence (say, 0.45), then A-theorists will only need to, on average, have a more than middling credence (at least, 0.57). And, of course, there are a vast number of scenarios in-between in which the numbers will work out as well.

However, hopefully, what consideration of these scenarios reveals is that whether Kelly is right or whether Kornblith is right is ultimately an empirical matter regarding the circumstances surrounding specialists' credences in their views. And perhaps, for some questions, the circumstances work in Kelly's favor and, perhaps, for other questions, Kornblith's skepticism is ultimately warranted. But, at the moment, we simply do not have the necessary data to decide all of these questions either way, given Christensen's conciliationism.[122] And so, even if his conciliationism does end up being true, it still seems as if the most that he can offer is an open, empirical question as to whether specialist contemporary analytic philosophers are rationally required to suspend judgement on the answers to their associated questions or not.

And, even with all of that being said, there are still independent issues with both Goldberg and Christensen's responses. For Goldberg, the clear issue is whether his response does all that much in alleviating worries about individual philosophers' possession or vindication of their knowledge (or rational acceptance) and the expertise that follows from them since, as we

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[122] Again, Bourget and Chalmers's data does not provide us with such information, let alone information about which individuals responded to the survey. And, as it seems, such detailed information is also unavailable anywhere else.

saw, he more or less concedes these points to Kornblith and, also, provides something of a defense of them in Goldberg (2013a). And, with regard to Christensen, it is still less than clear whether his view is independently the most plausible when it comes to the epistemic significance of ordinary peer disagreement. His own version appears to be *uniformist* and committed to what Frances (2014) calls an *independence* thesis - in that, respectively, it treats peer disagreements as functioning "the same epistemically in all circumstances" (Lackey 2010: 301-2) and as not being able to offer non-question begging reasons to "discount your peers' opinions" (Frances 2014: 161-3). But, perhaps, a *non-uniformist* view better captures the sorts of impressions that have been had, in light of an assortment of cases of ordinary peer disagreement. And, perhaps, some such disagreements can provide non-question begging reasons to discount a peer's opinions. Both positions have been taken within the literature. And so, in order to gauge their merit in relation to the ordinary peer disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy, it will help to consider some of the views which purport to have the most intuitive sorts of responses to such disagreement, contrary to Christensen's uniformist and independence-based conciliationism, and which might also be able to support some optimism about the discipline's disagreement, contrary to Kornblith's skepticism and Goldberg's slightly more moderate skepticism.

5.3.6 Non-Uniformist and Non-Independence-Based Suggestions

Typically, when non-uniformist and non-independence-based responses to peer disagreement have been discussed, two views have cropped up: the first is Jennifer Lackey's (2010) Justificationist View, and the second is Thomas Kelly's (2010) Total Evidence View. Both views

have been treated as alternatives to the Equal Weight View and a Steadfast View which rationally allows peers to hold steadfast on their initial attitudes in the face of their disagreeing with one another. But, where they principally differ is in what they feature as the "difference-makers," so to speak, in how peers should respond to their disagreements.

For Lackey's Justificationist View, the focus is on the *personal information* and *justification* surrounding ordinary peer disagreements - and, in particular, the justified confidences which the participating peers have towards either the proposition in question or its negation.[123] But again, unlike Christensen's conciliationism, she maintains that her view is non-uniformist because it allows that, in some cases, conciliation will be rationally required of peers and, in other cases, not and is also *not* committed to an independence thesis because it allows peers to sometimes revise their initial attitudes about each other's status *as peers*, in light of their disagreements. But, to better see the contours of her view, it will help to contrast the following cases:

> **PLUS**: Jack and Jill, who have been colleagues for the past six years, were drinking coffee at Starbucks and trying to determine how many people from their department will be attending an upcoming meeting. Jill, reasoning aloud, says, "Well, Hill and Bucket will be attending, as well as you and me, and, since 2 + 2 = 4, I think we can expect four members of our department to attend." In response, Jack asserts, "But, 2 + 2 does not equal 4." Importantly, prior to this disagreement, neither Jack nor Jill had any reason to think that the other was evidentially or cognitively deficient in any way, and both of them have sincerely

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[123] That the peers' credences are justified is essential to Lackey's account. She sees justification as being conferred to attitudes in so far as the processes that generate them are truth-conducive. She needs this sort of conception because, as she notes, it is not merely one's high confidence in a proposition's truth that makes the difference in various cases - it is also the nature of their justification that matters as well in virtue of what confidence it justifies, be it high, low, or in-between. For more details, see (Lackey 2010: 320-3).

avowed their respective conflicting beliefs - of which they are both supremely confident (Adapted from Lackey 2010: 307-8).

And, the next case:

> **RESTAURANT CASE**: While dining with each other, Hill and Bucket have both agreed to leave a 20% tip and to evenly split the cost of the bill. Both of them rightly regard each other as peers where calculations are concerned - they frequently dine together and consistently arrive at the same figure when dividing up the amount owed. After the bill arrives and they each have a clear look at it, Hill asserts with some confidence (- say, 0.65) that he has carefully calculated in his head that they each owe $43 and Bucket asserts with the same degree of confidence that she has carefully calculated in her head that they each owe $45 (Adapted from Lackey 2010: 314-5; Originally Adapted from Christensen 2007: 193).

Now, as Lackey interprets these cases, the first is an obvious case where Jill can and should hold steadfast to her initial attitude and should, instead, rethink her acknowledgement of Jack as a peer, while the second is an obvious case where Hill and Bucket should both conciliate - along Christensen's lines and not necessarily Kornblith's - on their confidences.[124],[125] For, as the cases seem to suggest, RESTAURANT CASE is one where it would be intuitively *implausible* for either Hill or Bucket to respond towards the other as if they were utterly delusional or misguided and, thus, as warranting a demotion in their peerhood - whereas, in PLUS, it appears intuitively *plausible* for Jill to respond as such to Jack's denial of 2 +2 =4.

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[124] PLUS is just one of three cases that Lackey lumps together as being cases where the proposition in question is likely, in virtue of one's justification, to warrant a high degree of confidence. The other cases involve near indisputable perceptual propositions, such as <Jack is sitting right next to me>, or near indisputable propositions based on other cognitive faculties, such as memory for the following <My Thai is on Michigan Avenue>.

[125] I say "not necessarily Kornblith's" because Lackey thinks that the extent to which peers must conciliate in certain cases will depend on the nature of the cases. So, I take her as potentially accepting that, in some cases, Christensen-like conciliation will be called for and, in other cases, Kornblith/Feldman-style conciliation might be called for.

As for what can explain and justify these differential responses, Lackey's focus is on three crucial differences between these cases. The first is that, in PLUS, Jill's confidence in claiming that 2 + 2 = 4 is *very* high, while in the second case, Hill and Bucket's confidences are not. Secondly, in PLUS, Jill is plausibly rational in remaining steadfast because she - and only she - is *justified* in her supreme degree of confidence in the truth of 2 + 2 = 4 and, equally, in her supreme confidence in the falsity of Jack's response (Lackey 2010: 307-8), whereas in RESTAURANT CASE Hill and Bucket's both conciliating appears plausibly rational because their middling confidences are *equally justified* (Ibid.: 315-7).[126] And lastly, in PLUS, Jill has significant personal information about both her cognitive faculties and her understanding of basic arithmetic which makes it highly implausible that she has made a mistake about the truth of 2 + 2 = 4 or that she has not acknowledged relevant defeaters for her justification (Ibid.: 307-10), whereas in RESTAURAnt CASE, Hill and Bucket do not appear to have significant personal information about themselves which would lead either of them to reject the other as a peer - for, as it seems, both of them can individually recognize the possibility, if not the likelihood, of either of them making one of a number of easy and ordinary mistakes which would explain why they disagree (Ibid.: 315-6).

Going in order, I take it that the first difference is crucial because Lackey recognizes that, where the justified confidence in a case is very high, the possibility, if not the likelihood, of our justification seeming misleading or liable to defeat is ultimately quite hard to fathom. In PLUS, it seems impossible. But, when it comes to cases like RESTAURANT CASE, it actually seems quite easy to fathom how either Hill or Bucket might have made a mistake - and, accordingly,

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[126] Simply put, in PLUS, Jill appears to have been wrong to regard Jack as a peer before their disagreement.

their confidences, if justified, should presumably reflect as much. For instance, perhaps, Hill forgot to carry a number while dividing or, perhaps, Bucket's quick arithmetic was off by one. Both mistakes are easy to make. And so, presumably, supreme confidence is inappropriate for either of them, given the fallibility of their justificatory processes. But, as Lackey suggests, where there is room for error on either of their parts, then is there not also room for some conciliation, however small it may be? It seems so, unlike in PLUS.

The second difference is also crucial because Lackey finds it highly implausible that hyper-dogmatism can be sufficient for rationalizing a steadfast response to ordinary peer disagreements. For, clearly, if it were sufficient, then anyone with a supreme degree of confidence in a proposition would be rational in retaining their confidence in the face of ordinary peer disagreement, even if the confidence itself was *unjustified*. But, surely, as Lackey seems to suggest, the rationality of our retaining our confidences in the face of such disagreement is not just sensitive to our confidences, but also to the reliability of our justificatory processes, our evidence, and our reasons. Otherwise, to what extent can such a steadfast response be *epistemically* rational?

Regarding the third difference, I take it to be crucial because Lackey grants that some reason(s) must underlie the rationality of one party's demoting another in the face of ordinary peer disagreement. As I have already mentioned, she points to personal information as the relevant sorts of reasons to which we might appeal. As for why she points to such information, I maintain that it is because this information is all that we have at our disposal in the sorts of cases that she points out, although she has not told us. And, again, the thought is that such information

is supposed to tell us, in the face of an ordinary peer disagreement, whether to suspect ourselves or another as not actually being a peer.

And so, concerning Lackey, four points might be taken away from her view. Firstly, very high confidence in a proposition (or its negation) is ultimately not going to be sufficient for rationalizing steadfast responses, although it will be necessary (Ibid.: 321-7). Secondly, justification is going to be necessary for rationalizing steadfast responses, although it will not always be sufficient. Thirdly, in combination with a very high degree of justified confidence in a proposition, personal information can act as an indication of whether one should suspect oneself or another of not actually being a peer. And lastly, when it comes to conciliation, the cases in question will always be ones where both parties have equally justified confidences, but where neither of those confidences or their justifications will be sufficient so as to make one party seem to another as obviously not a peer. But, with those points in mind about Lackey, what about Kelly's Total Evidence View?

Well, as I understand it, Kelly's view is similar in suggesting that, in the face of peer disagreement, how we should respond is ultimately not just a matter of what either our first-order evidence or our higher-order evidence calls for, but of what both sorts of evidence *combined* - as a total body of evidence - call for. Like Lackey's Justificationist View, this view is also going to be non-uniformist and not committed to an independence thesis.[127] But, whereas Lackey uses extreme cases to motivate her view, Kelly's primary motivation for his view is tied to worries

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[127] Kelly 2010 is not perfectly clear as to whether it is rational for one party to demote another as a peer in light of their disagreement. I read him as accepting that, in light of one's total body of evidence, one might demote a party from peerhood.

regarding views like Christensen's. And, in particular, it is tied to worries regarding what his view entails in cases like the following:

> **POOR EVIDENCE APPRECIATION**: At time t0, Jack and Jill have access to a substantial, fairly complicated body of evidence. On the whole this evidence tells against hypothesis H: given their evidence, the uniquely rational credence for them to have in H is 0.3. However, as it happens, both of them badly mistake the import of their evidence: Jack adopts a 0.7 degree of belief toward H while Jill adopts a 0.9 degree of belief. At time t1, they meet and compare notes and they then split the difference and converge on a 0.8 degree of belief (Adapted from Kelly 2010: 125-6)

Now, on views like Christensen's, the thought is that, in virtue of their responses to the higher-order evidence - namely, their splitting the difference in their credences -, both Jack and Jill will have rational beliefs. For, remember, on Christensen's view, it is the higher-order evidence that makes all the difference as to whether Jack and Jill's beliefs are rational, given the fact that both of them already have more or less equivalent first-order evidence. However, as Kelly rightly points out, something is clearly wrong with this way of thinking in virtue of the fact that Jack and Jill will have largely misdiagnosed their first-order evidence and still be rational. Presumably, their first-order evidence will constrain the rationality of their beliefs in some respect - otherwise, rationalizing one's beliefs might be as simple as having a peer disagreement and responding appropriately to one's higher-order evidence.

As for how this view plays out in particular cases, it is important to reiterate again that the view is non-uniformist. So, in cases like PREDICTION and RESTAURANT CASE, I take it that Kelly's view will suggest that the parties involved should both conciliate - albeit minimally because, in each case, both parties will have similar enough first-order evidence and similar

enough higher order evidence. But, when it comes to cases like PLUS, no such conciliation will be called for because, presumably, Jill's first-order evidence will be quite good and will ultimately swamp out any of her higher-order evidence associated with Jack's dissent. And, in cases like POOR EVIDENCE APPRECIATION, neither Jack nor Jill will be rational in their conciliation or their remaining steadfast because, from the get-go, their first-order evidence will not have supported either of their credences.   If anything, they will have to change their credences altogether.   But, as it seems, this response like each of the previous responses also appears to capture the more intuitively plausible response to such a hypothetical case.

Still, what is important for our purposes in considering Kelly's view, as well as Lackey's, is not just whether they are more plausible than Kornblith's strict conciliaitionism when it comes to capturing the more intuitive responses to such hypothetical cases, but also whether they can cast contemporary analytic philosophy's disagreement in a brighter light. For, easily, they might be able to succeed in the first regard, and fail in the second. But, do they?

Well, I would say so. Because, although I can agree that Kelly and Lackey's views are independently more plausible than Kornblith's view, I still do not see how these views - on their own - can reveal whether specialist contemporary analytic philosophers, given Bourget and Chalmers's data, should conciliate at all, let alone to what degree they will need to conciliate. As in the previous section, just consider: is specialist disagreement such as to require conciliation to the point of undermining the possession or the vindication of their individual knowledge (or rational acceptance) and expertise? It is hard to say. Perhaps, in light of their particular bodies of first-order evidence (or justification), specialist contemporary analytic philosophers have irrational (or unjustified) attitudes or credences in their philosophical views in the first place. Or,

perhaps, in light of their particular bodies of first-order evidence (or justification), they are all rational in having very high credences in their philosophical views. But, again, like my discussion of Christensen's conciliationism, the issue here is simply the details. In the first place, there is no general accounting of the make-up of particular specialist's bodies of evidence (or justification). And, secondly, there is also no general rubric for what attitudes/claims would even be rational (or justified) in light of those bodies of evidence (or justification) - in fact, in a number of instances of disagreement, these things might be exactly what is at issue. And so, although I would like to think that these views do provide for optimism in the face of the discipline's disagreement, the fact is that they ultimately do not offer any real indication - on their own and in light of Bourget and Chalmers's data - of whether they can, in fact, mitigate either Kornblith or Goldberg's skepticism for specialist contemporary analytic philosophers.

5.3.7 Suggestions of Non-Attitudinal Significance

Still, perhaps, Kelly and Lackey are on the right track, as Sonia Roca-Royes (forthcoming) seems to think, but are simply misidentifying the locus of ordinary peer disagreement's epistemic significance. Again, for Kornblith, the locus appears to be in its ability, as higher-order evidence, to undermine the rational/epistemic support that peers' attitudes/claims have from their first-order evidence. In contrast, for Kelly and Lackey, the locus appears to be in its ability, as higher-order evidence, to contribute to peers' total bodies of evidence in such a way as to either challenge their initial attitudes/claims or to put into question their statuses as peers. But, as Roca-Royes has recently suggested, perhaps, an alternative, hybrid locus is in its ability, as

higher-order evidence, to indicate that peers' first-order evidence/reasons "constitute strong enough evidence for neither p nor not-p" and which can, subsequently, act as a prompt for (1) their questioning the sufficiency and their awareness of all of their evidence/reasons, as well as for (2) seeking and disclosing what evidence/reasons might actually rationally support their different attitudes/claims (Roca-Royes forthcoming: 5-8).

So, to clarify the thought, here is how Roca-Royes imagines such a scenario proceeding in more detail:

> **PROFESSIONALS**: Suppose Jack and Jill - two reflective and genuinely truth-pursuing academic colleagues who mutually, and on solid grounds, respect each other intellectually - have a shared cognitive project they each feel *equally* capable of accomplishing: that of knowing whether p. After a period of joined, public reflection, which involves disclosing reasons of which Jack and Jill are already in possession plus gathering new evidence, Jack ends up forming the belief that p (allegedly - i.e. as he claims) on the basis of shared evidence E, and is surprised to find out that Jill holds not-p (allegedly - i.e. as she claims) on the same basis. The surprise is mutual. It is now shared, higher-order evidence that one takes E to be good evidence for p and the other takes E to be good evidence for not-p…. *Initially*, their disagreement was taken as providing higher-order evidence about what Jack and Jill take E to be good evidence for. *Subsequently*, however, and partly on the basis of the subjects' mutual recognition of their decent cognitive capabilities, the disagreement is quickly taken, instead, as (higher order) evidence that E constitutes strong-enough evidence for neither p nor not-p. This new piece of higher-order evidence overwrites the initial one. Jack and Jill start suspecting partly on this basis that E are not the real grounds for their respective beliefs. This is the point at which they cancel the mutual presumption of epistemic peerhood, on the basis of suspecting *evidential* (rather than cognitive) inequality. Their disagreement, rather than affecting their epistemic

attitudes as to whether p, is instead taken as revealing the need to do better at disclosing/providing their reasons. It is *directly* subject to their will to engage in the task of disclosing/providing further reasons, and both Jack and Jill respond accordingly to the felt call to engage in it. In the meantime, however, they remain (post-awareness of the disagreement) where they were (pre-awareness) with their beliefs as to whether p (Adapted from Roca-Royes forthcoming: 5 - [her italics]).

Now, beyond what I have already minimally claimed about her view, three things stand out to me from this passage. The first is that Roca-Royes accepts that Jack and Jill's attitudes are not necessarily going to be under their control and, in the case above, were not - which resulted in their maintaining possession of the same attitudes, regardless of their disagreement. The second is that, in alignment with Sosa (2010), she also accepts that Jack and Jill's first-order evidence/ reasons are not necessarily going to be fully transparent to them - which, in the case above, resulted in their trying to figure out what evidence/reasons they might not have properly disclosed, despite having used them as support for their attitudes. And, lastly, she also accepts that whatever epistemic status Jack and Jill's attitudes had in virtue of their total set of evidence/ reasons - before their disagreement - will remain, although they will not be able to vindicate whatever epistemic status that might be. So, in other words, if Jack's total set of evidence/ reasons were, in fact, sufficient for him to know that p before his disagreement with Jill, then Jack will continue to know that p - he will just not be able to vindicate that he knows that p. And, overall, I suspect that many thinkers will find these suggestions to be quite plausible.

Now, for the purposes of this study, it is Roca-Royes's last suggestion which is crucial. Throughout the previous sections and chapters, I have been trying to maintain - as best as possible and, perhaps, tiresomely - the distinction between the *possession/transferability* of

knowledge (or rational acceptance or expertise) and the *vindication* of such things. However, the explicit reason that I have done so is because of this last suggestion from Roca-Royes, although they are also present in both Lackey and Kelly's views as well. For, if she is right about the locus of ordinary peer disagreement's epistemic significance, then perhaps Kornblith's skepticism can be partially mitigated. And, in particular, perhaps, contemporary analytic philosophers who know (or who justifiably believe) their views, given their first-order evidence/ reasons, can retain the possession of their knowledge (or justified belief), despite their disagreement.[128],[129] And, in proceeding to disclose their evidence/reasons, perhaps, such philosophers might even end up eventually agreeing and being able to vindicate who knows.

Overall, such results are welcome. Still, what is important to note is that, in conception, it is actually one of Roca-Royes's "working hypotheses" or desideratum for reactions to disagreement that they "not *per se* make knowledge impossible; that is, that they do not disable or destroy knowledge" (Ibid.: 4 - her italics). And so, it makes sense that her view would undermine Kornblith's skepticism in part. It must also be recognized, though, that: although Roca-Royes's view might meet this desideratum and seem quite plausible, it ultimately assumes a particular view about the *possession/transferability* of various epistemic attitudes - namely, that they may not necessarily require us to be able to access their epistemic grounds, in particular or in general, in order for anyone to have them or transfer them. So, in other words: Roca-Royes's view and results appear to rely upon what many within the literature would call an "externalist" conception of the possession and transferability of knowledge.

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[128] I have switched from "rational acceptance" in parenthesis to "justified belief" because it is more attuned to texts involved.

[129] For any mention of "knowledge," one should read in "(or justified belief)" for the rest of this section.

Of course, for many thinkers within the literature, this reliance is not going to be suspect at all - especially, for those who are already keen on Lackey's view or Kelly's view. But, for those with more "internalist" sympathies, it might be - that is, it might be problematic for those with sympathies for conceptions of various epistemic attitudes which require our being able to access their epistemic grounds, in particular or in general, in order for us to have them, let alone to vindicate them. Still, as I understand Roca-Royes's position, she has taken something of a middle ground in accepting an externalist conception for the *possession/transferability* of knowledge and an internalist conception for *vindicating* such things, given her commenting that:

> An important consequence of this [i.e. her view] is that, in such cases [i.e. cases like PROFESSIONALS], the epistemic quality of our beliefs is inaccessible to us: reasons that are believed to be concealed are not candidates for being assessed as good or bad in their capacity as our reasons. This makes the vindication of knowledge that p a bad response, even by subjects who might (as a matter of fact) be in possession of knowledge that p (Roca-Royes forthcoming: 8).

The key is in her pointing to the *vindication* of knowledge - which, as I have assumed and also have understood her, is the providing of sufficient evidence/reasons for the sake of validating that we know that p (or that we rationally accept that p). And, as I am thinking of things, it is typically in the context of inquiry that, when we claim that we know that p, we are usually called upon thereafter to vindicate such a claim. And so, for the sake of clarity, I will also keep this middle ground with Roca-Royes, although I have internalist sympathies.

My point in highlighting this aspect of her view, though, is that, even on this middle ground, there is still a substantial issue that crop ups in relation to this study's core discussion. For, just consider: her view does not give any indication of whether any specialist contemporary

analytic philosopher does, in fact, know, given their evidence/reasons, the answers to the sorts of question that they consider. On her view, they either do or they do not, in virtue of whether or not they satisfy whatever features the possession/transferability of knowledge requires. And, on her conception of the satisfaction conditions for knowledge, they are free-standing conditions which are decided wholly by the nature of an agent's attitudes and their relation to an agent's evidence/reasons, regardless of how the agent conceives of either their natures or their relations. So, perhaps, specialist contemporary analytic philosophers's evidence/reasons are sufficient for the possession of knowledge (or its transferability) and expertise and, perhaps, they are not. We are neither here nor there. But, surely, if *we* want to *determine* whether any one of them, in fact, does or does not know anything, then it will have to be asked: does so-and-so have sufficient evidence/reasons for them to rationally claim that they know that p - in other words, can they vindicate such a claim? And unfortunately, where anyone accepts Roca-Royes view, then ultimately the answer appears to be "no" for a number of the questions that specialists ask. For, where there is a great deal of disagreement surrounding a question, further disclosure is going to be needed of the evidence/reasons upon which the relevant parties' answers might be grounded, before any such vindication can be established.

So, really, there are some rather deep questions lying at the heart of this view for this study's core discussion. And, in particular, I want to highlight the following: to what degree do we (or should we) and specialists care about the possession/transferability of knowledge, and to what degree do we (or should we) care about our and specialists' abilities to vindicate such things? For instance, do we (or should we) care about one more than the other - or, perhaps, disregard one for the other? Or, do we (or should we) care about both equally? And, in

response, what I would say is that both *should be* valued to some substantive degree, although not necessarily equally.

Immediately, it seems to me that we are only going to be able to provide "good" reasons for how much we *should* value either of those things because we do not have any rigorously established empirical data which can suggest how much we actually value them. But, even with that limitation, my thinking is that, at the very least, we should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) substantively value the *possession/transferability* of individual knowledge for the sake of successful individual action or being in a position to make someone else's actions more successful - but, moreover, that we should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) also value the ability to *vindicate* individual knowledge because, as collaborative and fallible inquirers, we often do not engage in inquiry alone and for our own sake, but also in conjunction with others and for the sake of others as well.

Importantly, regarding the possession/transferability of individual knowledge (- to be precise, knowledge-that), all that I am suggesting is that we should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) substantively value it in virtue of the *role* that it *can* and *has played* in *contributing to* the success of our actions. Of course, in some cases, the possession of knowledge is not going to be necessary for an action to be successful, seeing as sometimes and, perhaps, even often we are lucky (- especially, in cases where our justified beliefs are enough). But also, it is not always going to be sufficient for such action, considering the contribution that our physical capabilities can also make to our actions. In fact, sometimes, our knowing something might even disrupt our ability to do something. But, that being said, I accept that, at the very least, we can agree: our ability to act successfully is *partially determined by* the epistemic quality of our beliefs or

acceptances, and when they amount to knowledge, our ability to act successfully is *generally* enhanced, and not diminished, by this knowledge.[130]   So, as the thought goes, where we substantively appreciate successful action, it will also follow that we should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) *generally* and substantively value the possession/transferability of knowledge as well. What about vindicating such knowledge?

Well, as I view the act or process of vindication, its value is primarily tied to the value that we, as collaborative and fallible inquirers, place on accepting/claiming *quality* information both for the sake of furthering our inquiries, but also for furthering our various interests. In this regard, I take it that some sort of information-vetting is going to be essential for rooting out bad information and identifying quality information for such acceptance/claims.[131]   But, moreover, because we do not always inquire alone or for our own sake, I also take it that enforcing certain norms which detail the conditions under which we can or should accept/claim any information is also going to be essential - otherwise, how might we root out bad information and identify quality information *among each other*? Just imagine:

> **POOR PRESENTATION**: Jill's very intelligent and well-known colleague, Jack, walks up to a podium in order to give a talk to his fellow inquirers on whether or not p. But, instead of giving a talk which includes details about his evidence/ reasons for and against p, Jack simply claims to know that p - over and over again.

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[130] A major claim on the part of Socrates in Plato's *Euthydemus* - see for example: Nawar 2017. There are also arguments to the effect that action is not possible without knowledge which might be enough for our purposes - see for example: Funke 2017.   There are also authors like Peirce 1992, Olsson 2011, and Sosa 2015 who straightforwardly acknowledge the value of knowledge-that in its relation to successful action or competence. And lastly, I also accept as much as a result of the dialectics surrounding the topic - see for example the work of: Fantl and McGrath 2002 and 2009; Hawthorne 2004; and Weisberg 2013.

[131] That is, something along the lines of what Peirce describes in "The Fixation of Belief" (see pages 109-23), what William James 2000 accepts in his "Will to Believe" (see pages 198-218), and what Dewey 2008b describes in his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (see page 16).

Now, surely, such a talk would not go over well. On the one hand, it is quite uninformative - it only tells us that Jack accepts that he knows that p. And, clearly, anybody - inquirer or not - can simply tell others what they think they know. But, presumably, in the context of collaborative inquiry where it is generally - and, as it seems, reasonably - assumed that all inquirers are fallible, Jack as an inquirer surely has some obligation (at least, pragmatically-speaking) to, in Roca-Royes words, vindicate his attitudes/claims. For, besides perhaps his integrity and his genuine concern for providing quality information (which, unfortunately, not all thinkers have), what is to stop him from claiming such things to his audience, despite having never considered anything at all related to whether or not p? And, secondly and more importantly, what about his fallibility as an inquirer? Jack could very well have made a mistake in his inquiry - perhaps, in his assessment of his reasons, in his having drawn upon "bad" reasons, or in his having simply not considered all of the available reasons that the community of inquirers has to offer.[132] Each of these things opens the door to bad information. But, presumably, inquirers should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) do their best to check such information at the door. So, really, all that I am suggesting is that, in so far as inquirers want to avoid bad information and identify quality information both in their own inquiries as well as in collaboration with others, it seems hard to deny that, in the context of inquiry, substantive value should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) be placed on vindicating one's attitudes/claims.

But, returning to Roca-Royes view with those values in mind, remember: her view only salvages contemporary analytic philosophers' possession/transferability of individual knowledge from Kornblith's skepticism where such individual knowledge already exists (if at all), and *not*

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[132] Kristina Rolin 2021 also defends something akin to the sort of obligation on offer here.

necessarily their vindications of their individual attitudes/claims.   Again, her view only leaves open the possibility of their coming to vindicate them, once they further disclose their evidence/ reasons.   And so, altogether, her view might provide something substantive to contemporary analytic philosophers, despite their disagreement, but there is still a lot to be said for whether or not they will ultimately be able to vindicate that they individually know various philosophical propositions.

5.4 What to Conclude?: A Pragmatic Shift

Still, having covered so many different suggestions for how we might undermine or mitigate Kornblith's master argument, the question remains: have any of them actually succeeded in doing so?   And, in response, the most that I think that we can rationally claim is: it is hard to say.[133]

This response probably came as no surprise.   Time and again, I have offered it as a response to the various debates that we have considered both in previous sections and in previous chapters.   But, in this case, there are several things to be said for its being particularly apt. Firstly, I want to point out the fact that, for each of these suggestions, there are still various lines of inquiry and debate which have yet to be resolved.   For instance, I am particularly thinking of suggestions like those of Self-Trust, Permissivism, Alternative Conciliationisms, Non-Uniformity and Non-Independence, and Non-Attitudinal Significance since, to the extent that I have introduced them, each of these suggestions have either revealed that, perhaps, there is good

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[133] This conclusion is shared by Frances (2014), and I suspect that others will also agree that the debate has proliferated to such an extent that any definite conclusions are going to be quite controversial or subject to extensive disagreement itself.

reason to deny the independent plausibility of Kornblith's strict conciliationism or good reason to accept that, in so far as they might or might not undermine Kornblith's skepticism, what is needed is more empirical data to decide the matter. Easily, it can be seen that those suggestions which indicate the second are clearly unresolved. But, for those suggestions which indicate the first, I am also wary. For, as of yet, I still do not see within the literature any clear-cut set of satisfaction conditions upon which most or all of the relevant thinkers can agree. In some cases, it seems that they are trying to formulate views which can capture the various impressions that arise as a result of various cases of ordinary peer disagreement - while, in other cases, it seems that they are trying to formulate views which can undermine Kornblith's skepticism. And, in other cases still, it seems that they are trying to do both things at once. But, in so far as thinkers are trying to determine the epistemic significance of ordinary peer disagreement for either the possession or the vindication of anyone's individual attitudes/claims, I find it hard to see why their impressions are a good guide to such significance, rather than something else (e.g. whatever significance they happen to *give* to such disagreement) - and, moreover, why undermining Kornblith's skepticism is something which can act as a desideratum in trying to discern such significance.[134] If anything, what I would say is that either more neutral ground needs to be found for such a debate or that new ground needs to be opened up. And, because I do not have any suggestions to make on the first route, what I will suggest instead is one way in which we might traverse the second route - and, in particular, what I will suggest is a different sort of question and policy regarding disagreement's significance.

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[134] In general, I am wary of such armchair methodologies because the jury is still out on whether or not they are reliable methods for what they purport to be investigating - in this case, what is required of us, epistemically-speaking, in the face of ordinary peer disagreement. And, equally, I am also generally wary of accepting desiderata which presuppose the falsity of a major component of a contending view - which, in this case, is *the* contending view.

Previously, it was being asked: what epistemic significance might ordinary peer disagreement have for either the possession or the vindication of any individual epistemic/ rational goods by contemporary analytic philosophers? And, as has been seen, this question is far from decided or, perhaps, even decidable in light of this section's dialectic. Nevertheless, what I do not think can be claimed as a result is that this dialectic has been unfruitful. For, as I am envisioning things from a pragmatic perspective, the previous dialectic is ultimately a good basis upon which contemporary analytic philosophers might construct a policy - which I have partially discussed in Chapter 2 - for converging on their aims and overcoming their disagreement. The key, though, is for them to, instead, ask something more like the following question about disagreement:

> **(Pragmatic Peer Disagreement Question)**: What significance *should* contemporary analytic philosophers *give* to ordinary peer disagreement, in light of their aims and constraints?

So, filling in the gaps, someone might ask: in virtue of their wanting to maximize their possession, transferability, and ability to vindicate various epistemic/rational goods, should contemporary analytic philosophers give no significance to their ordinary peer disagreement or should they treat it in such a way as to require that they conciliate in some regard? But, perhaps, someone else might want to ask: in virtue of their wanting to minimize their disagreement, should contemporary analytic philosophers give no significance to their disagreement or should they treat it as requiring conciliation in some regard? And, for whatever other parameters we can think of, so can the above question be changed in order to accommodate them. Still, as I have already indicated in Chapter 2, I will focus on the first of these two options because, given

Bourget and Chalmers 2020 survey data, many contemporary analytic philosophers seem to have such goods in mind when they practice their discipline.

Behind this change of perspective and question, though, the thought is not that this shift will save contemporary analytic philosophers from the worry that Kornblith has presented, so much as it will, at the very least, put into perspective what sort of policy (or rule) might further their aims and, perhaps, even allow them to overcome their disagreement. Again, I maintain that it is hard to say whether or not Kornblith is right, at a theoretical-level. But, what I think can be said nevertheless is that, in virtue of their aims, constraints, and this section's dialectic, there is a general practical policy which contemporary analytic philosophers should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) accept - namely, that:

> **(Disagreement - Pragmatic Significance - Individual Goods)**: In the face of their ordinary peer disagreement and their wanting to maximize the possession, transferability, and ability to vindicate individual knowledge (or various epistemic/rational goods) for themselves, specialist contemporary analytic philosophers should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) respond to such disagreement as providing a weighted pragmatic reason in favor of them (1) comprehensively and individually setting out *what they take* their first-order evidence/reasons to be for whatever question is under dispute, to (2) compare their evidence/reasons with one another, and to (3) evaluate/re-evaluate the methods upon which their evidence/reasons are based.[135]

Now, as I have formulated this policy, it might seem somewhat trivial because the practices involved are ones with which specialist contemporary analytic philosophers are already broadly familiar and, to some extent, implement. But, as I read it in light of the circumstances

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[135] Such a policy seems hard to deny. For those who seem to accept something similar, both in practice and in writing, see: Peirce 1931-58 ("The Fixation of Belief"); and Dewey 2008, among others.

surrounding our core discussion and understand its rational structure, I ultimately do not find it to be all that trivial. If anything, I actually find it to be quite substantive. To see why, though, let me briefly explain some of its features and how they might be understood.

The first thing to note about this policy is that, at the very least, I think it is non-trivial in light of my previously concluding that specialist contemporary analytic philosophers, as they relate to one another in the context of Bourget and Chalmers's survey, are rationally acknowledgeable as roughly broad epistemic peers - so, to remind:

> **(Acknowledgeable Roughly Broad Epistemic Peers):** Individuals are rationally acknowledgeable as roughly broad epistemic peers over a question (or set of questions) just in case they are unaware of any good reason to deny - or, alternatively, are aware that, by their own rational lights, they have good overall reason to accept - that they are roughly equally likely to arrive at the right answer to whatever question (or set of questions) is under discussion.

Now, for my purposes here, what is important to remember about casting specialists contemporary analytic philosophers as peers of this kind is that they may very well have different first-order evidence/reasons from one another and different conceptions of what they take such evidence/reasons to be. So, it is not necessarily (and is likely not) going to be the case that specialists are going to be aware of the exact nature of each other's epistemic standings. And, in that regard, I do not think that it is going to be a trivial task for them to individually, comprehensively, and genuinely set out and compare what they take their first-order evidence/ reasons to be. They may very well discover something about each other which they did not previously realize.

Relatedly, I should also note that this policy also focuses on *what specialists take* their first-order evidence/reasons to be, rather than on the first-order evidence/reasons themselves or specialists' attitudes/claims. The reason for this nuance is that I generally agree with both Sosa (2010) and Roca-Royes (forthcoming) that individuals' total sets of first-order evidence/reasons are not necessarily going to be transparent to them. Further, like Roca-Royes, I also take it that disagreement is something which can call for peers to work on what they take their first-order evidence/reasons to be and not necessarily something which calls for them to change their individual attitudes/claims, as Kornblith and some of the other authors that I have surveyed have claimed. Overall, this strategy seems right to me and also non-trivial because, like Roca-Royes, I am also sympathetic to something like the Right Reasons View when it comes to what is *ultimately significant* for epistemically justifying or rationalizing our attitudes/claims - namely, the first-order evidence/reasons themselves. But again, because such things are not necessarily going to be transparent to any of us, it is also presumably not going to be a trivial task for specialists to individually and comprehensively detail what they take their first-order evidence/ reasons to be.

And, a similar point can also be made about the purported methods by which specialists "produce" or are provided their purported first-order evidence/reasons - which is why I have included them in the policy above. For, as even a brief look at some of the literatures on philosophical methodology will show, specialists are not only debating either the methods or the nature of the methods that they actually use, but also which ones produce or provide credible results.[136] Even within this chapter and an earlier chapter (- Chapter 3), I have provided clear-cut

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[136] The literatures on intuitions, thought-experiments, experimental philosophy, and so on, are the obvious ones for making this point.

examples of my disagreeing with Thomas Kelly (2016) and Bryan Frances (2017) in light of what they take their first-order evidence/reasons to be - and, in line with my realizing that we disagree, I have challenged the methods by which they have produced their own responses to Bourget and Chalmers's 2009 and 2020 survey data. In Chapter 7, it will also be seen that concerns regarding method will also arise in connection to worries about the discipline's reliability. So, between present concerns and the ones which I am soon to discuss, I think it is reasonable enough to include something about method in the proposed policy.

And, the last thing that I want to note about this policy is that, although it is straightforward in its rationally demanding (again, at least, pragmatically-speaking) that specialists treat their ordinary peer disagreements as providing weighted reasons for certain actions, given the aims that I have attributed to them, it is ultimately quite open-ended when it comes to what rational weight can be (or should be) given to such disagreements. Various options are available. For instance, perhaps, specialists might treat such disagreements as providing *decisive* reasons which rationally *require* specialists to implement the actions outlined. Or, perhaps, they might treat such disagreements as providing *sufficient* reasons which merely make it rationally *permissible* for them to implement those actions. For, again, looking at these things from the pragmatic perspective that I have adopted, all that really matters is whether their choice of rational weight is apt for furthering their aims. But, as far as I am concerned, I believe that they should (pragmatically-speaking) simply give as much rational weight to such disagreements as is commensurate with the strength of their desires to achieve those aims.[137] So, for instance, it seems to me that, if specialist contemporary analytic philosophers only desire the

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[137] Such a claim might seem like an endorsement of something like Mark Schroeder's (2007) Proportionalism. However, I am not endorsing this view here - even though, I am sympathetic to Proportionalism.

aims that I have attributed to them, say, to the degree that they desire a 10p coin, then so be it: presumably, they will only attribute a small amount of rational weight to their disagreements. But, if they desire those aims, say, to the degree that they desire keeping their employment, then also so be it: presumably, they will attribute a great deal of rational weight to their disagreements.

But, it is important for them to recognize that there are going to be consequences associated with how much they desire their aims. So, for instance, if they only desire maximizing the possession, transferability, and the vindication of their individual knowledge (or various individual epistemic/rational goods) as much as, say, their desire to see everyone use a Chicago style of citation, then presumably the policy that I have set out will more than likely be doomed to failure. Or, perhaps more realistically, if they do not desire such things as much as, say, the controversy-based fruitfulness of their work, the speedy production and recognition of their own novel views, or merely coming out ahead of any criticism, among other things, then presumably this policy will also have a hard time achieving its aims.[138] But, if they desire such aims as much as, say, maintaining their employment, then perhaps such a policy might have a fairly good chance of furthering those aims.

Admittedly, there is no guarantee that such a policy will succeed, even with a great deal of desire for the aims towards which it is directed. As should clear, its success is also partially up to other contingent factors, such as specialists' personal lives, chance, and so on. But, by-and-large, I suspect that how much rational weight they give to their disagreements and, accordingly,

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[138] Remco Heesen 2018 and 2019 has argued for an analogous claim for the sciences. And, broadly speaking, I take it that, if contemporary analytic philosophers have reward structures/motivations like the sciences, then Heesen's results will be equally worrying for the reproduction of their results - even if the sort of reproducibility that contemporary analytic philosophers seek is ultimately not necessarily experimental.

how diligently they implement the actions suggested (in light of those disagreements) will make a difference. So, even where specialists do accept this policy, only weakly desire the aims within it, give their disagreements commensurate rational weight, and implement it accordingly, then even still they will see a minimal increase in their understanding of why they disagree, in light of what they take their first-order evidence/reasons to be. And, hopefully, they will even have a minimal increase in their understanding of how their purported first-order evidence/reasons stand, dialectically-speaking, given the methods that have produced them.   But, in alignment with Roca-Royes again, I also think that, if specialists go even further, then perhaps they might also hope for the best - namely, that by taking their disagreements quite seriously and going about their inquiries more diligently, which is essentially what the policy above suggests, then perhaps they might also be able to overcome skeptical worries like Kornblith's after all.

And so, long story short, if specialist contemporary analytic philosophers seriously want to maximize the possession, transferability, and vindication of individual knowledge (or various other epistemic/rational goods) for themselves, then not only should they treat their disagreements as providing weighted reasons to implement the things that the above policy sets out, they should also take such disagreements as providing reasons of considerable rational weight to implement them as well - and, hopefully, satisfying results will follow.

5.5 Goldman's Worry Regarding Novices and Disagreeing Experts

But now, after so much discussion of Kornblith's argument, we are finally in a position to consider Goldman's worry, which will, fortunately, be more straightforward than the previous section.

Essentially, as it is set out in his *Knowledge in a Social World* (1999) and "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?" (2001), Goldman's worry is that, in occupying an observing perspective and having limited epistemic resources, novices (or non-experts) are not always going to be in a good position to assess the relative credibility of disagreeing (alleged) experts (see Chapter 4 for clarification of the sort of expertise under discussion) or to receive the best information or advice that they might have to offer.[139]   Here is the sort of case that he has in mind:

> **PAINS**: Jack - who is a musician and a near-absolute novice in matters medical - has gone to the hospital due to his regular fatigue, headaches, muscle pain, and joint swelling. The two physicians who are trying to treat him, Jill and Hill, are acknowledged to be the best in the hospital, and equally so, given their largely equivalent track records, credentials, practices, and interests. But, in diagnosing Jack, a setback has occurred - for, despite their best and largely equal efforts, Jill and Hill have concluded different things about what ails Jack and which course of treatment he should take. Jill has concluded that Jack has Lupus and should be put on a regimen of immunosuppressants, anti-inflammatories, and frequent visits to his GP, whereas Hill has concluded that he has rheumatoid arthritis and should be put on a regimen of anti-inflammatories, with only occasional visits to his GP.

Fortunately, in most real life cases, the decision of what to do next is not left up to Jack. But, to really appreciate the gravity of Goldman's concern, imagine if Jack were to be asked: "Whose testimony are you going to accept?" In such a scenario, it is hard to imagine him reacting with anything but indecision and fear. For, as Goldman considers in the abstract, how would someone

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[139] Although they are not the only ones, Goldman's works are still the most prominent sources (at least, in terms of citation and priority of date) for appreciating how disagreement might effect third-parties. For similar or nearby works, though, see also: Matheson 2005; Zagzebski 2012; Lackey 2018; Matheson, McElreath, and Nobis 2018; Irzik and Kurtulmus 2019; and Oreskes 2019.

like Jack be able, at face value, to determine whose testimony to accept? There are only so many options available to him and, by and large, they do not appear to be particularly promising. Consider: might he assess their credentials (Goldman 2001: 106 - 108); ask for and evaluate arguments from the experts which will support their own views and critique their rival's (ibid: 93-7); ask for a third opinion or investigate where the consensus of expert opinion lies (ibid: 97-104); look into each expert's previous performance (ibid: 106-8); or, perhaps, look into each expert's interests and potential biases in order to see if their judgements are in any way skewed (ibid: 104-5)? But, as Goldman ends up admitting, his own findings in considering these options are "decidedly mixed" since, in all sorts of cases, the plight of the novice remains and, moreover, it does not look like that plight can always or, maybe, even often be improved upon.

Take, for instance, the option of assessing arguments from the disagreeing experts. To all appearances, this option is going to require that novices be sufficiently versed in the relevant topics and practices in order for them to be able to appreciate and, then, effectively evaluate the different arguments that the experts will present. But, if that is right, then what about cases like ILLNESS? It seems highly unlikely that Jack is going to be able to appreciate his doctors' arguments and counter-arguments concerning, among other things, auto-immune diseases, synovium, and antinuclear antibodies. Again, he is a musician and a near-absolute novice on medical matters.   So, presumably, he will not have the necessary epistemic resources to genuinely appreciate, let alone evaluate, his doctors' exchange, and will need to consider another option.

However, the only other *viable* options appear to be just as tenuous as the previous. For, if Jack were to ask for a third opinion or to investigate where the consensus of expert opinion

lies, who is to say that a fourth opinion will not just put him right back in his initial position or that, in seeking the expert consensus, he will not just find a near 50-50 split among them? Both outcomes are possible and, in some cases, even probable. So, in considering the sheer variety of cases that might be encountered, Goldman is probably right to maintain that his findings are "decidedly mixed" - especially, when there is no way to insure that our circumstances will be favorable or that a particular method will readily and reliably indicate, in *all* or *most* circumstances, which expert is right.

Nevertheless, even if there are many pitfalls surrounding the novice's perspective, it is important to remember that Goldman's findings are mixed, and not just bad (Goldman 1999: 271; and 2001: 109). So, sure, cases like ILLNESS and others like it are particularly difficult, if not impossible, to non-arbitrarily resolve, given the extent of the novice-hood involved, the similarities that the experts share, and the fact that the question under consideration may not be conducive to consensus or any other means of resolution. But, as Goldman points out, we do sometimes (and, maybe, even often) find ourselves in circumstances more like the following:

> **PALEO-CLIMATOLOGY:** Jack - who is a near-absolute novice in climate science - needs to form an opinion immediately (for some reason or another) about the accuracy of models for past global climate activity. Fortunately, his friends, Jill and Hill, are both highly credentialed paleo-climatologists who work for the US National Academy of Sciences and who can also agree that they are peers. However, in asking his question, Jack has discovered that they disagree: Jill says that the models are generally accurate, while Hill says that it is hard to say as of yet. Interestingly, Hill can admit that his position is something of an outlier in comparison to Jill's position, which they agree (out loud) is shared by roughly 80% of their colleagues. But, Hill's position is far from uninformed - he

is simply having a hard time getting over the fact that the local data for past climate activity often varies quite a bit from one location (or data type) to the next, and still believes that more local data is needed.

In such a case, I would say that there is a relatively straightforward way for Jack to rationally decide upon whose testimony to accept: he can simply look to the expert consensus on the matter, and accept whoever's response accords with it. On the one hand, this option seems to be the best available in virtue of Jack's evidential situation - which is minimal, to say the least. But, moreover, there is also something to be said for the fact that a large majority of scientific experts can agree that their models are generally accurate. It is that their practices are generally rigorous and even encourage the scrutiny of their colleagues who will, often, have diverse backgrounds and interests - so, when they can agree to such an extent, there is probably good reason (be it pragmatic or epistemic) for a novice, *with no other available evidence*, to accept what they largely accept as well (cf. Oreskes 2019: 107 - 11).[140] Similarly, if the case were such that Hill works for a petroleum company which has an explicit and vested interest in making sure that scientific findings do not disrupt its profits, then I would also say that there is a relatively straightforward way for Jack to non-arbitrarily and rationally decide upon whose testimony to accept: he can look to both the consensus on the matter, and he can take note of the relevant biases and interests that Jill and Hill might have.

So, depending on the case, different results will follow. Two questions still need to be addressed, though. The first is: what significance, then, does expert disagreement have in the bad cases? And, the second is: what do the considerations of this section suggest about the

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[140] There are epistemic limitations that come with bandwagoning, of course. See, for example, Sorenson 1984 for discussion. But, for the sorts of cases that Goldman and I are considering, such limitations are not going to be particularly problematic.

situation among specialist contemporary analytic philosophers and related philosophical novices?

Well, to the first question, it seems to me that two sorts of responses might be given. The first is that expert disagreement undermines a novice's receiving an expert's knowledge (or rational acceptances), and the second is that it undermines a novice's ability to rationally assess the options that are available to them.[141]   So, as I classify them, the first sort of response indicates that expert disagreement has some (negative) epistemic significance for novices, while the second sort of response indicates that such disagreement has some (negative) practical significance for novices.

Overall, the first sort of response is fairly easy to identify. Clearly, when experts espouse incompatible information or advice, a novice is simply not going to be able to accept or implement both of the things espoused to them, on pain of inconsistency or incoherence. But, further, even if they were to form an attitude as a result, then presumably it would be an epistemically arbitrary one, seeing as they do not have anything but the expert testimony to go on in the cases that we are considering. Perhaps, they might end up with a true belief or the right intention, by chance, because they are veritically lucky.[142]   But, in such a case, it is clear that

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[141] I should say that I am not taking a firm stance on whether or not testimony can only transmit knowledge (or rational acceptance). I loosely accept that it can transmit epistemic goods, but also that it might generate such goods as well. For discussion on this topic, see for example: Fricker 1987; Elgin 2002; Goldberg 2005; Graham 2000 and 2006; Zagzebski 2012; and Wright 2019 among others.

[142] By "veritically lucky," I am following Mylan Engel: "A person S is *veritically lucky* in believing that p in circumstances C if and only if, given S's evidence for p, it is just a matter of luck that S's belief that p is true in C" (Engel 1992: 67). I am particularly taking on board his claiming that such attitudinal uptake is "just a matter of luck."

neither expert's testimony will have played any epistemic role in the novice's uptake of the attitude in question, seeing as chance did all the work.[143]

Similarly, the second sort of response is also quite easy to identify. For, just consider: any novice in Jack's situation in PAINS is clearly going to be stunted in their ability to rationally assess the relative credibility of the disagreeing experts if the experts' testimonies are the only reasons to which they can appeal. So, again, as with the previous sort of response, novices will simply not be able to consider anything but non-arbitrary decisions when it comes to whether to trust one expert or another. And, presumably, where they will not be able to make a non-arbitrary decision, but will still have to make a decision nevertheless, they will either have to resort to an arbitrary method (for example, tossing a coin) or resort to broadly irrelevant methods when it comes to the question under dispute (for example, trial by combat). But, given the sorts of cases that we are considering, I take it that, broadly-speaking, novices will simply be at a loss for what they should accept or do and will, consequently, either actively or passively suspend judgement on the matter.

So, with these two sorts of responses in mind, the key question for our purposes is: what does Goldman's worry suggest about the situation among specialist contemporary analytic philosophers and related philosophical novices? For, altogether, we can see that, because different cases produce different results, there might very well be cases associated with specialist contemporary analytic philosophers where philosophical novices will not be in such bad shape. So, we must consider: from the perspective of a philosophical novice, are the ordinary peer

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[143] I am assuming that, in cases like the ones we are considering, something like the "Incompatibility Thesis" is true - and, in particular, I am assuming that any proper epistemic or rational status for an attitude or claim is ultimately incompatible with chance's *wholly* determining the formation of that attitude or the making of that claim. Importantly, what I am not assuming is that such statuses are incompatible with all forms of chance playing *some* role in those things.

disagreements within the discipline closer to cases like PAINS or are they closer to cases like

PALEO-CLIMATOLOGY?

Unsurprisingly, even here, what can be found is something of a Goldman-esque mixed-bag. As can be seen, for some of the questions from the Bourget and Chalmers's 2020 survey, there are clearly going to be issues, as with a case involving a question like the following:

> **TELE-TRANSPORTER**: Jack, who is decidedly a novice in matters philosophical, wants a philosophical question answered: will I die if I go through a tele-transporter? The only problem is that, despite considering themselves to be roughly broad epistemic peers, the three metaphysicians - Jill, Hill, and Bucket - who have been employed to address his question have come to different answers as a result of their inquiries. Jill's position is that he will and Jill states that 45.48% of her colleagues agree, while Hill's position is that he will not and he states that 34.75% of his colleagues agree. Bucket, in the meantime, has simply suspended judgement on the matter because he is unaware of Jack's criteria for identity, let alone if there is a privileged criterion. He also states that 19.77% of his colleagues are probably conflicted on the matter.

But, for other cases, there appears to be some hope, as with a case involving a question like the following:

> **TROLLEY PROBLEM**: Jack, who is decidedly a novice in matters philosophical, wants a philosophical question answered: in the Trolley Problem, does morality require me to switch, not switch, or do something else? Interestingly, the three normative ethicists - Jill, Hill, and Bucket - who have been employed to address his question have come to different answers as a result of their inquiries. Jill's position is that he should switch and she notes that 71.23% of her colleagues agree, while Hill's position is that he should not and he notes that 10.06% of his colleagues agree. Bucket, in the meantime, has simply suspended

judgement on the matter because he thinks that morality is simply too complicated for such binary choices. He notes that 18.72% of his colleagues can probably agree.

There are also even cases involving questions like the following:

> **PIETY**: Jack, who is decidedly a novice in matters philosophical, wants a philosophical question answered: is there a god? Interestingly, the three contemporary analytic philosophers - Jill, Hill, and Bucket - who have been employed to address his question have come to different answers as a result of their inquiries. Jill's position - as a philosopher of religion - is that there is and notes that 68.79% of her specialist colleagues agree, while Hill's position - as a metaphysician - is that there is not and he notes that 61.35% of his specialist colleagues agree. Bucket, in the meantime, has the position - as a non-specialist - that he ultimately thinks that the question is beyond the remit of his epistemic abilities to answer. But, he notes that he is disinclined to believe in a god, along with 66.72% of his non-specialist colleagues.

And so, generally, the task that I face, in looking over Bourget and Chalmers's survey data, is in generally appreciating what sort of circumstances it will put philosophical novices in.

And, in response, there are at least three things that I think we might reasonably claim. One is that, in cases like TELE-TRANSPORTER - which arguably are similar to 20 of the 47 questions considered in Bourget and Chalmers's 2020 survey (see Chapter 3) -, philosophical novices will end up in a similar sort of situation as Jack in PAINS (although, presumably, without such high stakes), especially since they will not be in a position to assess the capabilities, biases, or evidence/reasons of any of the specialists associated with those questions. Another is that, in cases like TROLLEY PROBLEM - which arguably are similar to 23 of the 47 questions in the survey (again, see Chapter 3)-, philosophical novices will end up in a similar sort of

situation as Jack in PALEO-CLIMATOLOGY, although it is debatable how much agreement (or consensus) is needed in order to constitute solid grounds for rationally trusting one specialist over another or for the testimonial reception of knowledge (or rational acceptance).[144] And, the last thing that I think can be reasonably claimed is that, in cases like PIETY where there is substantive disagreement between different sorts of specialists - which roughly holds of 4 of the 47 survey questions (see Chapter 3 or Appendix 2) -, philosophical novices are also going to be in similar enough situations to TELE-TRANSPORTER with the exception that, instead of there being disagreement between individuals, there will be disagreement between groups.

So, all-in-all, when it comes to a number of philosophical questions, be they explicitly on Bourget and Chalmers's 2020 survey or related to them, philosophical novices appear as if they are going to be confronted with some rather tough circumstances. At the very least, for slightly more than half of the 2020 survey questions, it appears as if novices are going to have to reckon with the likelihood of their not being able to non-arbitrarily adjudicate between what specialists have claimed on the matter, let alone whether any specialist's knowledge (or rational acceptance) can be non-arbitrarily received by them. Of course, not all is lost. For slightly less than half of the questions from the 2020 survey, philosophical novices might be in a decent enough position to adjudicate between specialists and to have specialist knowledge (or rational acceptances) transmitted to them. But, as we will see in Chapters 6 and 7, this impression is ultimately not going to hold when it is considered how much agreement (or consensus) is necessary for the

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[144] For now, I am simply going to assume that an absolute majority is sufficient, although in Chapter 6 this assumption will be challenged. Ultimately, I will suggest that a supermajority of 60% of individuals is minimally necessary.

possession, transferability, and vindication of collective epistemic/rational goods, such as rational consensuses or collective knowledge.

So, given these findings, philosophical novices might simply accept advice akin to what Richard Fumerton (2010) has claimed - namely, to take specialist contemporary analytic philosophers' individual attitudes/claims with a grain of salt, seeing as in many cases "you can't trust any particular philosopher over another" (adapted from Fumerton 2010: 91-110) - or advice which is akin to what Keith Allen (2019) suggests in obliging philosophical novices to simply work to become non-novices because, as he argues, they "should only believe philosophical claims on the basis of argument" (Allen 2019: 11). But, again, if we can hope for the best in light of the sorts of considerations that Roca-Royes and I have forwarded, then perhaps such philosophers can simply suggest patience, seeing as the work of the discipline's practitioners is still ongoing.

5.6 Conclusion

And so, with both Kornblith and Goldman's worries now on the table, as well as various suggestions for how they might be overcome, I am now at a stopping point when it comes to how specialist contemporary analytic philosophers' ordinary peer disagreements might affect the possession, transferability, or vindication of any individual epistemic/rational goods, be they from the perspective of a participant or an observer.

Through Kornblith, it can be seen that, given their extant ordinary peer disagreements, such things might be under threat for specialist contemporary analytic philosophers as participants - but, also, that there are a number of critical responses which his worry faces. And,

further, through Goldman, it can be seen that, as *observing* non-experts, philosophical novices'

individual abilities to rationally and non-arbitrarily assess the relative credibility of different

experts, as well as to receive specialist knowledge (or rational acceptance), might also be under

threat. Overall, these worries may not be the only ones which anyone might have about such

things - and, in fact, there are likely to be more. But, at the very least, they do seem to provide

us with a decent overview when it comes to what sorts of reasonable worries seem to underwrite

the various pessimistic claims about contemporary analytic philosophy that I have presented in

Chapter 1.

Still, as Roca-Royes and I have suggested - albeit from different angles -, neither of these

worries seem to ultimately warrant a deep pessimism about the discipline yet - that is, a

pessimism which accepts the *impossibility* of the discipline's practitioners individual abilities to

possess, transfer, or vindicate any individual epistemic/rational goods. If anything, they might

warrant a mitigated pessimism - that is, a temporary pessimism about such practitioners'

individual abilities to possess or carry out such tasks. But, if we are right in suggesting that

specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might ultimately be able to achieve such primary

epistemic/rational aims by working more diligently and more in alignment with those aims, then

perhaps they might also be warranted in maintaining a *very* cautious optimism as well.

6

Possessing, Transferring, and Vindicating Collective Epistemic/Rational Goods

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed worries from both Hilary Kornblith (2010) and Alvin Goldman (1999; and 2001) about how specialist contemporary analytic philosophers' ordinary peer disagreement might consequently affect the possession, transferability, or vindication of various *individual* epistemic/rational goods. But, as I have already mentioned in various chapters, the potential worries surrounding such disagreement ultimately do not stop at individuals - they might also extend to groups as well. And so, before I can have a fuller picture of why specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might be right to worry about their disagreement, I will also need to consider: what sorts of worries might they face when treated as a group?

Like the previous chapter, I am also going to focus on worries from several thinkers in the hope of making our discussion as representative of the literature as possible. And, in particular, I am going to focus on two sorts of worries: one which has been posed by David Chalmers (2015), and another which has been posed by such authors as Ernest Sosa (2011), Richard Fumerton (2011), and Hilary Kornblith (2013).[145] In brief, the first worry concerns specialist contemporary analytic philosophers' possession, transferability, and vindication of various collective epistemic/rational goods, while the second concerns the reliability and credibility of such specialists as a group (and not as individuals). In due course, I will discuss both of these worries in the next chapter - especially, as the literature has presented them, in addition to how they might be treated from a pragmatic perspective.

Before I turn to them, though, I am going to begin with some discussion in this chapter of how collective epistemic/rational goods might be possessed, transferred, or vindicated by *groups* at all. In part, such discussion is needed, given the growing concern within the philosophical literature on the possibility of group-level phenomena. But, more than anything else, it is needed because, depending on what conceptions of collective epistemic/rational goods we consider, different results may very well follow, as Chapter 7 will discuss, for whether or not specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might be right to worry about their ordinary peer disagreement.

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[145] Immediately, I should note that the reason for my primarily focussing on these authors is because they are either the most straightforward or the earliest sources for subsequent work about the collective effects of disagreement. Chalmers (2015) straightforwardly discusses in print disagreement's effects on contemporary analytic philosophy's collective knowledge and collective knowledge ascriptions. Whereas, Sosa, Fumerton, and Kornblith's discussions appear to be the most straightforward in print that can be read as doubting contemporary analytic philosophy's reliability and, hence, credibility as a discipline.

Accordingly, I am going to consider two questions overall. The first is: what sorts of views are going to be relevant for our purposes? For instance, thinking of the literature on social ontology, are the relevant views going to abide by methodological individualism or methodological collectivism? And further, as Jennifer Lackey (2016) puts it, are the relevant views going to abide by "inflationary" or "deflationary" views of collective epistemic/rational goods? And, the second question is: for whatever views are relevant, how might they characterize the difference between the possession, transferability, and vindication of whatever collective epistemic/rational goods specialists might seek? I will discuss each question in turn.

6.2 Setting the Playing Field for Collective Epistemic/Rational Goods

To get started, there are two distinctions with which we will need to be acquainted in order to better contextualize the sorts of the views that might be relevant for my purposes. The first distinction is between methodological individualism and methodological collectivism, which are explanatory theses about the different ways in which group phenomena can be thought about. And, the second is Lackey's (2016) distinction between "deflationary" and "inflationary" views about group attitudes/claims (- in particular, what I have been calling their epistemic/rational goods), which will primarily depend on the collaborative dynamics and epistemic/rational statuses of a group's members or makeup.

In general, methodological individualism and methodological collectivism, as they are understood within the literature on social ontology, are taken to be mutually exclusive. In the context of our discussion, the first "ism" would amount to the claim that the possession, transferability, or vindication of a group's epistemic/rational goods "can be explained solely in

terms of the psychological states and processes of the group members and the relations between them," whereas the second would amount to claiming "that there are irreducible group-level properties and processes which need to play a role in the explanation of [such possession, transferability, or vindication as a] group phenomena" (Tollefsen 2015: 4). So, to illustrate the difference, imagine that a council - made up of three individuals - collectively knows that <p, q, and r>. Now, on methodological individualism, the thought is that I need only look to the individual psychological aspects of the group's members and the individual relations between those members in order to explain why they collectively know that <p, q, and r> - so, for instance, such things as: one member knows <p>, another <q>, and another <r>, and each of these members have just shared their information with each other, on the basis of their individually believing that they should share information with each other, and moreover each of them also assumes that the information provided from the others is excellent and should be accepted. On methodological collectivism, though, the thought is that, sometimes, I will also need to appeal to more than the sorts of things just mentioned in order to explain why a group collectively knows - so, for instance, such things as: one member knows <p>, another <q>, and another <r> and, in virtue of their belonging to council X, they are beholden to a group norm which requires them to share their knowledge with each other and to accept what the others accept, and they do accord with this norm. But, overall, these sorts of things are just a handful of the ones to which either "ism" might appeal. And, ultimately, there are going to be innumerable possible explanations on either one of them

For my purposes, though, I am largely going to bypass the debates surrounding which of these "isms" is ultimately correct about the explanation of group phenomena because, as I am

envisioning things, these views can simply be treated as holding of different, but seemingly identical, group phenomena - so, perhaps, group-individualist rational consensus/knowledge and group-collectivist rational consensus/knowledge. Of course, if one or the other view ends up being true *and there is only one sort of group phenomena which exists*, then we can simply restrict ourselves to the findings which will result from that view. But, for my purposes, I do not think that I must ask the more specific question of: do collective epistemic/rational goods (i.e. the one and only ones that exist) survive among specialist contemporary analytic philosophers, given their ordinary peer disagreement?   Rather, I can just ask: what sorts of collective epistemic/rational goods might survive among such specialists, given their ordinary peer disagreement?

And, a similar point will also hold of the debate between deflationary and inflationary views about the relevant epistemic/rational goods. Deflationary views hold that, necessarily, a group has an attitude or an epistemic/rational good only if at least one individual is both a member of that group and has the attitude or epistemic/rational good in question; whereas, on inflationary views, it is possible for a group to have an attitude or an epistemic/rational good even if no *members* of that group have the attitude or the epistemic/rational good in question (Lackey 2016: 342).   So, while deflationary views have it that, at least, one member of the council from a few paragraphs back will need to individually know that <p, q, and r> - and not just each of them knowing <p>, <q>, or <r> individually - in order for the council to collectively know that <p, q, and r>, inflationary views will allow for the possibility of none of the council's members individually knowing that <p, q, and r>, and the council's still collectively knowing

that <p, q, and r> - that is, so long as certain group mechanisms or dynamics are in place.[146] But

again, for my purposes, I do not need to decide this debate here and now. In other words, I do

not need to answer: regarding collective epistemic/rational goods, is group-inflationary rational

acceptance/knowledge or group-deflationary rational acceptance/knowledge the true conception?

Again, I can simply ask: what sorts of collective epistemic/rational goods might survive among

such specialists, given their ordinary peer disagreement?

If so, then views will fall into one of four combinations and, correspondingly, there will

also be four types of collective epistemic/rational goods which might be at stake: either they can

be of a deflationary sort and accord with either methodological individualism or collectivism, or

they can be of a strictly inflationary sort and accord with either methodological individualism or

collectivism. For the purposes of this study, I am going to focus on three views and the goods

that they pick out in order to establish whether or not specialist contemporary analytic

philosophers are in a position to possess, vindicate, or transfer such goods and to what extent

they might, in fact.

For a deflationary view which accords with methodological individualism, I am going to

focus on the following account which Lackey identifies (but does not endorse):

> **(Deflationary Epistemic Summativism)**: A group, G, collectively and rationally
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> accepts, justifiably believes, has a rational consensus, or knows that <p> when

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[146] All inflationary accounts require certain conditions be met by the group. I will set out a prominent example shortly and further explain its particular conditions in section 6.3. But, in general, when Lackey discusses such views, she thinks that cases like the following primarily motivate them: **DIFFERENT EVIDENCE**: "A jury is deliberating about whether the defendant in a murder trial is innocent or guilty. Each member of the jury is privy to evidence that the defendant was seen fleeing the crime scene with blood spatter on their clothes, but it is grounded in hearsay which, though reliable, was ruled as inadmissible by the judge. Given only the admissible evidence, the jury as a group justifiably believes that the defendant is innocent, but not a single juror justifiably believes this proposition because it is defeated for each of them as individuals by the relevant reliable hearsay evidence" (Lackey 2016: 343-4).

and only when a significant percentage of its members rationally accept, justifiably believe, or know that <p> (Adapted from Lackey 2016: 358).[147]

For a deflationary view which accords with methodological collectivism, I am going to focus on Lackey's own account:

> **(Group Epistemic Agent Account)**: A group, G, collectively and rationally accepts, justifiably believes, has a rational consensus, or knows that <p> when and only when (1) a significant percentage of the *operative* members of G (a) rationally accept, justifiably believe, or know that <p>, and (b) are such that adding together the epistemic/rational bases of their rational acceptances, justified beliefs, or knowledge that <p> yields an attitudinal set that is coherent, and (2) full disclosure of the evidence/reasons relevant to the proposition that <p>, accompanied by rational deliberation about that evidence/reasons among the members of G - in accordance with their individual and group epistemic normative requirements - would not result in further evidence/reasons that, when added to the bases of G's members' acceptances, beliefs, or knowledge that <p>,

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[147] For those who defend one or another version of deflationary summativism for group attitudes, see for example: List 2005; List and Petit 2011; and Faria 2021. And, for a defense of a version of deflationary epistemic summativism, see for example: Goldman 2014.

yields a total attitudinal set that fails to make sufficiently probable that <p> (Adapted from Lackey 2016: 381).[148,149,150,151]

And lastly, I am also going to focus on an account from Alexander Bird (2010) which functions as strictly inflationary, but which can accord with either methodological individualism or collectivism:

> **(Minimal Functional Account)**: A group, G, collectively and rationally accepts, justifiably believes, has a rational consensus, or knows that <p> when and only when, functionally, (1) the members of the group are inter-dependent based on a division of labor, (2) the group outputs <p> based on various inputs and mechanisms, and (3) the group's mechanisms are sufficiently reliable to provide for the group's rationally accepting, justifiably believing, having a rational

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[148] Deflationary Epistemic Summativism, the Minimal Function Account, and the Group Epistemic Agent Account have all been modified to take into account rational acceptance, justified belief, rational consensus, and knowledge. Originally, the Minimal Functional Account only concerned knowledge, while Deflationary Epistemic Summativism and the Group Epistemic Agent Account were only concerned with justified belief.

[149] Ultimately, I class Lackey's view as a deflationary view because it requires that a certain number of a group's members be justified in believing the proposition in question in order for the group to justifiably believe that proposition (see condition (1a)). I also class her view as methodologically collectivist because group-level norms and properties regarding a group's evidence/reasons play an essential role in her account (see condition (2)) - and, as it seems, neither of these things will necessarily be reducible to norms or properties regarding the group's individual members.

[150] What I will say about the Group Epistemic Agent Account will also apply for something like Paul Silva Jr.'s 2019 Evidentialist Responsibilism Account which also has condition regarding a significant percentage of the operative members of the group.

[151] Although some Summativisms and the Group Epistemic Agent Account appeal to "significant percentages," Lackey is less than clear what sort of threshold she has in mind and, for various Summativisms, different thresholds have been argued, including: simple majorities, various supermajorities, as well as thresholds based on certain norms (e.g. norms of assertion, norms of action, and so on). I will discuss this point further in a few sections.

consensus, or knowing that <p>, given their inputs (Adapted from Bird 2011: 39-49).[152],[153]

Altogether, these views offer a great deal to parse, both in terms of their adequacy when it comes to a variety of cases, as well as their contents. But again, for my purposes, their truth is not going to be up for debate in my discussion and, moreover, I am also only going to focus on those aspects which can be discerned and applied to my discussion.[154]

I am concerned with contemporary analytic philosophers' and the relevant specialists among them, as they relate to their responses to the questions in Bourget and Chalmers's surveys. So, in terms of the three accounts under consideration, four things are going to be important. The first is that the existing versions of Deflationary Epistemic Summativism and the Group Epistemic Agent Account are going to require some specification of which members of the group under consideration are going to be the *operative* members. So, for instance, as the literature on social choice suggests, are the group's dynamics going to be dictatorial (that is, mirror a single group member's attitudes), oligarchic (that is, mirror a select subset of the group's members' attitudes), egalitarian and requiring unanimity (that is, mirror equally *all* of the members' attitudes), egalitarian and requiring less than unanimity, and so on?[155] Secondly,

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[152] I could have focused on something like Margaret Gilbert's 2014 Joint Commitment Account or Frederick Schmitt's 1994 Joint Acceptance Account and other nearby accounts, such as can be found in Raimo Tuomela 2002 and 2013; and Raul Hakli 2011. But, ultimately, these views are not going to be satisfied by contemporary analytic philosophers in virtue of these views' requiring that *all of the group's members* jointly accept or be jointly committed to something, as a body, and the fact that contemporary analytic philosophers clearly do not satisfy such stringent conditions for the sorts of questions that they ask.

[153] Bird's view can accord with either methodological individualism or collectivism, depending on the nature of the group's division of labor and mechanisms. For instance, can they be explained without appeal to irreducible group-level properties, norms, or processes? If so, then the explanation will accord with methodological individualism. But, if not, then it will accord with methodological collectivism.

[154] I should note, though, that each of these views might, as far as their authors are concerned, be in competition with one another when it comes to the true account of such collective goods.

[155] For further discussion of these aggregative rules, I suggest some of the most seminal texts in social choice theory: Arrow 1951; Gibbard 1969; and Sen 1970.

Summativisms and Lackey's account are also going to require that a *significant percentage* of a group's *operative members* satisfy the conditions for rational acceptance, justified belief, or knowledge *individually* in order for them to *collectively possess* such epistemic/rational goods. Thirdly, Summativisms and Lackey's Account are also, presumably, going to require more than just the possession of such epistemic/rational goods in order for a group to *vindicate* such possession - although they may maintain that possession is sufficient for *transferability*, as I will assume. And, the last thing to note is that the Minimal Functional Account is going to require that a group's members be sufficiently inter-dependent based on a division of labor in order for it to be an inflationary-like group and, also, it is going to require that its mechanisms be sufficiently reliable for it to *collectively possess* and, presumably, to *transfer* the relevant epistemic or rational goods - although, presumably, more is going to be required for the *vindication* of such possession and transferability.

So, when it comes to discerning what collective epistemic/rational goods specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might possess, transfer, or vindicate, the difficult questions are going to be: (1) given such philosophers' group dynamics, what sort of aggregative process can we appeal to for one or another version of Deflationary Epistemic Summativism or the Group Epistemic Agent Account, (2) what constitutes a *significant* percentage of contemporary analytic philosophers or the relevant specialists when it comes to the possession or transferability of such goods on either those Summativisms or the Group Epistemic Agent Account, and how might such groups vindicate such possession or transferability, (3) when are the members of a group sufficiently inter-dependent based on a division of labor to be an inflationary-like group (as on Bird's account), and (4) how reliable does a group need to be when it comes to both the

possession and transferability of the relevant goods on something like Bird's Minimal Functional Account, and how might such groups vindicate such possession and transferability?

6.3 Specialist Contemporary Analytic Philosophers and Functional Integration

Immediately, I am going to rule out the sorts of collective goods that might be possessed, transferred, or vindicated on Bird's Minimal Functional Account. In general, I decided upon this account as a representative example of an inflationary-like view of groups and their goods because of its prominence. But, mostly, I chose it because it is by far the most minimal account available - the thought being: if the account is the most minimal available and contemporary analytic philosophy's specialities still cannot satisfy it, then such specialties will also not be able to satisfy more demanding accounts.

What makes this account so minimal is that it only rests on whether or not specialists and their activities are *functionally integrated enough* so as to count as the sorts of inflationary-like groups that Bird has in mind - namely, scientific research groups.[156] He takes functional integration to be determined by the extent to which members of a group (or sub-groups within a larger group) are inter-dependent for their own proper functioning - and, in particular, he seems to have two dimensions in mind. The first is the extent to which a group has a division of labor which allows its members to rely upon and interact with the fruits of each other's labor. And, the second is the extent to which the group has standardized mechanisms for producing and vetting

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[156] "Functional integration" is a notion that Bird borrows from Durkheim 1893, who originally used it in more or less the same way Bird has: as a way of thinking about groups as organisms with components that depend upon each other for their proper functioning.

various pieces of information. Both dimensions might appear as if they are readily satisfied by contemporary analytic philosophy's specialties.

With the first dimension, I think that it can be readily admitted that there is no *strict* division of labor within such specialties. Still, what can be found are specialists acting in different capacities and discussing related topics. So, activity-wise, it can be seen among epistemologists, for instance, that some of them are trying to demarcate new phenomena, some of them are trying to formulate (or clarify) the questions and answers that are to be (or have been) the focus of discussion, some of them are engaging in dialectic on the available answers to those questions, some of them are systematizing on the basis of popular answers, and some of them have even been doing all of the above. Further, when it comes to the topics discussed, they can also be found to be discussing such related things as: analyses (or conceptions) of different epistemic notions (e.g. knowledge, justification, evidence, and so on), the epistemic aims of different epistemic attitudes or practices, the epistemic norms associated with different epistemic attitudes or practices, how different methods function, which of those methods are reliable and which are not, how our epistemic virtues or vices might contribute to our epistemic attitudes or practices, and more. And, if those two things were not enough, it can also be seen that, for any one of those topics, there is some inter-dependence among epistemologists in their utilization of each other's work - they employ each other's conceptions, they further each other's work, they test the quality of each other's work, they systematize on the basis of each other's work, and so on. And, the same can be seen in virtually any speciality within contemporary analytic philosophy.

Similarly, the second dimension might also seem as if it is easily satisfied by such specialties. In the first place, there is a general peer review process for the information that circulates within the specialities, as well as out of them, so that no "bad" information proliferates. Secondly, as can be seen from Bourget and Chalmers' 2020 survey results, different specialities have generally accepted and preferred methods and have even been wary of certain methods - for instance, logicians and philosophers of logic prefer formal methods and are wary of experimental philosophy, while aestheticians prefer conceptual analysis or empirical philosophy and are also wary of experimental philosophy. Thirdly, there are also speciality and inter-speciality conferences where specialists can forward and test the quality of their views with their other specialist colleagues or with specialists in other areas.[157] And, lastly, specialists will also even test whether or not their views or theories are consistent with the results of other disciplines - for instance, metaphysicians will sometimes check for the consistency of their views or theories with the best research in the physical sciences, and ethicists will sometimes check for the same of their views and theories with the best research in moral or social psychology. And so, altogether, it would also seem as if, among the different specialities within contemporary analytic philosophy, there are standardized mechanisms for producing and vetting the information that they output.

However, despite these appearances, I still do not think that contemporary analytic philosophy's specialities ultimately satisfy Bird's minimal account - in particular, two points come to mind.

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[157] Of course, each of these sorts of mechanisms (e.g. peer review, accepted and preferred methods, and conferences) has an analogue in the sciences.

Firstly, even if there are divisions of labor within contemporary analytic philosophy's different specialties, they are ultimately insufficient for the sort of functional integration that Bird has in mind. Again, broadly speaking, he is thinking of scientific research groups - and, characteristically, such groups tend to have *highly directed* divisions of labor based on different types of activities and various sub-topics.[158] Activity-wise, it can be seen that many scientific research groups tend to maintain - for the sake of efficiency and transparency - a division of labor between their theoretical/analytical activities and their observational/experimental activities for the duration of their project.[159] Topics-wise, it can also be seen that they tend to assign various sub-topics to different researchers based on their expertise (or training needs). And, by "directed," the thought is that such groups also tend to actively coordinate - be it through group leaders (e.g. principal or lead investigators) or some set of institutional guidelines - roles and responsibilities associated with which members will perform which activities and investigate which topics based on their expertise (or training-needs) for the duration of their project.[160] Of course, some scientific research groups do not abide by any of these tendencies, or just some of them. But, given the literature on scientific leadership and project management, as well as various studies about different scientific projects, the standard suggestion is that *productive* and *effective* scientific research groups tend to have a highly directed division of labor when it comes

[158] His most explicit examples are the various working groups and research groups associated with CERN (cf. Bird 2010: 45).

[159] See, for example, Haeussler and Sauermann 2015 on how to measure the division of labor within the sciences, some data on the extent to which scientific research groups have divisions of labor, and how such divisions manifest, depending on the nature of the research group.

[160] For evidence of this claim, see for example: Pelz and Andrews 1966; Shrum, Geneth, and Champolov 2007; Bennett and Gadlin 2012; Parker and Kingori 2016; Wagenknecht 2016; and Niemantsverdriet and Felderhof 2017, among others.

to both their activities and topics.[161]   So, if such a group has any pretensions to being either

productive or effective, then presumably it will also have a highly directed division of labor.

However, when it comes to specialties or research groups within contemporary analytic

philosophy, a different picture appears to hold.   There is certainly collaboration within these

specialities and research groups, in that specialists and researchers are clearly discussing and

disputing their chosen topics with each other, as their acknowledgements and referencing

indicates, and are also clearly engaging with other nearby specialties and disciplines (or, at least,

advocating for engagement with other disciplines).[162]   But, while it can be seen that such

specialties and research groups do exist on fairly general topics and there are different activities

which different members can perform - e.g. formulating and clarifying some distinction(s),

question(s), answer(s), or argument(s), and engaging in dialectic over such things-, it is

ultimately not standard practice for *particular activities* to be assigned to particular members, be

it through either a group leader (e.g. a principal or lead investigator) or some set of institutional

guidelines.   Rather, such members are generally assigned more specific topics within the

overarching general topic and are, then, allowed to carry out the sorts of general activities that I

have just mentioned.[163] Primarily, it seems that such practices exist because specialist

contemporary analytic philosophers (and nearby researchers) tend to all be adequately trained in

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[161] Within both the social sciences and the various natural sciences, studying the management of scientific research projects has become a commonplace - be it university courses, professional development workshops, or onsite training. And, representative samples of more successful research projects tend to be used for uncovering the basic principles of what forms of management are most effective for producing quality work. See for example: Bennett and Gadlin 2012; Niemantsverdriet and Felderhof 2017; Jansen 2018; and Hall et al. 2018, among others.

[162] See for example Michigan State University's ambitious Toolbox Project. And, in particular, its Toolbox Dialogue Initiative which is featured in Hubbs, O'Rourke, and Orzack (eds.) 2020.

[163] For support for this claim, see for example such excellent research proposals for European Research Council grants as: Kusch 2013; Kingma 2015; and Zahavi 2018.

each of the activities that I have just mentioned. But, secondarily, I would also say that they exist because they keep philosophical research projects from running the risk of unjustifiably relegating any of the group's members to undesired or uncreative activities and, potentially, disadvantaging them when it comes to producing original and publishable work.[164]

Of course, such points seem to mirror the sciences, to a certain extent. But, again, there is a salient difference. In the sciences, even *more directed* divisions of labor are needed in terms of assigning particular activities - as well as assigning topics - because producing working and empirically supported results efficiently and transparently is ultimately held in priority and, thus, requires the strategic planning and management of such things as: resources, sub-group inter-dependencies, the differences in members' expertise, the differences in kinds of expertise, the different means for carrying out certain justificatory procedures for different activities or needs (e.g. medical ones or industrial ones), and even contingencies. And, if those things were not enough, there is also the need to strategically plan and manage such things as: the group's diversity, its members' training needs, the enhancement of all the members' creative and career potentials, and even their temperaments in working together. Specialists contemporary analytic philosophers also have to concern themselves with some of those things and strategically plan and manage them, to some extent. But, the extent to which they must do so and how they must do so in order to produce their anticipated results does not generally resemble that of the sciences - especially, when what is at stake in the sciences could be something as consequential as producing results which could bear on the tracking of pathogens or as consequential as producing

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[164] Both of these results might constitute "inquiry-based" injustices similar to Miranda Fricker's (2007) "epistemic" injustices.

results which could cost other research (and, even, industrial) projects significantly.[165] So, yes,

philosophical specialties and research groups can be seen to have divisions of labor. But, all-in-

all, I think it is hard to claim that they are relevantly similar *in extent* and, in more specific

respects, even *in kind* to those of the sciences.[166]

And, the second point that I want to note is that, whereas scientific research groups tend

to have more standardized and more transparent local mechanisms (- ground rules, so to speak)

for tentatively (or definitively) closing their dialectics with other scientists, whether they are an

opposing group or are simply agnostic, philosophical specialties and research groups tend to

have less standardized and less transparent ones.[167] For instance, when a scientific research

group proposes and undertakes a line of inquiry, their aims tend to be working and empirically

supported results which are replicable.[168,169,170] So, when they achieve such results and can

repeat them (- not replicate them), the general policy is that they can tentatively close their

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[165] For support for this claim, see such excellent research proposals for European Research Council grants as: Gaita 2015; Meyfroidt 2015; and Weigel, Roux, and Bergelson 2020.

[166] Spohn 2005 maintains that the practices in contemporary analytic philosophy are not different in kind to the those of the sciences. And, in one sense, I can agree. For instance, generally-speaking, the sciences and contemporary analytic philosophy both engage in inquiry: e.g. formulating and clarifying different distinctions, questions, answers, and arguments (or sets of them), and engaging in dialectic about those things. However, in their details, I would say that, given the available evidence, they clearly differ in both the extent to which they have divisions of labor and what sort of divisions of labor that they have. In a moment, I will also say why they differ as types of inquiry as well.

[167] Note: the "closure" of a dialectic is not to be confused with deductive closure.

[168] Again, see for example the research proposals from Gaita 2015; Meyfroidt 2015; and Weigel, Roux, and Bergelson 2020. Also, see philosophers of science and meta-scientists on the matter, including: Collins 1985; Atmanspacher and Maasen 2016; Munafò et al. 2017; and Vazire 2018, among others.

[169] Results can be anything from models, generalizations, positive evidence for hypotheses, countervailing evidence for hypotheses, observations, effective experimental interventions, failed or ineffective experimental interventions, and so on. By "working," I mean: results which can be used for some other valued purpose.

[170] Granted, there are issues (- some would even call it a "crisis") associated with whether scientists, in fact, replicate (or reproduce) their results - see for example: Baker 2016; Atmanspacher and Maasen 2016; and Vazire 2018. But, whether they in fact do or do not, it is at the very least accepted that productive or effective science requires replication (or reproducibility) - see for example: Collins 1985; Freedman et al. 2015; Atmanspacher and Maasen 2016; and Vazire 2018.

inquiry.[171]   Moreover, when it comes to dialectic with other scientists, there will be clear options as to how those other scientists can reasonably respond to any set of results: they can accept them, replicate them, reproduce them, or challenge them as a result of theoretical failings, failures of replication, or through countervailing empirical support.   Generally, if the challenge succeeds, then the results can be tentatively (or definitively) rejected; whereas if the challenge fails, then the results must be tentatively (or definitively) accepted.   And, if it is inconclusive whether the challenge succeeds or fails, then further research on the topic (that is, a new but related line of inquiry) will typically be called for.   Overall, though, the key to each of these steps is whether or not the results in question can pass both theoretical *and* empirical scrutiny and can do so continually.[172]

With philosophical research groups, on the other hand, the picture is much more vague. Even if specialist contemporary analytic philosophers are largely aiming for epistemic/rational goods like knowledge, rational acceptance, justified belief, understanding, and so on, the only "ground rules" that they appear to have are the following vague suggestions: accept the clearest and most informative formulations of different distinctions, questions, and answers, and accept the answers that are best supported by the available evidence/reasons.   In general, they do manage to come to certain closure points for the sake of publication, including: when they have

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[171] Following McArthur 2019, I take it that repeatability, unlike replicability and reproducibility, is when a research group or scientist can re-create their results with, more or less, the same kinds of means; replicability is when a *different* research group or scientist can re-create the original group or scientist's results with, more or less, the same kinds of means; and, reproducibility is when a *different* research group or scientist can re-create the original group or scientist's result by *different* means.

[172] Richard Dawid 2013 has cast doubt on whether empirical scrutiny is essential to proper scientific practice, using string theory as an example of a theory which is prevalent and accepted by some theoretical physicists, despite being beyond empirical scrutiny.   However, it is important to note that, because Dawid's doubt is based solely in one domain of science - namely, theoretical physics -, it is hard to see how this doubt might generalize to proper scientific practice.

arrived at clearer or more informative formulations of various distinctions, questions, answers, or arguments, and/or when they have formulated novel reasons, evidence, or arguments in defense of or as a challenge to such things. But, unlike the sciences, philosophical research groups tend to have only vague/idiosyncratic policies when it comes to what things count as good evidence/reasons/arguments, to what degree different types of evidence/reasons/arguments support their claims or conclusions, and how much support a claim or conclusion needs before the group and others are rationally obliged to accept it.[173] For instance, are Gettier cases good evidence/reasons/arguments to accept that knowledge is not justified true belief? Well, it turns out that this question is quite contentious - so, presumably, no definitive policy has been established.[174]

Relatedly, it is also not required nor always the case that specialist contemporary analytic philosophers' claims or conclusions are capable of going through empirical scrutiny of the sort that can be found in the sciences - and so, as a tentative (or definitive) closure point for dialectic, it has been negotiable. Of course, there are various theoretical criteria which can be applied from the armchair, including: internal consistency, consistency with scientific findings, consistency with one's intuitions, ontological simplicity, theoretical simplicity, fruitfulness, explanatory adequacy, palatable consequences, and so on. But, even with this strategy, there is ultimately no clear policy as to how to rationally weight these criteria and precisely how to use them to clearly adjudicate between different theories.[175] So, whether they are exchanging evidence/reasons/arguments for their claims/conclusions or scrutinizing their theories, it seems hard to accept that

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[173] Nicholas Rescher 1978 presents a similar point - except, he uses it to support a form of pluralism within the discipline.

[174] For more discussion on this question, see for example: Weatherson 2003; Nagel 2012 and 2013; Stich 2013; and Mizrahi 2016, among many others.

[175] For more discussion of this issue, see for example: Kuhn 1969; Lipton 1990; Popper 2002; and Ivanova 2010.

philosophical specialties or research groups tend to have as clear/transparent of tentative (or definitive) closure points for their dialectics as scientific ones.[176]

And so, altogether: although I can grant that, at first glance, contemporary analytic philosophy's specialities or research groups might seem as functionally integrated as scientific research groups, they are ultimately far from being so for the reasons that I have just specified. Accordingly, when it comes to the sort of collective epistemic/rational goods that Bird's Minimal Functional Account might pick out, they are simply not going to be available to specialists contemporary analytic philosophers. Nevertheless, even if those goods are beyond them, there are still the sorts of collective epistemic/rational goods which deflationary-like views pick out to consider as well.

6.4 Aggregating Collective Epistemic/Rational Goods on Deflationary Views

Again, when it comes to deflationary-like views, there are two sets of questions to consider: (1) given the dynamics between specialist contemporary analytic philosophers, to what sort of aggregative process can we appeal to for one or another version of Deflationary Epistemic Summativism or the Group Epistemic Agent Account, and (2) what constitutes a *significant* percentage of such philosophers when it comes to the possession or transferability of collective epistemic/rational goods on such accounts, and how might such groups vindicate such possession or transferability?

The first question is quite difficult. Nevertheless, given the nature of the discipline's specialities and the relations between its practitioners, it can at the very least be assumed that,

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[176] My preferred explanation for why they do not have clear closure points for their dialectics is because they disagree on the proper closure points. Again, a nearby thought can be found in Rescher 1978.

dynamics-wise, no particular member of a speciality is going to be privileged over all others in determining the specialty's attitudes or actions - which, as I have already mentioned, is just to say that these specialties are not dictatorial, in that they do not allow a single individual to dictate unilaterally their speciality's attitudes or actions. If anything, what can be said in terms of aggregative rules is that, in general, contemporary analytic philosophy does have *operative* members (or oligarchies) when it comes to certain questions - namely, the specialists on those questions. But, among those specialists, there are no dictators and no oligarchies, given the results about ordinary peer disagreement from Chapter 4. So, in other words, groups comprised of specialists are going to be egalitarian, in that each member has equal say when it comes to the speciality's attitudes or actions.

As for being able to determine, though, what any speciality's attitudes might be or whether it is rational, justified, or amounts to knowledge in virtue of its members' evidence/ reasons, this discussion is ultimately going to be quite limited, considering the information that we have available to us for both Deflationary Epistemic Summativism and Lackey's account.

Two things, in particular, come to mind when I think of Deflationary Epistemic Summativism accounts. Firstly, in the previous chapter, it was noted that some of the views on offer, including Christensen's conciliationism, Kelly's Total Evidence View, and Lackey's Justificationist View, are simply not going to be able to reveal all that much about the extent to which contemporary analytic philosophers or specialists might be rationally required to conciliate or whether it is rationally permissible for them to hold steadfast because no one is privy to what credences (or the extent of the preferences) such philosophers might have towards the views that they endorse. And, nothing has changed in this regard. So, by extension, no one

is going to have such information available to them for certain versions of Deflationary Epistemic Summativism - and, as a consequence, they are ultimately not going to be able to vindicate what the group's credences (or the extent of their preferences) might be as a result of any aggregation associated with something as fine-grained as such philosophers' individual credences (or the extent of their preferences). At best, they are only going to be able to vindicate some form of coarse-grained "majority-voting," be it for a majority or some sort of super-majority. In the next section, I will return to this point.

Secondly, though, when it comes to Lackey's Group Epistemic Agent Account, there is also a tough situation regarding what evidential/rational bases specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might have used in order to support their attitudes or claims. Simply put, there might be some instances where what sort of evidential/rational bases *they take themselves* to use can be pointed out, as in question 6A of Bourget and Chalmers's 2020 survey (about the responses to skepticism), or vague conceptions of what sorts of evidential/rational bases that they might have used might be available. But, when it comes the details of these bases, we are ultimately going to be at a loss for most of the surveys' questions. And, presumably, where there is significant disagreement, there is also likely to be differences in the evidential/rational bases of the philosophers involved. So, taking into consideration the account's requirements, it does not seem as if we are going to be able to vindicate substantive positions on either conditions (1b) or (2) of Lackey's account.

Of course, for both fine-grained Deflationary Epistemic Summativisms and Lackey's account, the necessary conditions might be met. But, again, meeting these conditions, without our being able to discern whether they are met, is ultimately not going to be informative for our

purposes. So, in response, I am only going to focus on the versions and aspects of these accounts with which I can work.

6.5 Quasi-Assimilation and Deflationary Collective Epistemic/Rational Goods

Our second question is: what constitutes a *significant* percentage of contemporary analytic philosophers or the relevant specialists when it comes to the possession or transferability of various collective epistemic/rational goods on such accounts, and how might such groups vindicate such possession or transferability? Overall, it almost goes without saying: this question is also quite difficult. But, because both accounts take it that a *significant* percentage of specialist contemporary analytic philosophers will *individually* have the rational acceptances, justified beliefs, or knowledge that p in order for the group to have such things as well, it seems to me that we can make some sense of where such a threshold might be. On a coarse-grained Deflationary Epistemic Summativism, the obvious options are going to be either some sort of majority or some sort of super-majority. But, when it comes to Lackey's view, she is less than explicit about what she has in mind. On the one hand, she claims in text that:

> What amounts to a significant percentage of operative members varies from group to group - it might be as small as a single dictatorial member, or as large as all of the members. But simply one or two members justifiedly believing a proposition in a fully democratic group of 50 is clearly not sufficient for the group to justifiedly believe this (Ibid.: 382).

But, on the other hand, she also offers the following in a footnote:

> As with other threshold notions in epistemology, such as "sufficient" justification for knowledge, there is room for disagreement over where on the scale the threshold is located for a "significant" percentage and how it comes to be there.

> Some will argue that contextualism is helpful here; others will take the threshold
>
> to be fixed by practical interests or by implicit social coordination (Ibid.: 382).

So, there are available options. And, they are compatible with coarse-grained Deflationary Epistemic Summativisms. But, at the same time, I take it that something more concrete is going to be needed for our discussion, given our asking whether or not contemporary analytic philosophers and the relevant specialists *actually achieve* some such significant percentages, despite their disagreement.

In general, the most principled threshold will be based on an unanimity rule because it will guarantee a group's possession of the relevant collective goods. But, then, the problem is that many, if not all, disciplines are going to be in trouble when it comes to the possession or transferability of any such goods, let alone their vindication. So, presumably, something else is going to be required. What I can defend is that, for both her account and a coarse-grained Deflationary Epistemic Summativism, an absolute majority is going to, at the very least, be required because of the considerations in Chapters 3 and 5 that I have offered surrounding Kelly's reading of Bourget and Chalmers's 2009 survey data (- namely, that oppositional coalitions cannot be arbitrarily discounted and must be "beaten," so to speak). But, even with that minimal requirement, there are still a number of possible thresholds which might apply for any particular collective epistemic/rational good. So, to narrow our focus even further, I suggest that we consider the epistemic and rational conditions that a group's members might need to meet, more generally, but also that we take into consideration - somewhat following Lackey - how these conditions might relate to the group's dynamics and inquiries.

Clearly, a group's "winning" members should, epistemically-speaking, have evidence/ reasons which are *strong enough* to support their respective epistemic/rational goods - so, perhaps, quite strong for individual knowledge (say, at least, as strong as to warrant 0.85 credence in the proposition under question) and less strong for individual rational acceptance or justified belief (say, at least, as strong as to warrant 0.51 credence in the proposition under question).[177] But, more controversially, I also think that, when it comes to collective knowledge or rational consensus, we should demand (pragmatically-speaking) that the "winning" members' evidence/reasons be *rationally persuasive enough* to generate as much agreement as is necessary among the group's members for the *rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation* of any opposing members' activities or attitudes.

As I envision it, quasi-assimilation amounts to a group's oppositional party being effectively discounted in "what is going on," so to speak, within the group, although they are still members of the group and acting of their own accord. So, for specialist contemporary analytic philosophers in an oppositional minority, I presume that they will continue to look for evidence/ reasons to support their own views, engage in dialectic with the "winning" party, maintain opposing beliefs or acceptances to their colleagues, and so on. For overall, the thought is that, although the opposing party will be acting of their own accord, they will no longer be doing so in such a way as to substantively influence "what is going on" within the group when it comes to

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[177] I am basing the first suggestion on my agreeing with Achinstein 1983 that one's evidence/reasons need to make a proposition more likely than not, but also that there needs to be an explanatory connection between that proposition and the evidence/reasons in order for the evidence/reasons to count as a reason to accept it or as justification to believe it. I am basing the second suggestion on my agreeing with various thinkers (e.g. Plato, Peirce, Williamson, and so on) that knowledge (and rational consensus) is more stable than both rational acceptance and justified belief and is, thus, going to require more support from the related reasons/evidence.

the group's primary purpose - that is, inquiring in order to achieve various epistemic/rational goods.

It occurs because, at some point, an opposing party's activities and attitudes no longer *bear systemic consequences* or no longer *evoke substantive attention* within the group in virtue of how minimal their presence is in comparison to the activities and attitudes of the group's other members. So, to illustrate, epistemologists are widely in agreement that idealism and skepticism are false (- given the 2020 survey data for epistemologists, 83% for non-skeptical realism). Nevertheless, there are some epistemologists who accept and defend idealism and skepticism (- given the 2020 survey data for epistemologists, 2.7% for idealism and 4.67% for skepticism). But, surely, the second party constitutes such a small percentage of epistemologists that, ultimately, their influence on "what is going on," inquiry-wise, among epistemologists is actually quite negligible. For instance, I take it that they have little to no effect on epistemologists' willingness to take it as common knowledge or as the rational consensus in their inquiries that idealism and skepticism are false, their willingness to claim that they collectively know or have a rational consensus that idealism and skepticism are false to each other and other disciplines, their willingness to take as closed dialectics which argue for or presume idealism or skepticism's truth, and so on. If anything, idealist or skeptical epistemologists might occasionally stand out for their novelty and their views might evoke some attention for historical reasons or out of curiosity - but, again, epistemologists, I take it, will inquire as if debates over idealism and skepticism are closed and, largely, as if proponents of those views, if ever encountered, are merely extending debate for exploratory reasons or, maybe, just for the sake of argument.

The trickier question, though, is not what is or why does quasi-assimilation occur, but rather *when* does it occur for any particular collective epistemic/rational good in the context of inquiry? The previous case is a plausible one where, I take it, quasi-assimilation has occurred for the possession/transferability of collective knowledge or the possession of a rational consensus in the context of inquiry. But, is it right to suggest that 83% agreement is necessary for it to occur for all collective epistemic/rational goods in such a context? It seems not. Because, although I can agree that it is sufficient for most collective goods in the context of inquiry, it still seems to be too stringent to be necessary, considering the sort of inquiry-based coordination which surrounds various other views below such a threshold. For instance, consider the question about whether or not *a priori* knowledge exists. Epistemologists seem to be in broad agreement that we have such knowledge and that it is based in some form of *a priori* justification (- given the 2020 survey data for epistemologists, 76% for *a priori* knowledge). Granted, some epistemologists do not accept that we have such knowledge or justification, or even that it exists (- given the 2020 survey data for epistemologists, 15.67% against such knowledge). Again, though, it appears that the second party constitutes such a minority that, in their inquiries, epistemologists will not refrain from relying upon the "a prioricity" of *a priori* justifications to defend their positions in dialectic, will not refrain from claiming such knowledge or rational consensus to others and other disciplines, will not refrain from investigating and debating the nature of such knowledge or justification, and so on.

And, further, I also think that a good case can be made for thinking that 76% is still too high a threshold in the context of inquiry for the possession/transferability of collective knowledge and rational consensus. Consider the question about whether or not to push a person

in the way of a train in order to save five lives. Applied and normative ethicists seem to substantively agree that we should not do so (- given the 2020 survey data for applied and normative ethicists, 61.7% and 65% for not pushing). Some of them disagree (- given the 2020 survey data for applied and normative ethicists, 18.9% and 20.5% for pushing, and 14.5% and 19% for other options). But, even with these numbers, it appears that the first party is large enough that, in their inquiries, applied and normative ethicists will generally take it as common knowledge or as the rational consensus that a good ethical theory will not suggest that we push the person to save lives, will claim to others or other disciplines that they collectively know or the rational consensus is that they should not adopt a theory which suggests as much, will take dialectics as closed with those who think that we should, and so on.

If anywhere, it seems that things start to break down - at least, for the possession/ transferability of collective knowledge and rational consensus in the context of inquiry - when we consider philosophers of mind on questions like: what is the nature of mind? Physicalists appear to have a supermajority in their favor (- given the 2020 survey data for philosophers of mind, 55.21% for physicalism). But, there are those who disagree (-given the 2020 survey data for philosophers of mind, 27.89% for non-physicalism, and 16.9% for other). And, in general, this question and related questions are still some of the most discussed and debated within the discipline.[178] So, in other words, these debates do not appear to be closed in the context of inquiry. If anything, they are quite open. And, moreover, evidence/reasons which are only rationally persuasive enough to garner 55.21% agreement do not appear to be strong enough for collective knowledge or a rational consensus - even in the context of inquiry - given how tenuous

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[178] For some evidence, see: PhilPapers>Philosophy of Mind>Philosophy of Consciousness.

such a supermajority appears to be. As we can see, only 5.22% of philosophers of mind need to change their minds in light of new evidence/reasons for non-physicalism (or evidence/reasons against physicalism) for physicalists to not only lose their supermajority, but also their majority. And, presumably, a group's possession of collective knowledge or a rational consensus will be fairly stable and generally capable of withstanding a substantive amount of further evidential/ rational scrutiny.   And so, unlike the specialists in the other cases, it does not appear as if physicalists have achieved sufficient agreement on the basis of their evidence/reasons for the rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation of their opposition.

But, that being said, perhaps, rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation is not required for philosophers of mind to be collectively justified (or rational) in believing (or accepting) physicalism, given physicalists' evidence/reasons and their agreement.   Justified belief (or rational acceptance) is not often associated with stability or the ability to withstand substantive further rational scrutiny, so much as treated as a qualified attitude that simply abides by the epistemic/rational quality of a related set of evidence/reasons. The qualification can come and go, depending on changes in the attitude's related set of evidence/reasons. And, in the case of groups, what will also presumably make a difference is in how much agreement is achieved on the basis of that set of evidence/reasons. But, as for what sort of threshold for agreement would apply for collective justified (or rational) belief (or acceptance), it seems hard to say - at least, without something like rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation to consider.   For instance, perhaps, it is sufficient that, individually, physicalists have strong enough evidence/reasons for their attitudes, and their evidence/reasons are rationally persuasive enough to achieve an absolute majority.   But, under these conditions, the opposition party appears to be straightforwardly

discounted, rather than quasi-assimilated. And, the question is: to what extent is this rationally legitimate? I think it is rationally permissible because of the underlying evidence/reasons. But, perhaps, as far as the analogy between individual and collective epistemic/rational goods go, collective justified beliefs (or rational acceptances) might simply push the analogy too far for some thinkers when the groups in question still have substantively engaged and obvious oppositional parties. And, perhaps, what we should focus on instead is something closer to Brian Hedden's (2018) suggestion - namely, to consider the group-level evidence/reasons of all philosophers of mind in order to consider what group attitudes they *ought to have*, rather than worry about whether or not they, in fact, have collective justified belief (or collective rational acceptance) in physicalism based on physicalists individually having strong enough evidence/ reasons for their view, and those sets of evidence/reasons being rationally persuasive enough to achieve an absolute majority (cf. Hedden 2018: 581-3). But, for our purposes, it will ultimately be sufficient to consider those collective epistemic/rational goods which, to all appearances, require quasi-assimilation - that is, collective knowledge or rational consensus.

And, for both of them, what is interesting is that, with various cases like the previous where there is less than 60% agreement on a particular view, quasi-assimilation also does not appear to occur. To illustrate, take two other instances. On the lower end, there are philosophers of mathematics on whether platonism (- given the 2020 survey data, 51.02%) or nominalism (24.49%) is true. And, on the upper end, there are philosophers of race, gender, and sexuality on whether gender is social (- given the 2020 survey data, 58.18%); other (40%); biological (1.82%); psychological (0%); or unreal (0%). Neither of these groups of specialists have moved on from these debates and are still currently having them, while also inquiring into the specifics

of the associated questions for the sake of such debate and not merely for the sake of argument or exploration.[179]   So, in other words, neither of these groups appear to act as if the oppositional parties' are absent. And thus, as it seems, more work is needed in order for rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation to occur.

And so, although we might be hard-pressed - like Lackey and others - to identify where exactly to place the threshold of agreement for various collective epistemic/rational goods, it does seem as if we can claim that, at the very least, 60% agreement is necessary in many cases for an opposition to be quasi-assimilated into a group - and perhaps, what we might also say is that these thresholds associated with quasi-assimilation are even necessary for groups to *possess* collective knowledge or to have achieved a rational consensus.

Of course, someone might worry that what I have suggested regarding rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation is simply that a supermajority of specialists is sufficient for a supermajority of specialists to be able to ignore minority inputs. But, in large part, such a worry misunderstands the spirit of the suggestion.   In the first place, the underlying thought is that generic claims about specialists are different from claims about supermajorities of specialists or most of them.   So, for instance, I take it that there is a difference between <epistemologists collectively know that skepticism is false> and <most or an 83% supermajority of epistemologists know that skepticism is false>. No doubt, the truth of the second claim will, sometimes, be sufficient to establish the truth of the first claim (if the underlying evidence/ reasons are also sufficient). But, I take it that, with claims like the first, there is more flexibility

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[179] For the philosophy of mathematics, see: PhilPapers>Science, Logic, and Mathematics>Philosophy of Mathematics>Ontology of Mathematics. And, for philosophers of race, gender, and sexuality, see: PhilPapers>Value Theory>Philosophy of Gender, Race, and Sexuality>Philosophy of Gender>Conceptions of Gender or Conceptions of Sex>The Sex/Gender Distinction.

in their truth conditions in different contexts, which will allow for statements like
<epistemologists collectively know that skepticism is false> to be true in the context of inquiry
and when other specialties ask about the views of epistemologists, even when many
epistemologists might disagree. And, overall, it is this sort of flexible generic reading that I am
associating with deflationary-like group phenomena and quasi-assimilation.[180] But, secondly, the
thought is not even that sufficient supermajorities for winning specialists are necessary so that
they can, rationally-speaking, legitimately *ignore* minority oppositions. Rather, it is that, because
minority oppositions will sometimes constitute such a minority, it is ultimately a natural
byproduct of their size that the winning parties will largely be unaware of and neither explicitly
nor implicitly directed towards "what is going on," inquiry-wise, within the minority opposition.
For instance, borrowing from the economics and sociological literature, quasi-assimilation might
simply be a natural by-product of a specialty's limited "organizational attention" when it comes
to all of its different lines of inquiry - that is, a speciality's being limited in its socially structured
patterns of attention which guide or direct its members towards different lines of inquiry (cf.
Ocasio 1997). If so, then, when it comes to the state or development of the specialty's group
dynamics, what I am discussing is something much more organic than just the winning party's
being rationally legitimate in *purposefully ignoring* the minority opposition(s). But, that being
said, a simple solution would be for all specialist contemporary analytic philosophers to come
together, rationally deliberate, and decide upon a threshold for when minority opposition's can be
taken to be legitimately quasi-assimilated, on the basis of the rational persuasiveness of a

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[180] For our purposes, I cannot unpack the intricacies of generics. But, in so far as I am appealing to them, I have
been relying upon Sterken 2015 for whom the quantificational force of generics varies with context and for whom
there is underdetermination with regard to this quantificational force. I accept both points.

winning party's evidence/reasons. However, given the size and the widely-dispersed state of the discipline as of now, what I am offering seems to be the best, if not only, alternative.

Still, someone else might object that quasi-assimilation is simply not a good indicator of when collective knowledge or a rational consensus are possessed because, as the previous paragraph just mentioned, it might be based on such extraneous factors as when most specialists no longer want to inquire into other views, when they are fed up with dialectic with their opponents, or even when they are willing to express their prejudices.[181] But, as I have already hinted at earlier in this section, if specialist contemporary analytic philosophers are genuinely considering the available evidence/reasons within their groups, *as they should be* (epistemically- and institutionally-speaking), then presumably a winning party will also be able to *vindicate* both the quasi-assimilation that has occurred within their group, as well as their purported possession of the collective epistemic/rational goods in question. For, as I have already suggested, such parties should - at least, pragmatically-speaking - be able to tie the extent of their agreement to how rationally persuasive they have found their own evidence/reasons to be and how rationally persuasive they have found an opposition's evidence/reasons to be. And, because their (that is, the winning party's) evidence/reasons were so rationally persuasive as to win a substantive enough majority to result in quasi-assimilation, then presumably they can also appeal to the very same evidence/reasons for why the quasi-assimilation is rationally legitimate and why they are in possession of collective knowledge or a rational consensus and can transfer their findings.

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[181] For instance, perhaps, some specialists are quasi-assimilated on the basis of their colleagues' wanting to silence them for being a member of another identity group. If so, then such quasi-assimilation is clearly going to be unwarranted and will amount to an epistemic injustice - more specifically, as Miranda Fricker (2007) identifies, it will be a form of testimonial injustice. Except, rather than occurring between two speakers or individuals, it will be an injustice that is committed at a group level towards a subset of the group.

Otherwise, I can agree: the opposition party's quasi-assimilation will have occurred for no good reason and will be rationally illegitimate.

Further still, someone else might have a related worry that, given the examples from contemporary analytic philosophy that I have highlighted, it is ultimately not clear whether or not quasi-assimilation has occurred as a result of rational persuasion, rather than the sorts of illegitimate motivations that I have pointed out in the previous paragraph. And, in response, I must admit: yes, it is not exactly clear whether or not those examples are genuine ones of rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation. But, in so far as I am speculating on what sort of threshold *might work* for the sorts of collective epistemic or rational goods that contemporary analytic philosophers might purport to have and I am regarding such philosophers charitably (as I have tried to do throughout this study), I do not think that what I have been suggesting is particularly vulnerable to this sort of objection. Three responses come to mind. In the first place, if more clear-cut examples of rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation can be found, then presumably those examples will require more agreement, rather than less, because it is only with more agreement that quasi-assimilation will be less likely to discount various members of a group illegitimately. Secondly, I have also been presupposing - out of good faith - that specialist contemporary analytic philosophers are primarily motivated by the evidence/reasons for a view, rather than biases, prejudices, or deficiencies in their willingness to inquire properly.[182] And lastly, it also almost goes without saying: with a lower threshold, there is also a greater chance

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[182] Importantly, I do not deny that it is a live possibility that specialist contemporary analytic philosophers are primarily motivated by the second sorts of things. But, again, if such things do, in fact, best explain the ordinary peer disagreement among specialists, then I take it that there is a great deal more for the discipline to potentially worry about and do in order to correct its course than what I have to offer in this study - for instance, perhaps, specialists need to be better trained or better norms need to be implemented which will make any display of such things more censurable.

for specialists to possess, transfer, and vindicate the sorts of collective epistemic/rational goods that they might seek. And, surely, such a consequence is a welcome one for them, even though I can readily agree that higher thresholds are likely called for (as, for instance, Chalmers will seem to suggest in Chapter 7).

And so, again, although we might be hard-pressed to find a stable, catch-all threshold, there is something with which we might be able to work for our discussion. For, as I envision it, rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation seems to be enough of a working indicator for when possession and transferability might be achieved for, at the very least, collective knowledge or a rational consensus, but also enough of a working indication for when a group has rationally persuasive enough evidence/reasons to vindicate such possession and transferability as well. If so, then it would appear, considering the sorts of examples that I have brought up in this section and how I am regarding contemporary analytic philosophers, as if something like 60% agreement can be a working minimum for the sorts of collective goods with which Chapter 7 is going to be preoccupied.[183],[184] But, all else aside, such a threshold should at the very least be a charitable one where contemporary analytic philosophers (and other inquirers as well) might stand some chance of achieving the possession, transferability, and vindication of some of the sorts of collective goods that they might seek.

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[183] Interestingly, Goldman 2014 uses 60% as an illustrative threshold for justified group belief - but, he does not commit to its being correct or not.

[184] Perhaps, someone might want to claim that, given what I have suggested in this section, I have fallen prey to a methodological inconsistency. In Chapter 3, I pointed out that we should not rely on anecdotal evidence in order to make general sociological claims about contemporary analytic philosophers - and, just now, I have been relying on general sociological claims about the status of contemporary analytic philosophers' dialectics and inquiries. However, note: I have especially disparaged anecdotal evidence when it is taken to defeat or compete with claims based on empirically and sociologically-informed methods and evidence (which are not available for the previous discussion) and when the question under discussion is clearly an empirical one (which does not appear to be the case for the previous discussion).

6.6 Conclusion

At this point, we can now add on two more conclusions for the sake of our discussion. The first is that collective epistemic/rational goods like those on Bird's Minimal Functional Account - namely, inflationary-like ones - are not going to be available to specialist contemporary analytic philosophers because such philosophers, whether they are acting in a speciality or in a philosophical research group, are not nearly as functionally integrated as scientific research groups (for the reasons that I pointed out in section 6.3) and are, thus, not functionally integrated enough to fulfill Bird's account. And, as we have seen in the previous section, the second conclusion is that, if such philosophers are going to possess and be able to transfer and vindicate collective knowledge or a rational consensus, then as it seems the specialties' "winning" party must have a supermajority of 60% due to rational persuasion and can, thus, legitimately quasi-assimilate any and all "opposing" parties. Between these two conclusions, then, we can now look back to the findings from Chapter 3 and to Appendix 2 in order see to what extent rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation may have occurred in various specialties. And overall, what I find is that the available data appears to provide good reason to accept that, among specialists in general and for many of the specialties within contemporary analytic philosophy, numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement does, in fact, exist - and, to all appearances, this disagreement is also sufficient to warrant worry about the extent to which rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation has not occurred among specialists regarding a number of their questions. Here are the specifics.

Among aestheticians, only one question is relevant, and its winning view does not have sufficient agreement for quasi-assimilation. Among decision theorists, only one question is relevant, and its winning view has sufficient agreement for quasi-assimilation. Among general philosophers of science, two questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has sufficient agreement. Among logicians and philosophers of logic, three questions are relevant, and none of them have winning views with sufficient agreement for quasi-assimilation. Among epistemologists, six questions are relevant, and two of them have winning views with sufficient agreement for quasi-assimilation. Among meta-ethicists, five questions are relevant, and three of them have winning views with sufficient agreement. Among normative ethicists, five questions are relevant, and three of them have winning views with sufficient agreement. Among philosophers of mathematics, two questions are relevant, and neither of their winning views have sufficient agreement. Among philosophers of race, gender, and sexuality, two questions are relevant, and one of them has a winning view with sufficient agreement. Among philosophers of action, one question is relevant, and its winning view does not have sufficient agreement. Among philosophers of physical science, three questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has sufficient agreement. Among philosophers of religion, two questions are relevant, and both of them have winning views with sufficient agreement - but, the god question's winning view (theism 68.79%) substantively conflicts with metaphysicians (winning view: atheism 61.35%) and, for the meaning of life question, social and political philosophers (winning view: subjective 33.45%) and meta-ethicists (winning view: other 37.16%) also disagree substantively with philosophers of religion (objective 65.71%). Among social and political philosophers, five questions are relevant, and one question's winning view has sufficient

agreement. Among meta-philosophers, eleven questions are relevant, and two of their winning views have sufficient agreement. Among metaphysicians, twelve questions are relevant, and three of them have winning views with sufficient agreement - although one of them (atheism 61.35%) substantively conflicts with philosophers of religion (theism 68.79%) on the existence of a god. Among philosophers of language, five questions are relevant, and two of them have winning views with sufficient agreement. Among philosophers of mind, four questions are relevant, and none of them have winning views with sufficient agreement. And, lastly, among applied ethicists, seven questions are relevant, and three of them have winning views with sufficient agreement for quasi-assimilation.

And so, turning to Chapter 7, what might these findings suggest about the possession, transferability, and vindication of the collective knowledge or the rational consensuses that specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might (and, as will be seen, should) seek?

7

Where Might the Worry Reasonably Lie - in Collective Epistemic/Rational Goods?

7.1 Introduction

Having established in the previous chapter what might be required in order for specialist contemporary analytic philosophers to possess, transfer, and vindicate the collective knowledge or rational consensuses that they might seek, I am now in a position to discuss what sorts of worries might arise for those things as a result of the ordinary peer disagreement that their specialities display.

Again, as I have already stated in previous chapters, I am going to focus on two sorts of worries: one which has been posed by David Chalmers (2015), and another which can be found in such authors as Ernest Sosa (2011), Richard Fumerton (2011), and Hilary Kornblith (2013). In brief, the first worry concerns specialist contemporary analytic philosophers' ability to

possess, transfer, and vindicate collective knowledge or rational consensuses, while the second concerns their collective reliability and their collective credibility as a group in the eyes of observers. On the one hand, I am going to discuss these worries as the literature has presented them. But, on the other hand, I am also going to attempt to address them according to the pragmatic perspective that I have maintained throughout this study. Ultimately, what I am going to find is that neither of these sorts of worries are readily overcome.

7.2 Chalmers's Worry About Collective Knowledge

Going in order, the first sort of worry that I want to discuss is one which is explicit in Chalmers's (2015) paper, "Why Isn't There More Progress in Philosophy?" However, before I discuss it, let me begin with a disclaimer about his interests in this paper: he discusses disagreement, but his primary interest is in progress, as his abstract shows:

> Is there progress in philosophy? A glass-half-full view is that there is some progress in philosophy. A glass-half-empty view is that there is not as much as we would like. I articulate a version of the glass-half-empty view, argue for it, and then address the crucial question of what explains it (Chalmers 2015: Abstract).

So, where does disagreement come in?

For Chalmers, agreement/disagreement is tied to progress since, as he conceives of it, progress in cognitive disciplines (like the sciences and contemporary analytic philosophy) requires that those disciplines' practitioners be able to largely (or increasingly) collectively agree

upon the right (or best) answers to the big questions that they ask.[185],[186]   The source of this

conception appears to be an implicit, analogical argument which is similar to one that can be

found in Kornblith (2013):

(1) Progress in the natural and formal sciences is evident in their practitioners'
ability to largely (or increasingly) collectively agree upon the right (or best)
answers to the big questions that they ask.

(2) Contemporary analytic philosophy is relevantly similar to those sciences
when it comes to what is required for progress (because the former and latter
are both cognitive disciplines).

(3) If (1) and (2) are right, then contemporary analytic philosophy's progress
should also be evident in such things as described in (1) as well.

(4) So, contemporary analytic philosophy's progress should also be evident in its
practitioners' ability to largely (or increasingly) collectively agree upon the
right (or best) answers to the big questions that they ask (cf. Chalmers 2015:
4-7).

But, as Bourget and Chalmers's findings in Chapter 3 and Appendix 1 and 2 are supposed to

make clear, the problem is that there is numerically significant, widespread, and genuine

disagreement among specialist contemporary analytic philosophers which appears to put various

collective epistemic/rational goods at stake - and, by extension, the progress of the discipline as

well.

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[185] As I understand Chalmers, cognitive disciplines are those which prioritize or only have cognitive aims - e.g.
knowledge, justified true belief, and so on. And, they are to be contrasted (although they might overlap) with
pragmatic disciplines which prioritize or only have pragmatic aims - e.g. well being, solidarity, justice, prediction,
retrodiction, and so on.

[186] Chalmers defines progress as "large (or increasing) collective convergence on the truth" (Chalmers 2015: 5-6).
However, to keep things simple, I have presented that definition in terms of collective agreement/disagreement,
which corresponds to his own explication of collective convergence.

So, with an eye to disagreement, he offers two worries. From an observer's perspective, he worries that:

> If a community of experts on a question has serious disagreement over the answer to that question, then that community cannot be said to collectively know the answer to that question, and nor can the broader community of which they are a part (ibid.: 15).

But, for this section, I am going to focus solely on his worry concerning the disagreeing participants' perspectives (in the next section, I will discuss the first sort of worry). Here is what he suggests about participants:

> It is highly plausible that the kind of disagreement that we observe over the answers to the big questions of philosophy suffices to undermine any claims of collective knowledge of the answers to most of those questions (ibid.: 15).

And, as for why those things should be worrying, he claims it is because:

> …We value collective knowledge. One reason that the progress of the hard sciences has been so impressive is that it has plausibly enabled us - the community of inquirers - to collectively know the answers to those questions. But in the absence of sufficient agreement on the answers to philosophical questions, we cannot be said to have collective knowledge of those answers (ibid.: 15).

And, overall, Chalmers might be right that inquirers value collective knowledge (henceforth, the "Collective-Value" claim), and that the ability to possess, claim, or be ascribed such knowledge (or other collective epistemic/rational goods) can be undercut by numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement (henceforth, the "Collective-Undercut" claim). But, what is not evident is how exactly Collective-Value and Collective-Undercut are supposed to be understood individually, how they fit together, and whether Chalmers has sufficient support for

them. For one thing, there is clearly a distinction between valuing the possession/transferability of collective knowledge and valuing the ability to vindicate it - so, by "claims of collective knowledge," being "said to have collective knowledge," and being "enabled to collectively know," is it possession/transferability or vindication that is being valued? Secondly, Chalmers does not have an explicit explanation of how disagreement can undermine the possession, transferability, or vindication of collective knowledge - so, what sort of story might he be able to tell? And, lastly, his support for those claims mostly rely on impressions.[187] So, although he does provide the ingredients for why the disagreement among specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might be worrying, there are still some noticeable gaps to be filled in.

Fortunately, though, the discussions from previous chapters - especially, Chapter 6 - can help in all of those regards and can also, subsequently, help us to better assess whether or not Chalmers's worry does, in fact, end up being substantive for the discipline.

7.2.1 Chalmers's Collective-Value Claim

Starting on the Collective-Value claim, Chalmers appears to have something particular in mind when he talks about "collective knowledge" and "valuing" it. However, given his space-constraints and the brevity of his statements, it is ultimately less than clear what exactly he means by those things and, by extension, what aspects of such knowledge he thinks the extant disagreement within the discipline might be able to undercut. Nevertheless, based on Chapters 2 and 6, good cases can be made for why he is thinking of a deflationary conception of collective knowledge, but also why he and other contemporary analytic philosophers should

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[187] The two passages that I have just presented are pretty much the whole of what Chalmers provides to make his point.

(pragmatically-speaking) value the possession, transferability, *and* vindication of such knowledge.

When it comes to the sort of collective knowledge that he has in mind, recall that, in Chapter 6, I have already offered several reasons for why specialist contemporary analytic philosophers are currently incapable of satisfying inflationary accounts - that is, accounts which do not have it that the individuals within a group must possess an attitude in order for the group to collectively possess it as well. Again, taking Bird's (2010) Minimal Functional Account as a baseline, I noted that, in comparison to scientific research groups, specialist contemporary analytic philosophers lacked sufficient functional integration for inflationary-like collective epistemic/rational goods. And, because Bird's account is by far the most minimal sort available, I also noted that such philosophers are not going to be able to satisfy any nearby inflationary accounts either. So, if Chalmers happens to have one or another inflationary account in mind, then he will ultimately have to reckon with the reasons that I provided in Chapter 6 against specialist contemporary analytic philosophers being able to satisfy them.

Deflationary accounts were also discussed, though, including varieties of Deflationary Epistemic Summativism (which could either be coarse-grained or fine-grained), as well as Lackey's Group Epistemic Agent Account. And, as we saw, both sorts of accounts required that a significant percentage of a group's individuals must possess an attitude in order for the group to collectively possess that attitude as well. Now, consider the following quotation from Chalmers:

> … Of course, one can argue over just what degree and pattern of agreement is
> required for collective knowledge. But it is highly plausible that the kind of
> disagreement that we observe over the answers to the big questions of
> philosophy suffices to undermine any claims of collective knowledge of the

answers to most of those questions. Perhaps one could argue that in the survey above, a few views (non-skeptical realism about the external world [82%], atheism [73%], a priori knowledge [71%]) display the sort of consensus that allows collective knowledge. But even that claim would be bold, and the extension to claims with less consensus (physicalism [57%] and compatibilism [59%], say) seems so bold as to be implausible (ibid.: 15).

Quite clearly, we can see Chalmers assessing the plausibility of claiming collective knowledge for several questions from the 2009 survey. But, for our purposes, what is important is that he is taking consensus as necessary for collective knowledge to be possessed and legitimately claimed - and so, presumably, in so far as he is treating consensus ordinarily, he is also requiring that a significant percentage of contemporary analytic philosophers must agree in order for consensus to be achieved. So, Chalmers must have some sort of deflationary account in mind. And, although he is not specific about which sort, it is enough for our purposes to recognize that, in addition to requiring certain epistemic standings, Chalmers also accepts that a significant percentage of a group's individuals must agree in order for the group to possess collective knowledge.

Still, accepting that he has some of deflationary account of collective knowledge in mind, the other big question is: what does he mean by our "valuing" it? Does he mean that we value the possession of collective knowledge? Its transferability? Its vindication? Or, some combination of them? Each interpretation will require Chalmers to commit to different things, in virtue of what he has written. But, largely, it is not clear which of those interpretations he prefers and what other commitments he will need to and might be willing to accept in order to accommodate it. For instance, if, by "cannot be said to collectively know" or "suffices to

undermine any claims of collective knowledge," what he means is that the extant disagreement within the discipline is only sufficient to undercut the possession of collective knowledge and that is what we value about such knowledge, then perhaps what he might say in explanation is that he accepts a truth norm of assertion and, in virtue of disagreement's undercutting the possession of collective knowledge, it will thereby render us incapable of rationally claiming or ascribing such knowledge in accordance with such a norm.[188],[189] But, perhaps, he has something completely different in mind.   Again, the previous explanation is just one of a number of different ones that he might accept, given a particular interpretation of "valuing."   But, with so many interpretations on the table, I doubt that we will be able to find the right one merely by guessing.

And besides, regardless of which interpretation he chooses, his support for the Collective-Value claim is only an explanation of how it could be true - not whether it is true.   For, just consider: what we are provided is a partial explanation of why progress in the sciences has been so impressive - namely, because it has enabled the community of inquirers to collectively know the answers to scientific questions.[190]   But clearly, whether or not that explanation is correct, it ultimately does not tell us how many and which inquirers find the progress in the sciences impressive. It seems to simply take for granted that all or most of them do.

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[188] For a truth norm of assertion, I am thinking: Assert <We collectively know that p> if and only if <We collectively know that p> is true. For discussion and defense of such a norm, see for example: Weiner 2005; and Whiting 2015.

[189] But, then again, maybe he values the possession and vindication of collective knowledge and accepts an internalist-friendly justification norm of assertion. So, maybe, he accepts: Assert <we collectively know that p> if and only if one is justified in believing that <we collectively know that p>. Or, alternatively, maybe he accepts something like the following: Assert <we collectively know that p> if and only if one is capable of providing adequate grounds for the truth of that statement, in response to any appropriate challenge, or (when appropriate) can defer this responsibility to another asserter on whose testimony one is relying; otherwise, withdraw that assertion. For discussion and defense of similar norms, see for example: Brandom 1994; Lackey 2007; Macfarlane 2011; Gerken 2014; and McKinnon 2015.

[190] The arguments to follow will hold regardless of which aspect of collective knowledge Chalmers thinks is valued.

Moreover, even if inquirers widely value the collective knowledge provided by the sciences, the same might not be true of contemporary analytic philosophy. For instance, without any evidence to the contrary, it might very well be the case that inquirers only value the first because mentioning it in their work increases the likelihood of their being cited in scientific journals. Or, even worse, perhaps they only value it because they believe that mentioning it in conversation with other inquirers or citing scientific work will make them seem more scientifically informed and, as a result, more dominant on the intellectual pecking-order. But, if either of those things (or anything like them) is true, then contemporary analytic philosophy does not seem to have all that much to offer - for, what reason do we have to think that, by mentioning the collective knowledge of contemporary analytic philosophy, inquirers' odds will go up of being cited in scientific journals or that inquirers will seem more scientifically informed to other inquirers? It does not look like we have any such reason. And, to make matters worse, it also does not seem like we currently have anything at our disposal, evidentially-speaking, which will allow us to establish whether and how many inquirers, in fact, value contemporary analytic philosophy's collective knowledge, if they do at all

But, that being said, I agree with the spirit of what Chalmers has written. The only difference is that, whereas he suspects that all or most inquirers find collective knowledge *of any sort* valuable, I find it more plausible to simply suggest that contemporary analytic philosophers, in particular, should - pragmatically-speaking - value the possession, transferability, and vindication of collective knowledge (or rational consensus) for the sake of their discipline.

7.2.2 A Pragmatic Collective-Value Claim

Modification-wise, all that I am proposing is that we simply restrict the scope of Chalmers's claim to just contemporary analytic philosophers and the possession, transferability, and vindication of *their own* collective knowledge (or rational consensus). But, more importantly, what I am suggesting is that, in so far as individuals sincerely identify as contemporary analytic philosophers, there are good pragmatic reasons for why they *should* value the possession, transferability, and vindication of such knowledge (and nearby rational goods). Primarily, two reasons come to mind.

Firstly, in so far as individuals sincerely identify as contemporary analytic philosophers, I take it that they *should* value their discipline as an autonomous, independent, and resource-worthy research-producing one - otherwise, how could they sincerely identify as contemporary analytic philosophers?[191] But, further, if they should value their discipline in such a way, then pragmatically-speaking they should also value the possession, transferability, and the vindication of various collective epistemic/rational goods for their discipline (or speciality), in addition to various individual ones for themselves. Here is why.

As I have already discussed in Chapter 5, non-expert observers are not always (- perhaps, even not often) going to be able to look to disagreeing contemporary analytic philosophers and, subsequently, be able to rationally discern what to accept - especially, when those philosophers happen to be engaging in ordinary peer disagreement. But, when there is a rational (- that is, a reasons-based and stable) consensus or vindicated *collective* knowledge behind such

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[191] I take this "should" to be determined by the responsibilities that contemporary analytic philosophers have to the survival and well-being of their discipline. I am assuming that contemporary analytic philosophers have such responsibilities and, broadly, abide by them.

disagreement, there is often good enough reason for such an observer (and, perhaps, they will even be inclined) to accept whatever has been vindicated or born out by the available reasons and to disregard the disagreement in front of them. So, for instance, regardless of the fact that Larry Laudan (1977; and 1981) accepts a form of scientific anti-realism and disagrees with Stathis Psillos (1999), who accepts scientific realism, it seems right that a novice observer to such disagreement should accept scientific realism - in alignment with Psillos - because charitably the rational consensus among general philosophers of science (61%), philosophers of physical science (70.77%), and metaphysicians (78.24%) is that scientific realism is most likely to be true. However, clearly, if no such consensus were behind their disagreement, then it would be much harder, if not impossible, for a novice observer to non-arbitrarily decide between them.

Now, imagine this situation for observers at the level of the discipline (or a speciality). Easily, it seems observers might wonder (and have wondered): what good is a discipline (or speciality) which has not achieved all that much collective knowledge or rational consensus and cannot transfer/vindicate the related information (or their byproducts) to/for us? And easily, as this line of thought/questioning might go, it can end up resulting in the conclusion that such a discipline should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) not be afforded (at least, as much) autonomy, independence, or resources as a research-producing one and should perhaps, instead, be subsumed into the topic-related disciplines which they can understand best and, maybe, benefit most - so, philosophers of science with science departments or projects, philosophers of mathematics with mathematics departments or projects, philosophers of mind with cognitive science/neuroscience departments or projects, and so on.

Of course, some contemporary analytic philosophers might claim that their independence, autonomy, and resources should be granted, at least, on the basis of their ability to teach critical thinking (- clear reading, logical analysis, or other such things). But, there are ultimately several obvious reasons for why this sort of response falls short.[192] For one thing, critical thinking is not solely the remit of contemporary analytic philosophers. And, even if it were, resorting to this sort of response would still be insufficient to sure up the autonomy, independence, and resources of the discipline when it comes to its research. Someone could easily respond: why do universities even need to have philosophy departments or produce philosophical journals at all, then? Why not simply have a handful of contemporary analytic philosophers teach critical thinking (- clear reading, logical analysis, or so on) in the topic-related disciplines that they can understand best and, maybe, benefit? And ultimately, in response to these sorts of rejoinders, it seems to me that the best and, perhaps, only convincing response that such philosophers might be able to give is that they do, in fact, possess collective knowledge or rational consensuses and can vindicate them - and, based on those things, can also transfer intellectually or pragmatically valuable results to novice observers in either other disciplines or outside of academia altogether. But, this reason primarily focuses on novice observers of the discipline.

My second reason primarily focuses on the discipline's participants. Recalling an aspect of Chapter 6, my thought is that, in so far as individuals sincerely identify as contemporary analytic philosophers, they are by default collaborative inquirers and, consequently, should value the *collective closure* (- be it tentative or definitive) of their inquiries - otherwise, in what sense are they a part of the discipline? But further, if they should value the collective closure of their

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[192] Many philosophy department websites have used this sort of response as a selling point for the discipline and, in light of the claim that I am making here, many colleagues have also resorted to it.

inquiries, then pragmatically speaking they should also value the possession, transferability, and the vindication of collective knowledge or rational consensuses, and perhaps, even collective certainty. For, as I have already pointed out in Chapter 6, collective closure within scientific inquiry sets it apart from inquiry within contemporary analytic philosophy in the extent to which it is much clearer regarding what is required in order for its inquiries and, in particular, its dialectics to be closed. And, as far as I can tell, there is an obvious benefit to scientists, as well as contemporary analytic philosophers, in being able to collectively close their inquiries - namely, that it allows them to establish common knowledge or ground with one another which can, thereafter, be used to base their expectations of one another and, if done well, expedite their other inquiries, as well as generate progress in "Inquiry" for their discipline as a whole.[193],[194]

So, for instance, I take it that contemporary analytic philosophers collectively know (or have a rational consensus) and can vindicate: that the unrestricted axiom of comprehension results in inconsistency, that varieties of the Liar Paradox plague standard conceptions of the truth predicate, that knowledge is factive, and other such claims. Accordingly, I also take it that, in virtue of their possessing and being able to vindicate such knowledge, they will also be able to reasonably expect that, without a defense, they can individually and reasonably accept or forward among each other and to others such knowledge. And, even further, I also take it that, given the collaborative nature of their discipline, they will also be able to reasonably start their individual or speciality inquiries with those pieces of knowledge as common knowledge or ground, without having to establish them "from scratch," so to speak. If correct, then

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[193] For further discussion of this connection and what exactly common knowledge or ground amounts to, see for example such classic texts as: Lewis 1969; Ullmann-Margalit 1977; and Bicchieri 1993, among others.

[194] As I have already noted in Chapter 2, I am emphasizing "Inquiry" because, in the sense that I intend it, it is the sum of all particular inquiries.

individually, by not having to start from scratch for each of their inquiries, they will be able to save themselves from some amount of work in trying to produce newer results. But, collectively and more importantly, by coming to common knowledge or ground, the discipline as a whole will also be that much further along in "Inquiry," as Chalmers has already made salient for one conception of progress: the discipline's convergence on the truth. So, in so far as they value, *as they should*, less work, the potential for newer results which are not born of epistemic or rational sin, and any sort of progress within their discipline as a whole, it seems obvious that contemporary analytic philosophers should not only value the collective closure of their inquiries, but also the possession, transferability, and vindication of the collective epistemic/ rational goods which are capable of actualizing such closure.

Of course, for some inquirers, their motto might be: all inquiry must start from scratch and proceed individually. But, in large part, I find it hard to appreciate such a motto. For instance, I wonder: what is the starting point of all inquiry - that is, what is scratch? Is it immediate experience? The concrete problems that we recognize in our everyday lives? Common sense? Or, is it perhaps an indubitable claim? Also, in what sense is it necessary for all inquiry to start from scratch? Is it rationally required, epistemically-speaking? Is it our only option, metaphysically-speaking? Is it rationally required, pragmatically-speaking? Or, is something else underlying this claim? And, as for proceeding individually, how might we even do so, without relying upon some aspect of another's work (- for example, their distinctions, their questions, their arguments, or their conclusions)? And, of course, for any answer that we might accept to any of those questions, there is still the further question of: why? So, to all appearances when it comes to the "proper" starting point of any inquiry, there are still substantively open

questions and debates surrounding this topic - hence, perhaps, why it seems permissible for philosophers to simply choose a starting point and to proceed accordingly, so long as they are clear about what it is. And further, in so far as human inquirers are fallible, limited in their time and energy, and working in collaborative contexts, I take it that we can reasonably expect that no philosopher can or has inquired without relying upon some aspect of another thinker's work.

And so, considering these two reasons, it seems to me that:

(Pragmatic Collective-Value): In so far as individuals sincerely identify as contemporary analytic philosophers, they should - pragmatically-speaking - value the possession, transferability, and vindication of collective knowledge (or rational consensuses) for the sake of their discipline.

And, broadly speaking, I think that Chalmers would agree with this claim, as well as a number of other contemporary analytic philosophers.

7.2.3 Chalmers's Collective-Undercut Claim

And so, having arrived at more stable ground - namely, the Pragmatic Collective-Value claim -, the next set of questions to consider are about Chalmers's Collective-Undercut claim: how might we understand it and, more importantly, to what extent might the extant disagreement among specialist contemporary analytic philosophers, in fact, undercut the collective knowledge or rational consensus that they *should* (at least, pragmatically-speaking) seek?

Going in order, the sole issue with understanding the Collective-Undercut claim appears to be the number of substantial questions that Chalmers has left open regarding how much and what patterns of disagreement are sufficient to undercut various collective epistemic/rational goods and why. Essentially, what we have at our disposal are (1) a passing statement from him

which notes that the power dynamics within groups might affect what collective epistemic or rational goods they might be able to possess, transfer, and vindicate, and (2) his statement from sub-section 7.2.1 about contemporary analytic philosophy's own predicament based on the 2009 survey results. And, off-hand, it might very well be the case that many thinkers agree with Chalmers's impressions. But, there are those who have disagreed. Herman Cappelen (2017), for instance, has not had the same impressions and has even challenged them - and, moreover, there might even be some general hesitation as to what to make of Chalmers's claims, given the fact that he has not offered any explanation of them. However, given some of the conclusions that I have drawn in Chapters 4 and 6, I think that more can be said in response to both sorts of worries, on his behalf.

For one thing, as far as group dynamics go, recall that I have made several points related to this topic. Firstly, in Chapter 4, I noted that, in so far as the respondents to Bourget and Chalmers's surveys were only in a position, rationally-speaking, to recognize each other as roughly broad epistemic peers and as engaging in a slightly modified version of what Jennifer Lackey (2010) called "ordinary peer disagreement" - that is, disagreement which is genuine, between individuals who are aware that they disagree, and, prior to that awareness, were unaware of any good reason to deny - or, alternatively, were aware that, by their own rational lights, they had good overall reason to accept - that they are roughly broad epistemic peers regarding the sorts of questions that they have considered. And, it was, then, in virtue of my concluding that contemporary analytic philosophers are engaging in ordinary peer disagreement in the context of Bourget and Chalmers's surveys that I thereafter came to two further conclusions in Chapter 6. On the one hand, in light of Bryan Frances's (2017) apt point about

specialization among such philosophers, I concluded that the discipline is, broadly speaking, oligarchic on the basis of specialization - so, when particular questions are considered, the thought is that both practitioners and non-practitioners should look to those who specialize on those questions for the correct answers. But, on the other hand, I also noted that, although the discipline is oligarchic in this way, specialists can be treated as *egalitarian* among each other in the context of Bourget and Chalmers's surveys, seeing as they are engaging in ordinary peer disagreement when it comes to their specialities' questions. So, by "egalitarian," the thought is that, when asked about a question from their speciality, specialists will ultimately have equal say when it comes to the correct answer to that question. And, overall, these conclusions seemed to align with the fact that, as far as contemporary analytic philosophers appear to be concerned, neither the discipline nor its specialties are governed by dictators - so, in other words, it aligned with the fact that no one within the discipline nor anyone in its specialties can unilaterally dictate the attitudes or claims of those groups.

And so, thinking back to Chalmers's note about the power dynamics within groups, I think that it is safe to say that, by and large, the dynamics of the discipline's specialties - but not the discipline as whole - allow for the *sorts* of impressions to which Chalmers appeals. But, whereas previously he based his impressions on the 2009 survey data associated with the general population, it now only seems right that he should focus on the speciality data from the 2020 survey instead. Without issue, we can simply transfer *the lessons* of his previous impressions based on the 2009 survey data over to the later set of data from 2020 - which, to recall, are that over 70% agreement in favor of a view appears to be plausible, but bold, as a threshold for the consensus needed to possess, transfer, and vindicate *collective knowledge*, while under 60%

agreement appears to be so bold as to be implausible. But, of course, we still have to consider: are these impressions correct and can Chalmers base his Collective-Undercut claim in them?

Again, Herman Cappelen (2017) does not think so. And, although I do not disagree with Chalmers, I do think that more can be said as for why his impressions might be correct or are, at the very least, more correct than Cappelen's own impressions. So, to illustrate as much, I will work through this point of disagreement in order to "clear the ground," so to speak, for a discussion on what patterns of disagreement might be sufficient to undercut the possession, transferability, or vindication of collective knowledge (and rational consensus). Then, in the next sub-section, I will provide what I have to offer by way of an answer to that question, as well as more concrete results regarding the extent to which specialist contemporary analytic philosophers might, in fact, possess and be able to transfer or vindicate any collective knowledge or rational consensuses.

So, starting on Cappelen's challenge, two claims underpin it. The first is that there are cases where, despite numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement within a broader group, we are still willing to ascribe either a subgroup or an individual's achievement to the broader group. And, the second is that the collective epistemic/rational goods and disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy's specialties are roughly analogous to such cases. Here are the cases that he presents:

> **CASE 1**: Suppose I am looking for a golden coin together with 10,000 other people. I can say that we have found the coin even if just one of us found it and many are still looking for the coin in the wrong places.

> **CASE 2**: As in 1, I have found the golden coin, but seven other people found fake-gold coins, and they think theirs is the golden coin and I cannot argue

them out of their false belief. I can still say that we have found the golden coin (though unfortunately, some people do not recognize it).

CASE 3: As in 2, I have found the golden coin and seven others have found fake coins. Now emphasize that there is no consensus among the 10,000 collaborators about who has found the genuine coin (they are evenly split between the eight of us). We can still, I think, say that we have found the golden coin – there is just the complication that we have no consensus about how to pick it out from the fake coins.

CASE 4: We can say that Apple knows how to improve Siri when some of the employees have figured it out, even if there is extensive disagreement within the company about how to do it. It might even be that the disagreement is irresolvable (in that one group cannot convince another) (Cappelen 2017: 71-2).

I cannot speak to how others might have responded to these cases. But, for my own part, what I can say is that CASES 1-3 seem to have "worked" since, regardless of the circumstances surrounding the coin's finding or even its subsequent identification within the group, I could still admit that Cappelen's ascriptions of the broader group's "finding it" were acceptable.

For CASE 4, though, I did not have all that much of an impression. And, as far as I can tell, the reason for this blank was simply a lack of information. Among other things, it was unclear to me whether or not the disagreeing employees within Apple also knew how to improve Siri by other means, what Cappelen regards as necessary for know-how and what such know-how might be sufficient for, or whether or not the power dynamics within Apple might in some way have an effect on the transition from an individual achievement to a collective one. Nevertheless, I presumed that it was supposed to be similar to the following:

> **BRODGAR**: We can say that archaeologists know how to reconstruct the Ring of Brodgar as it was originally built when some of them have figured it out, even if there is extensive disagreement among them about whether method X, Y, or Z is the right one.

And, based on that presumption, I did have the same impression as in CASES 2 and 3. So, perhaps, Cappelen is right that Chalmers's impressions do not pass muster.

However, in considering these cases further, several things seem less clear and plausible than they initially appeared. For, as things stand, Cappelen might have the impressions he wants, and still be wrong. I can agree that he has shown that there are cases where - despite the presence of numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement within a group - *we are willing to ascribe* an achievement to that group on the basis of a subgroup's (or individual's) achievement. But, I still have three lingering worries about those cases which I do not think that Cappelen can readily address.

Firstly, I think it is important to consider: what about the cases above is informing our impressions of them and are those things good indications of what is *rational* for us to accept or ascribe in those cases?[195] Cappelen might be wrong to simply take it for granted that our ascriptions in each of his cases are rational since, to all appearances, the impressions - upon which our ascriptions seem to be based - are not at all transparent when it comes to their origin(s). Among other things, they could be rooted in good or bad analogical mechanisms/ reasoning, in good or bad heuristics for tracking actionable information/achievements, in good or bad beliefs about "winning," or even in good or bad linguistic conventions associated with the

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[195] I am going to try to keep things simple, in virtue of the fact that the nature and justificatory status of philosophical impressions is still an open debate. See, for example, Bealer 1998; Cappelen 2012; Ichikawa 2014; Booth and Rowbottom (eds.) 2014; and Climenhaga 2018.

terms involved (which importantly do not include "know-that").[196]   But, clearly, if our

ascriptions are going to be rational in some sense (which I think they need to be in order to

challenge the Collective-Undercut claim and Chalmers's impressions), then our impressions will

need to be rooted in something good. And, as of now, I simply cannot tell whether or not they

are. I cannot introspect on the matter and, moreover, we also do not have anything at our

disposal which can really tell us anything about either the origin(s) of those impressions or their

quality. All that we are offered is empirical evidence to suggest that we *are willing* to make the

sorts of ascriptions in question (see: Jenkins et al. 2014).[197] But, again, that sort of suggestion is

not what is needed in the context of this discussion.[198] And so, despite these cases "working," it

appears that a substantial open question also lies at the heart of them - just like Chalmers's

impressions.

My second worry is that, accepting the Pragmatic Collective-Value claim, Cappelen's

cases are not actually addressing *all* of the relevant phenomena. In light of that claim, he needs

to worry about the possession, transferability, *and* vindication of collective knowledge, and not

just its possession or transferability. So, he also needs to consider cases like the following:

BRODGAR SPLIT: 50% of archaeologists claim to know and be able to

vindicate that the Ring of Brodgar was originally built by method X.

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[196] By "good/bad" in this bit, read such things as: reliable/unreliable, true/false, adequately grounded/inadequately grounded, relevant/irrelevant, justified/unjustified, and so on.

[197] And, regardless of the empirical evidence that he cites, it is hard to tell whether or not his understanding and use of these impressions is ultimately consistent with Cappelen 2012. Perhaps, he has changed his mind since 2012. Or, perhaps, he has a very particular understanding of the impressions involved, which does not conflict with his 2012 work. However, until we receive further comment from Cappelen, not much else can be said.

[198] It should be noted that Cappelen eventually dismisses his whole line of objection because he does not think that it pertains to the more important questions that we should be considering - namely, what is the detailed source of the disagreement; how much agreement is there on conditional claims, negative claims, methodology, space of possible answers, and quality of arguments; and how do the groups who disagree cluster and interact? (cf. Cappelen 2017: 72-3).

However, 50% of archaeologists also claim to know and be able to vindicate that it was originally built by method Y. Can archaeologists as a whole claim to collectively know and be able to vindicate that the Ring of Brodgar was originally built by method X? What about method Y?

But, moreover, we must also recognize that all of Cappelen's cases rely on exhaustiveness and disjunctive-ness, as in the following:

BRODGAR: We can say that archaeologists know how to reconstruct the Ring of Brodgar as it was originally built when some of them have figured it out, even if there is extensive disagreement among them about whether method X or Y is the right one.

For, just consider: where the options are exhaustive, then vague claims such as <archaeologists know how to reconstruct the Ring of Brodgar as it was originally built> seem to follow because we and they collectively know that <either method X or Y is the right one> - so, collectively, it seems that they can rest assured that they "have" the right method on the basis of the disjunction being exhaustive. But, if we ask which one is the right one, then the trouble begins - and, ultimately, it is this sort of question which inquirers, through collaborative inquiry, often seem to be trying to answer as well.

Relatedly, my last worry is that Cappelen's cases do not appear to be all that analogous to the state of disagreement and inquiry within contemporary analytic philosophy's specialties. But, to illustrate, just consider the following cases:

CASE 5: Suppose that a group with 500 members is trying to figure out whether or not p is the case. Does that group possess the collective knowledge that p or can that group claim to have vindicated their collectively knowing that p, even if only 100 of its members individually know that p and

can vindicate as much, while the others are still trying to figure out and are debating whether or not p and are on the wrong track?

CASE 6: On the matter of p or not-p, suppose that, within a group of 500 members, 250 of them individually know that p and can individually vindicate as much, but the other half of the group wrongly and individually claims to have individual vindication for individually knowing that not-p. Also, suppose that both of those sub-groups are engaging in ordinary peer disagreement. Can we ascribe collective knowledge to that group or can the group still claim to collectively know that p, even though there is a 50-50 split between them when it comes to their possession and vindication?

CASE 7: On the matter of p, q, or r, suppose that, within a group of 500 members, 200 of them individually *claim* to individually know that p and to have vindication for such knowledge, but 150 of them individually *claim* to individually know that q and to have vindication for such knowledge, 100 of them *suspend judgment* on the matter altogether, and 50 of them individually *claim* to individually know that r and to have vindication for such knowledge. Now, suppose that they are engaging in ordinary peer disagreement and are still debating the issue - and, also, suppose it is still an open question as to whether or not p, q, or r is an exhaustive set of options. Can we ascribe collective knowledge to that group or can the group still claim to collectively know what is the case, even though none of them may know what is the case, there is no consensus about which claim to knowledge is right or whose vindication is adequate, there is an open question about whether or not their answers are exhaustive, and they are still debating the matter?

Now, if you were to ask me to rank CASES 1-7 according to which represents the state of disagreement and inquiry within contemporary analytic philosophy's specialities the most when it comes to many of their questions, I would easily say that: CASE 7 is the most, then CASE 6,

and so on, in descending numerical order. In the first place, neither we nor contemporary analytic philosophers have an independent standpoint from which we can "see," so to speak, who actually possesses individual knowledge or has adequate vindication for it, and who does not - so, CASE 7 is much more apt in that regard than the other cases. Secondly, for many of their questions, specialist contemporary analytic philosophers are not merely selecting from just three options: p, not-p, or suspension of judgement. So, in that regard, CASE 7 is also more apt than the others. Thirdly and relatedly, many questions that specialists consider do not have an uncontested set of exhaustive answers - so, in that regard, CASE 7 is also more apt than the others. Fourthly, CASES 5-7 are clear about the sort of disagreement that is taking place - namely, ordinary peer disagreement So, in that regard, they are more apt than CASES 1-4 as representations of specialist contemporary analytic philosophers' disagreement in the context of Bourget and Chalmers surveys, as Chapter 4 has already suggested. And, lastly, CASES 5-7 are also ones where the contents of the collective knowledge being sought are not disjunctive - so, in that regard, they appear to be more apt representations of the sorts of answers that Bourget and Chalmers's survey questions ask, unlike CASES 1-4 which appear to have disjunctive contents.

And so, altogether, it appears that Cappelen's cases seem to be over-simplifying the sorts of circumstances in which specialist contemporary analytic philosophers seem to find themselves, given their limitations and what we can glean from the conditions and data from Bourget and Chalmers's surveys about their disagreement. And, in virtue of their being over-simplified, I would not be willing to conclude that they make all that much of an overall case against Chalmers's impressions and the Collective-Undercut claim - especially, when CASE 7 does not appear to be a case where the group collective knows.

Nevertheless, the fact is: although Cappelen's challenge may fail to strike down Chalmers's impressions, this failure is ultimately neither here nor there when it comes to whether his impressions and his Collective-Undercut claim are right. It merely reveals that they are not wrong. So, at this point, what we need from Chalmers is some explanation of why his impressions are right and, by extension, his Collective-Undercut claim. But again, looking over his text, no such explanation is given.

7.2.4 From Collective-Undercut to Quasi-Assimilation and Collective Knowledge

Given the work of Chapter 6, though, something can be offered to Chalmers in order to set his Collective-Undercut claim on firmer ground - namely, the thoughts that I offered surrounding rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation. In the previous chapter, recall that I suggested that, in order to possess, transfer, and vindicate collective knowledge (or rational consensuses), specialist contemporary analytic philosophers should (pragmatically-speaking) demand of their specialities that their "winning" members' evidence/reasons be *rationally persuasive enough* to generate as much agreement as is necessary among the specialities' members for the *rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation* of any opposing members' activities or attitudes. As I envisioned quasi-assimilation, it amounted to a group's oppositional party (or parties) being effectively discounted in "what is going on," so to speak, within the group's inquiries, although they are still members of the group and acting of their own accord, inquiry-wise. And then, from there, I worked out that quasi-assimilation for collective knowledge or a rational consensus appears to occur among contemporary analytic philosophy's specialties when 60% of their members can agree - assuming

that the discipline's specialists were conducting their inquiries with propriety. For, as I have already mentioned, I also noted that not just any quasi-assimilation will do - it must be *rationally legitimate* by being based in the rational persuasiveness of the "winning" members' available evidence/reasons.

And so, as applied to Chalmers's Collective-Undercut claim, the suggestion is that, perhaps, he can avail himself of an explanation based in rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation when it comes to the necessary agreement-thresholds for possessing, transferring, and vindicating collective knowledge (or a rational consensus). Again, *the lessons* that I derived from his impressions and used to understand his Collective-Undercut claim were that over 70% agreement on a view appears to be plausible, but bold, as a threshold for the agreement needed to possess, transfer, and vindicate collective knowledge, while *under* 60% agreement appears to be so bold as to be implausible. Given my own findings, I expected the threshold to be 60% or above for such goods, as well as those related to rational consensuses. But, perhaps, Chalmers is right to set the bar much higher - and, admittedly, I am sympathetic. Still, I chose my threshold based on charity and where quasi-assimilation appeared to occur for various questions within the discipline's specialties. And, even further, I also think that, for questions with more answers than just p, not-p, or other, attaining 60% agreement is not a trivial task if it is based in dialectic and the rational persuasiveness of some set of evidence/reasons. So, for our purposes, I am somewhat unwilling to drastically modify my threshold, in light of Chalmers's impressions alone. As a concession, though, what I will do is take up both his 70% threshold as well as my 60% one in assessing the various specialties' disagreement. Hopefully, this concession is enough

- and overall, that Chalmers will help himself to the sort of explanation that I have offered in Chapter 6 for the sake of his Collective-Undercut claim.

If so, then what we can see is that, more or less, the very same findings hold from the conclusion of Chapter 6, but instead of reading in "rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation," we can read in "collective knowledge" or "rational consensus." So, looking back to Chapter 6 and Appendix 2, what we we can see is that, of the eighteen specialities surveyed, six of them do not have any questions about which they possess and can transfer or vindicate such collective goods, for a total of thirty-three winning views about which such goods are out of reach. Nine of them have such collective goods for 50% or *under* of their questions, for a total of 8 winning views about which they have such goods and which do not overlap among those specialties. And, three of them have such goods for *over* 50% of their questions, for a total of six winning views about which they have such collective goods and which do not overlap among those specialties.

But, if we accept Chalmers's 70% threshold, the results are even worse. Of the eighteen specialties surveyed, what we can see is that only one speciality has questions about which they possess and can transfer or vindicate collective knowledge or a rational consensus for all of them, for a total of one winning view about which such goods are within reach.[199] Eight of them have such collective goods for 50% or *under* of their questions, for a total of seven winning views about which such goods are within reach and which do not overlap among those specialties. And, nine of them do not have any questions about which such goods are within reach, for a total of 39 winning views about which such goods are out of reach.

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[199] The speciality in question is decision theory which only had one question relevant for it, in the first place. So, to some extent, this result is not particularly informative.

So, although there might be debates surrounding whether 60% or 70% is an adequate agreement-threshold for the sorts of collective goods under discussion, neither threshold reveals positive results for contemporary analytic philosophers. On either one, the vast majority of winning views do not have sufficient agreement for rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation and, by extension, the possession, transferability, and vindication of collective knowledge or rational consensuses. And, as was already discussed in sub-section 7.2.2, where such collective goods are broadly unavailable to the discipline's specialties, then, at least, two worries crop up for the discipline: one regarding its ability to provide such goods to philosophical novices and, consequently, secure the survival and well-being of their research activities, and the other regards its ability to close various lines of inquiry and, consequently, provide for common knowledge or ground which the discipline as a whole can, then, use in order to be that much further along in "Inquiry," as Chalmers has already made salient for one conception of progress: the discipline's convergence on the truth. So, all-in-all, if contemporary analytic philosophers accept both the Pragmatic Collective-Value claim and Chalmers's Collective-Undercut claim, as understood through rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation, then it would appear that Chalmers's worries about contemporary analytic philosophy and its specialties are not all that unfounded and are, in fact, quite substantive, given Bourget and Chalmers's 2020 survey data.

7.3 What To Conclude?: Another Pragmatic Shift

Of course, there have been responses to Chalmers's findings and worries. But, in large part, I have already covered them in previous discussion. So, in Chapter 3, I discussed Bryan Frances (2017) responses to Chalmers - namely, one which uses anecdotal evidence to support

the claim that there is overwhelming agreement within the discipline, and another which points out that Chalmers does not abide by the distinction between specialists and non-specialists within the discipline. And, as I pointed out, the first response fails because of its reliance on anecdotal evidence, while the second fails because Bourget and Chalmers's 2009 and 2020 data can be made to abide by the distinction between specialists and non-specialists and, even still, the discipline's specialties do not display all that much more agreement. Then, in Chapters 3 and 5, I discussed Thomas Kelly's (2016) response about treating simple majorities as sufficient for individual epistemic/rational goods and collective ones - which, as I pointed out, arbitrarily discounts disagreeing coalitions within specialties.   And lastly, in this chapter, I have also discussed Herman Cappelen's (2017) differing impressions when it comes to ascriptions of collective knowledge to groups - which, as I pointed out, lack an explanation of what informs them and also do not seem to track the right phenomena.

Another common response - which can be found in such authors as Gary Gutting (2009; and 2016), Daniel Stoljar (2017), and Timothy Williamson (2017) - is that, in our acceptances of something like the Collective-Value claim or its Pragmatic variant, both Chalmers and I are not affording due weight to the other ways in which the discipline has progressed and the other sorts of epistemic/rational goods that it can and has provided. For instance, sure, I showed that critical thinking might not be sufficient to provide for the discipline's survival, well-being, and progress when it comes to its research - but, what about the collective knowledge that it has achieved regarding various possibilities and dialectical maneuvers, or the more sophisticated questions and models that it has formulated? And, open to this sort of criticism, Chalmers points out that he is a pluralist when it comes to progress and can accept that the discipline has made progress in

those regards (cf. Chalmers 2015: 14). But, he is also quick to remind that vindicated and correct

answers to the central questions of the discipline is still a prominent aim for many contemporary

analytic philosophers and, in so far as they have such an aim in mind, there is ultimately a sense

in which, at the very least, Gutting and Williamson are "lowering their sights" in the face of

Bourget and and Chalmers's data. And overall, I am in alignment with Chalmers. But, I would

also add: when it comes to satisfying philosophical novices, it might also not be enough to only

offer knowledge of various possibilities and dialectical maneuvers, or more sophisticated

questions and speculative models. For, as some novices and even some philosophers have

already made clear, what is non-negotiable are results which bear on the actual world and which

can be informative or useful to non-philosophers (cf. Krauss 2012; Briggle and Frodeman 2016;

and Hardwick and deGrasse Tyson 2017, among others). And, in so far as the discipline has only

largely provided for the sorts of things mentioned by Gutting and Williamson, it might ultimately

fail to insure its survival and wellbeing as a resource-worthy research producing one. Overall, it

will depend on whether or not the sorts of results that Gutting and Williamson are suggesting (for

instance, theories of causation, formal models of natural language, theories of parthood relations,

various logics, and so on) genuinely meet such demands. And, more importantly, it also depend

on whether those results are uniquely the remit of contemporary analytic philosophers, rather

than, say, linguists, mathematicians, computer scientists, physicists, cognitive scientists, and so

on - and whether there is sufficient agreement surrounding those things that the possession,

transferability, and vindication of collective knowledge (or rational consensuses) can be

achieved. So far, neither of those things is clear from what Gutting and Williamson have offered.

Similarly, for Stoljar, it is also unclear to what extent he is right in claiming that a good many of what he calls "philosophical boundary problems" are solved and, consequently, are possessed, transferable, and vindicated bits of collective knowledge (or amount to a rational consensus). Take one example that he cites about the indeterminacy of translation:

(1) There are facts about meaning.

(4) If there are facts about meaning, all such facts are necessitated by behavioral facts.

(5) If there are facts about meaning, not all such facts are necessitated by behavioral facts (cf. Stoljar 2017: 55).

Now, according to Stoljar, this boundary problem has been solved - because (2) has been rejected and, according to him, it is widely accepted that (2) is false (cf. ibid.: 56). However, as with Frances (2017), what I will also say here is that Stoljar's anecdotal evidence on the matter is inadmissible. And, for each of the examples that Stoljar cites, the same can be said (cf. ibid.: 44-53).[200] His claims are about whether one or another example is widely accepted as true or false - making them empirical claims. And, as they are presented, they are also intended as counters to the sorts of claims that Chalmers has made which are based on Bourget and his own survey data. But, for examples like the meaning one above, it is far from clear what is widely accepted on the matter. And, based on the fact that Stoljar also cites the mind-body problem and the problem of free will as boundary issues about which there is substantive agreement, I also worry (cf. ibid.: 44-5). On the one hand, I can agree that, on my 60% threshold, but not Chalmers's 70% threshold, the mind-body problem might have collective knowledge or a rational consensus behind it, given Bourget and Chalmers's 2020 data. But, when it comes to the

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[200] And, even if Stoljar is right about all of these boundary problems, there is still the broader worry of whether or not his sample is representative of all philosophical problems. His choices might very well have been cherry-picked.

problem of free will, neither threshold is met, in light of the data. So, taking those split findings and given his support, I find it hard to treat Stoljar's claims as anything more than speculative - especially, for the reasons that I have already set out in Chapter 3.

Nevertheless, although Chalmers's worry is substantive and does not appear to be minimized by the sorts of suggestions that have just been discussed, I would still refrain from what I have called in Chapter 5 "a deep pessimism" about the discipline and its specialties' abilities to possess, transfer, and vindicate collective knowledge (or rational consensuses). Again, such a pessimism would amount to accepting the *impossibility* of their achieving such collective epistemic/rational goods. But, perhaps, what is called for instead is simply a new lease on their activities, given their genuinely abiding by the following policy:

> **(Disagreement - Pragmatic Significance - Collective Goods)**: In the face of their ordinary peer disagreement and their wanting to maximize the possession, transferability, and ability to vindicate collective knowledge (or rational consensuses) in their discipline or specialties, specialist contemporary analytic philosophers should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) treat such disagreement as providing a weighted pragmatic reason in favor of them (1) comprehensively and individually setting out *what they take* their first-order evidence/reasons to be for whatever question is under dispute, to (2) compare their evidence/reasons with one another, and to (3) evaluate/re-evaluate the methods upon which their evidence/reasons are based.

And again, as I have already made clear in Chapter 5, it will be up to specialist contemporary analytic philosophers to what degree they want to weight their ordinary peer disagreement and, accordingly, how assiduously they want to enact such a policy. For, depending on their weighting, different degrees of optimism or pessimism might be called for. Nevertheless, my

hope is that they will afford it a great deal of weight and will, consequently, afford the discipline and its specialities a cautious optimism when it comes to achieving various *collective* epistemic/rational goods as well.

7.4 A Collective Reliability Worry Regarding Disagreement

But finally, turning to the perspective of the discipline's observers, rather than its participants, the last worry that I want to discuss comes from such authors as Ernest Sosa (2011), Richard Fumerton (2011), and Hilary Kornblith (2013). As they present it, it is couched in different discussions. In Sosa, it is couched in a broader argument for why contemporary analytic philosophy might fall short of its aspirations to be a scientific discipline (cf. Sosa 2011: 461); in Fumerton, it is couched in a broader argument for why, he believes, he does not need to revise his views when other contemporary analytic philosophers disagree with him (cf. Fumerton 2011: 103-8); and, in Kornblith, it is couched in a broader argument for why there are no experts (in the substantive epistemic conception discussed in Chapter 4) within the discipline and, also, why knowledge does not seem to be possible or forthcoming within it (cf. Kornblith 2013: 268).

For our purposes, though, what is primarily important about these arguments is that each of them relies upon something like the following claim:

> **(Disagreement-Unreliability)**: Significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement in the deliverances of a source tend to reveal the unreliability of that source, in some capacity (Adapted from Sosa 2011: 462), (cf. Fumerton 2011: 109), (cf. Kornblith 2013: 268).

For, as the reasoning seems to go, sources which are unreliable tend to produce inconsistent results in some capacity, and inconsistent results produced from that capacity tend to lead to

numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement among those who rely upon that source for their results in that capacity. And so, where there is such disagreement among those who rely upon a source in some capacity, then often the best explanation of that disagreement is the fact that the source in question is unreliable in that capacity.

But, what is also important for our purposes is in what Sosa, Fumerton, and Kornblith take themselves to be questioning as a result of the disagreement that they find within contemporary analytic philosophy. For Sosa, it is primarily the reliability of the sorts of intuitions and armchair methods which have been taken to be characteristic of philosophical practice and which have recently been challenged quite extensively by experimental philosophers (cf. Sosa 2011: 463-6); whereas, for Fumerton and Kornblith, it is the reliability of the discipline and all of its mechanisms, broadly construed - that is, the actual practitioners and all of their practices considered collectively - that has been questioned (cf. Fumerton 2011: 109), (cf. Kornblith 2013: 268).

Ultimately, Sosa turns out to be unconvinced that the ordinary peer disagreement within the discipline and recent experimental work on armchair philosophizing is sufficient for identifying intuitions and armchair methods as the true source of this disagreement - and, as a result, he ends up adopting the broader stances of both Fumerton and Kornblith (cf. Sosa 2011: 463). So, for our purposes, I am simply going to take his later conclusion as his intended one, although I will return to his earlier worry later. For now, though, what I want to highlight about Sosa, as well as Fumerton and Kornblith, is that each of them has something like the following common argument underlying their considerations:

(Master Collective Reliability Worry)

(1) Numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement regarding the results of a source tend to reveal the unreliability of that source, in some capacity.

(2) There is numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement among specialist contemporary analytic philosophers about their results.

(3) So, it is likely that, in some capacity, specialist contemporary analytic philosophers are collectively unreliable.

For each of them, the sort of capacity that they have in mind is specialists' ability to possess, transfer, and vindicate rational consensuses (cf. Sosa 2011: 461), (cf. Fumerton 2011: 109), (cf. Kornblith 2013: 268). But, considering the other sorts of collective epistemic/rational goods that we have previously discussed in Chapter 6 and earlier in this chapter, I ultimately do not think that there is too much risk in assuming that their concerns will also apply to the goods associated with collective knowledge as well. I will maintain this assumption throughout. Nevertheless, the worry remains: how much credibility can observers of the discipline give to specialists who are, as we can see from our findings in section 7.2.4, collectively unreliable in achieving such collective epistemic/rational goods for their discipline? And, in response, the answer appears to be: not very much. So, in so far as the Pragmatic Collective-Value claim still holds, which I do not see why it would not, it would appear as if the autonomy, independence, and resources of the discipline - when it comes to its research - are not exactly insured, given its extant disagreement.

7.4.1 The Source(s) of the Discipline's Collective Unreliability

Of course, the natural follow-up question is: why are contemporary analytic philosophers collectively unreliable? And, in response, Sosa, Fumerton, and Kornblith have all hazarded explanations. Fumerton alleges it is due to the "cognitive deficiencies" of his colleagues - in

particular, their not having introspected about themselves enough (cf. Fumerton 2011: 103). For Kornblith, the suggestion is that, individually, contemporary analytic philosophers simply tend to be unreliable. And, for Sosa, the explanation is either that intuition and armchair philosophizing is unreliable or that philosophical dialectic, in general, is unreliable.

For both Fumerton and Kornblith, it is hard to accurately evaluate the plausibility of their explanations. In the first place, we are not provided any evidence to suggest that cognitive deficiencies - particularly, a lack of introspection - or individual unreliabilities are the genuine causes of the disagreement that can be found within contemporary analytic philosophy. And secondly, the possibility of contemporary analytic philosophers being collectively unreliable, but individually as reliable (or cognitively efficient) as each other, and *vice versa*, is not ruled out. For instance, you and I might both be in possession of individually reliable cognitive capacities when it comes to whether or not p - but, because you are reliable on the basis of cognitive capacities A (- say, 62% reliable) and capacity B (- say, 39% reliable), while I am reliable on the basis of B (- say, 60% reliable) and C (- say, 48% reliable), it would appear as if we can still end up being collectively unreliable as a result, assuming that A and C together have no bearing on our cognition's reliability when it comes to whether or not p. And, the opposite sort of case is possible as well - namely, one where we are both individually unreliable, but nevertheless end up being collectively reliable. So, without any evidence and with possibilities like the previous ones lurking in the background, I find it hard to be anything but wary of both Fumerton and Kornblith's explanations.

Sosa, on the other hand, though, has taken seriously the thought that philosophical intuitions and armchair philosophizing are the culprits on the basis of the recent experimental

literature on philosophical intuitions and nearby phenomena. Essentially, as he reads this literature, the core of the experimental argument against such intuitions and philosophizing is this:

> [I]ntuitions on philosophical thought experiments disagree extensively. Since intuitions disagree, they cannot all be perceptions of some objective philosophical order. Not every disagreeing intuition can be a perception of a fact. Some at least must be misperceptions. With misperception common enough among intuiters, intuition sinks into disrepute (Sosa 2011, 453f).[201]

But, as Sosa points out, there are several problems for this argument.

A common objection to this style of argument is that the underlying experimental work does not sufficiently account for the difference between expert and non-expert intuitions - or, to not beg the question, given our discussion, between specialist and non-specialist intuitions. Non-specialist intuitions might be quite diverse, in virtue of a lack of philosophical training and, furthermore, non-specialist intuitions might conflict quite substantively with specialist intuitions. But, such conflicts do not directly indicate that specialist intuitions are in conflict with one another. And, if not, then ultimately the experimentalists' argument above will be irrelevant when it comes to specialist intuitions since, perhaps, they do not conflict all that much after all (cf. ibid.: 461).

In response, though, some experimentalists might respond that there is still some indication that specialist intuitions continue to display non-specialist effects or biases, even after training and reflection. For instance, as I have already indicated in a footnote in Chapter 5, Eric Schwitzgebel and Fiery Cushman (2015) have provided evidence which suggests that:

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[201] For more elaborate presentations of such an argument, see for example: Weinberg 2007; Buckwalter and Stich 2014; and Sytsma and Livengood 2015.

… Professional philosophers exhibited substantial framing effects and order effects [about a moral puzzle case (the "trolley problem") and a version of the Tversky and Kahneman (1981; and 1983) "Asian disease" scenario], and were no less subject to such effects than was a comparison group of non-philosopher academic participants. Framing and order effects were not reduced by a forced delay during which participants were encouraged to consider "different variants of the scenario or different ways of describing the case." Nor were framing and order effects lower among participants reporting familiarity with the trolley problem or with loss-aversion framing effects, nor among those reporting having had a stable opinion on the issues before participating the experiment, nor among those reporting expertise on the very issues in question. Thus, for these scenario types, neither framing effects nor order effects appear to be reduced even by high levels of academic expertise (Schwitzgebel and Cushman 2015: Abstract).

So, perhaps, specialists are not so special after all.

But again, as I have already pointed out in a footnote in Chapter 5, what is important to recognize - as Theodore Bach (2019) hints at - is that these studies do not discriminate enough in their populations to show, for instance, that moral ethicists exhibit defective reasoning or biases when it comes to moral ethics or that epistemologists exhibit such things when it comes to epistemology. And, as a result, we are left with few to no existing empirical studies by which we might decide such questions as they relate to specialist contemporary analytic philosophers on their own specializations. So, back to square-one: perhaps, specialists are special.

Still, even if we cannot decide such questions yet, another objection to the experimentalists' argument that Sosa has raised is that, perhaps, specialists are simply interpreting the words or aspects associated with thought-experiments differently - but, nevertheless, correctly - and are consequently asking seemingly similar, but actually different,

questions (cf. ibid.: 461-2).   For instance, in assessing whether or not a subject knows in a Gettier scenario, it might be the case that, for different specialists, notions like justification or knowledge are not shared.   So, in asking whether the subject knows, there might simply be different epistemic intuitions among specialists because a form of polysemy holds about the notions at work.   And, if they are responding to different notions, then perhaps the epistemic intuitions being elicited are equally adequate.   And further, perhaps, the disagreement displayed as a result of specialists' intuitions is merely verbal and only requires further clarification - not the throwing out of intuitions and nearby armchair methods altogether (cf. Sosa 2009: 109).

However, as Sosa notes, even after providing these sorts of defenses for intuitions and armchair methods, there is still the fact of numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement.   So, although he might have diverted attention away from those sorts of methods, what he suggests contemporary analytic philosophers face now is the more general worry that their dialectics and all their underlying methods are, in combination, collectively unreliable. Again, this scenario is the one, more or less, set out by Fumerton and Kornblith.   And, in response, Sosa suggests that we consider other disciplines which also appear to be filled with disagreement: artistic criticism, morality, and politics.   He notes that these disciplines also do not appear to be sciences.   But, nevertheless, even if they are not sciences and the methods in them might not be adequate - at least, as of yet - for answering their questions as readily as the sciences can answer their own questions, we still "arrive at a general question of attitude" (Sosa 2011: 464).   He wonders:

> Even if there possibly could be such sciences, what are we to do while we await
> their consummation? Should we just hold ourselves generally aloof? That would

be to check out of life. And, if the judgments required for living well admit a distinction between the good and the bad, we can properly reflect on this distinction, we can try to understand it, even if it is not quite the distinction between the scientific and the unscientific (ibid.: 464).

And, as I read Sosa, the suggestion is that, although we may not be able to insure that contemporary analytic philosophy will become a science, the discipline's practitioners should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) still hold out for the possibility of its becoming one and, in the meantime, continue their work.

7.5 What to Conclude?: Yet Another Pragmatic Shift

Overall, I find Sosa's suggestions convincing, to some degree. Firstly, I can agree that, given the existing experimental work, there are still too many gaps that need to be filled in order for specialists' intuitions and armchair methods to be deemed unreliable for the more abstract questions that contemporary analytic philosophers discuss. And secondly, I can also agree that, as of yet, there is still not good enough to reason to think that its *impossible* for contemporary analytic philosophy to overcome its disagreement or for it to become a more science-like discipline - especially, when they might still enact the two pragmatic policies that have been suggested in this chapter and Chapter 5. But, whereas Sosa stops at generally suggesting that contemporary analytic philosophers need to be clearer about what questions they are asking and trying to answer, as well as in rooting out various unhealthy influences on their philosophizing, what I will suggest is the following:

(**Armchair Limitations**): Within dialectic, and in virtue of their wanting to maximize the possession, transferability, and ability to vindicate collective

epistemic/rational goods, contemporary analytic philosophers should (at least, pragmatically-speaking) refrain from forwarding claims about non-qualitative contingent matters in light of their findings from armchair methods - and, in light of the same, from directly contradicting what empirical data based in best scientific practice suggests about non-qualitative contingent matters.[202]

However, the key to appreciating this suggestion is in understanding what I mean by "armchair methods." For, as I understand them, there are several things that I am picking out.

Firstly, I am picking out the sort of intuitions that Sosa (2009; and 2011) and others have called "rational" and which have been taken as paradigmatically bearing on matters of mathematics, geometry, logic, and so on. Accordingly, the thought is simple: on the basis of such intuitions, contemporary analytic philosophers should refrain from making claims like <there are x number of stars with planets orbiting them in our galaxy> or directly contradicting what empirical data suggests when it comes to something like: <there are more than 3,200 stars with planets orbiting them>. And, they should similarly refrain for claims like <the likelihood of rain in France tomorrow is 35%> or <x built the Gate of All Nations>. Overall, I hope that few thinkers would disagree with this suggestion.

Equally, the second sort of method that I am picking out is guessing - so, making conclusions on the basis of conjectural thinking and no demonstrable data. Again, the thought is simple: where there is no data to be had, contemporary analytic philosophers should refrain from making claims about things like <most French citizens prefer camembert to brie>, <it is always cold in Buenos Aires>, or <the temperature in Scotland this coming year will reach 46 degrees

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[202] Quantitative contingent matters are associated with questions like: whether or not the number of planets in our galaxy is greater than five. Qualitative contingent matters are associated with questions like: how did so-and-so feel as a result of medical procedure x? And, of course, there are mixed contingent matters as in the following: how do most patients tend to feel after medical procedure x?

celsius>. And, they should also refrain from directly contradicting what empirical data suggests when it comes to such claims. Again, I hope that few thinkers would disagree with this suggestion either.

More controversially, though, the last sort of method that I am picking out is a method which I have already worried about in Chapter 3. It is generalization on the basis of anecdotal evidence - so, coming to general and quantitative contingent conclusions on the basis of casual personal observation. By "casual," the thought is that personal observation can be more or less systematic and less idiosyncratic. It depends on such things as whether the observational data is demonstrable, how the data is collected (e.g. whether certain biases or prejudices are taken into account), how much data is collected, what is the target phenomenon, whether the data is paradigmatic or exclusive, and so on. For, on the one hand, I take it - hopefully, along with most other inquirers - that, when personal observations are formed and generalizations are made on the basis of them about *qualitative* matters, there might be room for negotiation when it comes to the extent to which such a method needs to reflect best scientific practice. Clearly, qualitative results can also be scientific ones, such as results from thorough case studies - hence why, to be safe, I have restricted armchair methods only when it comes to "non-qualitative contingent matters" in the policy above.[203] Just consider: in anthropology, sociology, and other related disciplines, case studies are a prominent means of coming to qualitative conclusions, and they are not always unscientific, seeing as cases studies also play an invaluable role in providing various life and medical sciences with qualitative and scientifically-respectable conclusions.[204]

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[203] For more discussion, see for example: Flyvbjerg 2006; and Gerring 2007.

[204] For more discussion, see for example: Yin 1981 and 2018; Brown 2008; and Crowe *et al*. 2011.

But, when it comes to quantitative contingent matters, the only credible methods for such claims will have to reflect best scientific practice, for the sorts of reasons that I have already set out in Chapter 3. And, to fill in the thought for my policy, what I am suggesting is that, where contemporary analytic philosophers' personal observations are casual, they should refrain from generalizing and dialectically forwarding claims such as: <20th century trade unions have largely been corrupt>, <there is more agreement than disagreement within contemporary analytic philosophy>, <nationalists will always put their country first>, <all instances of what we call "understanding" are factive>, or <all instances of what we call "evidence" are instances of knowledge." And, on the same basis, they should also refrain from dialectically forwarding claims which directly contradict what empirical data based in best scientific practice seems to suggest, such as: what a blinded social survey suggests, what telescopic images suggest, what repeated experiments suggest, and so on.

Importantly, what I am not suggesting is that the previous methods are exhaustive of "armchair methods." But, in so far as I have constructed the policy above, these methods were the ones that I had in mind.

As for the aptness of the above policy for these methods, though, I only have two points to make. The first is that, although I think that it is obvious that rational intuition and guessing are armchair methods, what might not be obvious is that generalization based on *anecdotal evidence* (- not scientific case studies or scientifically thorough personal observation) is similarly an armchair method. Nevertheless, I do think that we can say that such generalization is broadly an armchair method, despite involving some empirical evidence. For, in so far as I have understood it, two features stand out about it. The first is that the guiding forces behind such a

method's data collection are broadly idiosyncratic and are neither transparent nor, as a result of the previous, testable for their reliability - much like rational intuition, as Sosa (2011) and others have admitted about it.[205] And, secondly, the work done by conjectural thinking in arriving at a generalization through anecdotal evidence is, on my understanding of it, always significantly greater than the work done by any empirical evidence - much like guessing. And so, in so far as it is similar to those methods in those ways, it seems only right that generalization upon anecdotal evidence should also be broadly treated as an armchair method, rather than an empirical one.

But, secondly and lastly, the other point that I want make is that, regardless of whether some contemporary analytic philosophers believe that armchair methods are reliable in many domains, what should still be obvious is that such methods are not going to be apt and reliable for all domains. Already, I have made a similar point in Chapter 3. But, what I want to emphasize here is that, in so far as we think that quantitative contingent matters are the remit of empirical methods, and not of armchair methods, contemporary analytic philosophers should avoid employing armchair methods when it comes to such matters. And, broadly-speaking, I do not think that such limits are completely unrecognized for rational intuition and guessing. Still, as a look over this thesis will show, some contemporary analytic philosophers have forwarded generalizations based on anecdotal evidence and, in that regard, it cannot be denied that there is some need for the policy that I have set out. Granted, it is hard for me to anticipate the degree to which its implementation might actually help the discipline, as a whole. Nevertheless, in so far

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[205] For instance, Jessica Brown 2013 also admits these points, despite defending appeals to intuition for certain areas of philosophy. Importantly, I am also not disparaging rational intuition's epistemic use in all areas of philosophical inquiry as a result of this feature.

as Sosa and others might be right that contemporary analytic philosophy can become a science by rooting out unhealthy influences on its practitioners' philosophizing, it seems to make sense that the discipline, as a whole, should simply be more like the sciences in various regards.[206] I have suggested one - namely, in avoiding anecdotal evidence as a dialectical underpinning for quantitative, contingent claims. But, of course, the more general hope is that contemporary analytic philosophers will do their best to clearly delineate which sorts of methods are most appropriate for this or that aspect of their inquiries, be it speculation, dialectic, systematization, and so on. And, equally, that they will also do their best to clearly delineate which sorts of methods are most appropriate for one or another domain of questions, be they qualitative, quantitative, contingent, non-contingent, and so on. For, maybe then, their discipline will come to be more collectively reliable and, if possible, a science.

7.6 Conclusion

And so, with that suggestion, we have now rounded out our discussion of the more prominent worries surrounding some of the collective epistemic/rational goods that contemporary analytic philosophers should seek. I have focussed on the possession, transferability, and vindication of collective knowledge and rational consensuses. And, ultimately, what can be seen is that worries about these goods appear to be quite substantive.

When it comes to the possession, transferability, and vindication of collective knowledge or rational consensuses, Chalmers has made salient that, as participants to their ordinary peer disagreement, contemporary analytic philosophers ultimately have a great deal to worry about.

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[206] Sosa 2011 sees the discipline as striving to be scientific, but so also do Bahr et al. 2016 and the other authors that I have already stated in Chapter 3, as being on team-sciences.

Accepting rationally legitimate quasi-assimilation as an indicator of a group's possession and their ability to transfer or vindicate such goods, I accepted two different thresholds of agreement - my own of 60% and Chalmers's of 70%. Then, looking to Appendix 2 with the 60% threshold, I found that: of the eighteen specialities surveyed, six of them do not have any questions about which they possess and can transfer or vindicate such collective goods, for a total of thirty-three winning views about which such goods are out of reach. Nine of them have such collective goods for 50% or *under* of their questions, for a total of 8 winning views about which they have such goods and which do not overlap among those specialties. And, three of them have such goods for *over* 50% of their questions, for a total of six winning views about which they have such collective goods and which do not overlap among those specialties.

But, accepting Chalmers's 70% threshold, the results were even worse. Of the eighteen specialties surveyed, I found that only one speciality has questions about which they possess and can transfer or vindicate collective knowledge or a rational consensus for all of them, for a total of one winning view about which such goods are within reach. Eight of them have such collective goods for 50% or *under* of their questions, for a total of seven winning views about which such goods are within reach and which do not overlap among those specialties. And, nine of them do not have any questions about which such goods are within reach, for a total of 39 winning views about which such goods are out of reach.

So, on either threshold, the overwhelming majority of winning views did not have sufficient agreement among specialists for the possession, transferability, and vindication of collective knowledge or a rational consensus. And, in so far as the findings about this set of questions are indicative of the discipline's many other questions and the extent to which their

corresponding dialectics are closed, it is hard to doubt that Chalmers's overall conclusion seems right.

Equally, though, when it comes to observing the discipline, Fumerton, Sosa, and Kornblith have also made salient that something is not quite right, given the amount of ordinary peer disagreement that can be found among specialists. They each had their own suspicions as to what might be at fault. But, as further discussion made clear, each of their suspicions could only provide for the realization that the discipline, as a whole, is collectively unreliable and, consequently, in trouble when it comes to its credibility for observers.

For both worries, though, I offered pragmatic policies which might be able to alleviate some of the discipline's disagreement. For Chalmers's worry, I offered a pragmatic policy akin to what I have already suggested in Chapter 5 - except, rather than individual epistemic/rational goods, the focus was on collective ones. And, for Fumerton, Sosa, and Kornblith's worry, I suggested that contemporary analytic philosophers should treat generalization based upon anecdotal evidence as an armchair method and should avoid employing - in dialectic - this method and other armchair methods when it comes to forwarding or supporting quantitative contingent claims. Again, my aim in presenting these policies was to stave off a deep pessimism about the discipline and, in doing so, my hope was to provide for either a mitigated pessimism or a very cautious optimism towards it. But, as with many things, only time and effort will tell whether or not these suggestions will prove useful.

Conclusion

The core of my discussion is now complete. I have worked through a number of different questions - and, if nothing else, six conclusions should have stood out. They are:

(1) Given Bourget and Chalmers's 2020 survey data, there is good reason to accept that, among contemporary analytic philosophers and specialists in general, and for many of the specialties within the discipline, numerically significant, widespread, and genuine disagreement does, in fact, exist.

(2) Such disagreement is best characterized, in light of the circumstances surrounding Bourget and Chalmers survey, as an instance of a slightly modified version of Lackey's "ordinary peer disagreement."

(3) Such disagreement, at the very least, appears to substantively undermine the vindication of individual epistemic/rational goods and, also, the ability for philosophical novices to discern, at face value, which specialist contemporary analytic philosophers are rationally or epistemically credible, given their disagreements with their colleagues. But, it is still an open question whether

or not such disagreement is sufficient to undermine the possession and transferability of individual epistemic/rational goods.

(4) Such disagreement also appears to substantively undermine the possession, transferability, and vindication of various collective epistemic/rational goods, including: collective knowledge, rational consensuses, collective understanding, collective wisdom, and the discipline's collective reliability and credibility.

(5) Such disagreement might be overcome by specialist contemporary analytic philosophers if they treat it as a weighted pragmatic reason in favor of them (1) comprehensively and individually setting out *what they take* their first-order evidence/reasons to be for whatever question is under dispute, to (2) compare their evidence/reasons with one another, and to (3) evaluate/re-evaluate the methods upon which their evidence/reasons are based.

(6) And lastly, such disagreement might also be overcome by such specialists if, within dialectic, they refrain from forwarding claims about non-qualitative contingent matters in light of their findings from armchair methods - and, in light of the same, from directly contradicting what empirical data based in best scientific practice suggests about non-qualitative contingent matters.

Now, no doubt, there are many nearby conclusions which could have been made. But, even with just the six above, I am ultimately satisfied that I have vindicated some aspects of the initial phenomena that this study began with - namely, the various negative assessments that some contemporary analytic philosophers have made of their discipline in light of its disagreement. And, moreover, it should also be noted that, rather than just suggest ways in which such philosophers might *shift their focus away from* or *think differently* about their disagreement so as to "defang" it, so to speak, I have instead suggested from a pragmatic perspective things which they might *do* in order to take it on directly and, hopefully, overcome it.

Regarding the first point, I do not take it that what I have done is trivial. For, while my findings are consistent with some of those negative assessments, the second are not without controversy, considering what many contemporary analytic philosophers seem to believe about philosophical knowledge. Again, looking over Bourget and Chalmers's survey data, it can be seen that, among 1110 analytic- and Anglophone-inclined philosophers, 55.68% can agree that there is a lot of philosophical knowledge, 32.07% can agree that there is a little philosophical knowledge, 8.65% think "Other," and 3.6% can agree that there is no philosophical knowledge (Bourget and Chalmers: forthcoming). But, given my work, there should now be a clear sense and case for why it is questionable, at best, that such philosophers might have as much knowledge as they might think.

And, regarding my second point, I would note that, although I have largely avoided discussions of contemporary analytic philosophy's progress, there is something to be said on this front, given this study's findings. Avoidance-wise, I should say that my primary reason for doing so is because, like Chalmers, I am also a pluralist about progress and believe that there are many ways to measure it. But, equally, I have also avoided them because the existing data from Bourget and Chalmers's longitudinal analysis of both the 2009 and 2020 surveys is still too few data points, I think, to make a particularly convincing case for a lack of progress, even if I were to only measure it in terms of the discipline's practitioners being able to possess, transfer, or vindicate either individual or collective epistemic/rational goods.

Nevertheless, even with this avoidance, what I have suggested in terms of policies should - if pursued urgently - go some way in helping the discipline to progress towards some of its primary inquiry-based aims. At the very least, they should urge specialist contemporary analytic

philosophers to better understand their evidence/reasons for holding their particular views and the limitations of their evidence/reasons and methods when it comes to their rational persuasiveness within dialectic. But, more importantly, it also seems to me that these suggestions will do more for such philosophers' primary inquiry-based aims than simply shifting focus away from or trying to distinguish their disagreement away. Again, both results are important to consider in light of Bourget and Chalmers 2020 survey data, which contains a question about how much philosophical progress has been made. Among the general population containing many analytic- and Anglophone-inclined philosophers, 45.8% can agree that a little progress has been made; 41.24% can agree that a lot of progress has been made; 9.18% responded "other"; and 3.77% can agree that no progress has been made (Ibid.: forthcoming). And, although I cannot speak to which of these groups is correct, what I will say is that, given the findings and the policies presented in this study, my own sympathies are with those who have rested their responses on a form of mitigated pessimism or a *very* cautious optimism - so, those who have responded that "a little progress has been made." But, again, if the discipline's disagreement is taken seriously and the policies that I have suggested from my pragmatic perspective are pursued urgently, then ultimately I do not see why "a little progress" might not become "a lot." And, it is with this thought in mind that I hope the discipline's practitioners will do everything in their power to do better.

Appendix 1

General Population and Specialist Responses for Bourget and Chalmers's 2009 Survey (30 Main Questions)

Note: For ease of comparison, I have not included detailed breakdowns of the responses for each answer - so, leaning towards a view or accepting it will be taken as finding the view agreeable, leaning against a view or rejecting it will be taken as finding it disagreeable, and other responses will be taken as finding the available views as not agreeable (but not disagreeable). Specific breakdowns can be found in Bourget and Chalmers (2014). Further, unlike Appendix 2, Philosophy of Gender, Race, and Sexuality as a speciality has not been included because of a lack of data. And lastly, by design, answers' percentages are presented from greatest to least.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Aesthetics	Aesthetic Value: Objective 41%; Subjective 34%; Other 25%.	Aesthetic Value: Objective 44%; Other 41%; Subjective 15%.
Decision Theory	NewComb's Problem: Other 48%; Two-Boxing 31%; One-Boxing 21%.	NewComb's Problem: Two-Boxing 61%; One-Boxing 26%; Other 13%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Epistemology	A Priori Knowledge: Yes 71%; No 18%; Other 11%. Epistemic Justification:; Externalism 43%; Internalism 26%; Other 31%. External World: Non-Skeptical Realism 82%; Other 9%; Skepticism 5%; Idealism 4%. Knowledge: Other 37%; Empiricism 35%; Rationalism 28%. Knowledge Claims: Contextualism 40%; Invariantism 31%; Other 17%; Relativism 5%.	A Priori Knowledge: Yes 78%; No 14%; Other 8%. Epistemic Justification: Internalism 37%; Externalism 35%; Other 28%. External World: Non-Skeptical Realism 84%; Skepticism 9%; Other 5%; Idealism 2%. Knowledge: Other 41%;; Rationalism 33%; Empiricism 26%. Knowledge Claims: Invariantism 49%; Contextualism 29%; Other 17%; Relativism 5%.
General Philosophy of Science	Laws of Nature: Non-Humean 57%; Humean 25%; Other 18%. Science: Realism 75%; Other 13%; Anti-Realism 12%.	Laws of Nature: Non-Humean 49%; Humean 41%; Other 10%. Science: Realism 60%; Other 24%; Anti-Realism 16%.
Meta-Ethics	Meta-Ethics: Realism 56%; Non-Realism 28%; Other 16%. Moral Judgement: Cognitivism 68%; Non-Cognitivism 17%; Other 15%. Moral Motivation: Internalism 35%; Other 35%; Externalism 30%.	Meta-Ethics: Realism 56%; Non-Realism 26%; Other 18%. Moral Judgement: Cognitivism 75%; Non-Cognitivism 14%; Other 11%. Moral Motivation: Internalism 44%; Externalism 36%; Other 20%.
Metaphilosophy	A Priori Knowledge: Yes 71%; No 18%; Other 11%. Metaphilosophy: Naturalism 58%; Non-Naturalism 26%; Other 16%.	A Priori Knowledge: Yes 66.7%; Other 19%; No 14.3%. Metaphilosophy: Naturalism 38%; Non-Naturalism 38%; Other 24%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Metaphysics	Abstract Objects: Platonism 39%; Nominalism 38; Other 33%. Free Will: Compatibilism 59%; Other 15%; Libertarianism 14%; No Free Will 12%. God: Atheism 73%; Theism 15%; Other 12%. Laws of Nature: Non-Humean 57%; Humean 25%; Other 18%. Personal Identity: Other 37%; Psychological 34%; Biological 17; Further-Fact 12%. Science: Realism 75%; Other 13%; Anti-Realism 12%. Teletransporter: Survival 36%; Other 33%; Death 31%. Time: Other 59%; A-Theory 26%; B-Theory 15%.	Abstract Objects: Platonism 51% / Nominalism 32%; Other 17%. Free Will: Compatibilism 55.6%; Libertarianism 21.4%; No Free Will 13.2%; Other 9.8%. God: Atheism 71.4%; Theism 18.8%; Other 9.8%. Laws of Nature: Non-Humean 72%; Humean 19%; Other 9%. Personal Identity: Psychological 33%; Other 32%; Biological 18%; / Further-Fact 17%. Science: Realism 86.8%; Anti-Realism 8.1%; Other 5.1%. Teletransporter: Survival 39%; Death 38%; Other 23%. Time: A-Theory 42%; Other 34%; B-Theory 24%.
Normative Ethics	Normative Ethics: Other 32%; Deontology 26%; Consequentialism 24%; Virtue Ethics 18%. Trolley Problem: Switch 68%; Other 24%; Don't Switch 8%.	Normative Ethics: Deontology 35%; Other 30%; Consequentialism 23%; Virtue Ethics 12%. Trolley Problem: Switch 80%; Don't Switch 10%; Other 10%.
Philosophy of Action	Free Will: Compatibilism 59%; Other 15%; Libertarianism 14%; No Free Will 12%.	Free Will: Compatibilism 53%; Libertarianism 19%; Other 16%; No Free Will 12%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Logic	Logic: Classical 52%; Other 33%; Non-Classical 15%. Truth: Correspondence 51%; Deflationary 25%; Other 17%; Epistemic 7%.	Logic: Classical 57%; Non-Classical 24%; Other 19%. Truth: Correspondence 48.9%; Deflationary 28.3%; Other 17.4%; Epistemic 5.4%.
Philosophy of Language	Analytic-Synthetic Distinction: Yes 65%; No 27%; Other 8%. Knowledge Claims: Contextualism 40%; Invariantism 31%; Other 17%; Relativism 5%. Mental Content: Externalism 51%; Other 29%; Internalism 20%. Proper Names: Other 37%; Millian 34%; Fregean 29%. Truth: Correspondence 51%; Deflationary 25%; Other 17%; Epistemic 7%.	Analytic-Synthetic Distinction: Yes 65%; No 29%; Other 6%. Knowledge Claims: Invariantism 41%; Contextualism 36%; Other 19%; Relativism 4%. Mental Content: Externalism 69.2%; Other 20.9%; Internalism 9.9%. Proper Names: Millian 42%; Fregean 33%; Other 25%. Truth: Correspondence 52%; Deflationary 25%; Other 20%; Epistemic 3%.
Philosophy of Mathematics	Abstract Objects: Platonism 39%; Nominalism; 38%; Other 23%. Logic: Classical 52%; Other 33%; Non-Classical 15%.	Abstract Objects: Platonism 60%; Nominalism 20%; Other 20%. Logic: Classical 51.4%; Other 25.7%; Non-Classical 22.9%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Philosophy of Mind	Perceptual Experience: Other 43%; Representationalism 31%; Qualia Theory 12%; Disjunctivism 11%; Sense-Datum Theory 3%. Mental Content: Externalism 51%; Other 29%; Internalism 20%. Mind: Physicalism 56%; Non-Physicalism 27%; Other 17%. Zombies: Conceivable but Not Metaphysically Possible 36%; Other 25%; Metaphysically Possible 23%; Inconceivable 16%.	Perceptual Experience: Representationalism 43%; Other 19%; Qualia Theory 17%; Disjunctivism 17%; Sense-Datum Theory 4%. Mental Content: Externalism 57%; Other 25%; Internalism 18%. Mind: Physicalism 61%; Non-Physicalism 22%; Other 17%. Zombies: Conceivable but Not Metaphysically Possible 48%; Inconceivable 25%; Metaphysically Possible 18%; Other 9%.
Philosophy of Physical Science	Laws of Nature: Non-Humean 57%; Humean 25%; Other 18%. Science: Realism 75%; Other 13%; Anti-Realism 12%. Time: Other 59%; A-Theory 26%; B-Theory 15%.	Laws of Nature: Non-Humean 52.5%; Humean 31.1%; Other 16.4%. Science: Realism 70.5%; Other 23%; Anti-Realism 6.6%. Time: A-Theory 49%; Other 40%; B-Theory 11%.
Philosophy of Religion	God: Atheism 73%; Theism 15%; Other 12%.	God: Theism 72%; Atheism 19%; Other 9%.
Social and Political Philosophy	Politics: Other 41%; Egalitarianism 35%; Communitarianism 14%; Libertarianism 10%.	Politics: Egalitarianism 51%; Other 34%; Communitarianism 9%; Libertarianism 6%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Applied Ethics	Normative Ethics: Other 32%; Deontology 26%; Consequentialism 24%; Virtue Ethics 18%. Politics: Other 41%; Egalitarianism 35%; Communitarianism 14%; Libertarianism 10%. Trolley Problem: Switch 68%; Other 24%; Don't Switch 8%.	Normative Ethics: Other 27.3%; Consequentialism 27.3%; Deontology 27.3%; Virtue Ethics 18.2%. Politics: Egalitarianism 40.9%; Other 29.5%; Libertarianism 15.9%; Communitarianism 13.6%. Trolley Problem: Switch 70.5%; Other 15.9%; Don't Switch 13.6%.

Appendix 2

General Population and Specialist Responses for Bourget and Chalmers's 2020 PhilPapers Survey (39 Main Questions, 1 Speciality Follow-Up Question, and 1 Split-Main Question for 7 Methods)

Note: Again, for ease of comparison, I have not included detailed breakdowns of the responses for each answer - so, leaning towards a view or accepting it will be taken as finding the view agreeable, leaning against a view or rejecting it will be taken as finding it disagreeable, and other responses will be taken as finding the available views as not agreeable (but not disagreeable). Specific breakdowns can be found in Bourget and Chalmers (forthcoming). Further, unlike Appendix 1, Philosophy of Gender, Race, and Sexuality as a speciality has been included. And lastly, by design, answers' percentages are presented from greatest to least and only represent exclusive answers (because they do not significantly differ from inclusive answers).

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Aesthetics	Aesthetic Value: Objective 40.18%; Subjective 37.18%; Other 22.65%.	Aesthetic Value: Objective 52.69%; Other 29.03%; Subjective 18.28%.
Decision Theory	NewComb's Problem: Two-Boxing 38.47%; Other 30.81%; One-Boxing 30.72%.	NewComb's Problem: Two-Boxing 70.83%; One-Boxing 18.75%; Other 10.42%.
General Philosophy of Science	Laws of Nature: Non-Humean 53.73%; Humean 30.82%; Other 15.45%. Science: Realism 71.52%; Anti-Realism 14.27%; Other 14.21%.	Laws of Nature: Non-Humean 50.27%; Humean 32.62%; Other 17.11%. Science: Realism 61%; Other 19.5%; Anti-Realism 19.5%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Logic	Logic: Classical 48.69%; Other 29.54%; Non-Classical 21.77%. Truth: Correspondence 48.33%; Deflationary 22.22%; Other 20.69%; Epistemic 8.76%. Vagueness: Semantic 42.56%; Other 26%; Epistemic 16.28%; Metaphysical 15.16%.	Logic: Classical 37.5%; Non-Classical 37.5%; Other 25%. Truth: Correspondence 46.05%; Deflationary 25%; Other 21.05%; Epistemic 7.89%. Vagueness: Semantic 50%; Other 23.97%; Epistemic 13.01%; Metaphysical 13.01%.
Epistemology	A Priori Knowledge: Yes 72.67%; No 18.3%; Other 9.03%. Epistemic Justification:; Externalism 45.34%; Internalism 30.41%; Other 24.25%. External World: Non-Skeptical Realism 78.17%; Other 11.62%; Idealism 5.44%; Skepticism 4.76%. Knowledge: Empiricism 37.28%; Other 35.95%; Rationalism 26.77%. Knowledge Claims: Contextualism 52.17%; Invariantism 24.29%; Other 19.54%; Relativism 4%. Responses to Skepticism: Other 26.74%; Pragmatic 18.26%; Abductive 17.19%; Epistemic Externalist 14.61%; Dogmatist 10.10%; Contextualist 7.73%; Semantic Externalist 5.37%.	A Priori Knowledge: Yes 76.12%; No 15.67%; Other 8.21%. Epistemic Justification: Internalism 37.84%; Externalism 37.35%; Other 24.82%. External World: Non-Skeptical Realism 83.05%; Other 9.58%; Skepticism 4.67%; Idealism 2.7%. Knowledge: Empiricism 35.5%; Other 33.5%; Rationalism 31%. Knowledge Claims: Contextualism 38.44%; Invariantism 35.84%; Other 20.78%; Relativism 4.94%. Responses to Skepticism: Other 30.48%; Epistemic Externalist 17.84%; Dogmatist 15.61%; Abductive 14.87%; Pragmatic 10.04%; Contextualist 5.95%; Semantic Externalist 5.2%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Meta-Ethics	Experience Machine: No 76.86%; Yes 13.34%; Other 9.81%. Meaning of Life: Other 29.16%; Subjective 28.35%; Objective 27.59%; Non-Existent 14.9%. Meta-Ethics: Realism 61.55%; Non-Realism 25.77%; Other 12.68%. Moral Judgement: Cognitivism 68.15%; Non-Cognitivism 19.87%; Other 11.98%. Moral Motivation: Internalism 38.14%; Externalism 36.6%; Other 25.26%.	Experience Machine: No 84.96%; Yes 9.29%; Other 5.75%. Meaning of Life: Other 37.16%; Objective 34.4%; Subjective 19.27%; Non-Existent 9.17%. Meta-Ethics: Realism 64.04%; Non-Realism 24.56%; Other 11.4%. Moral Judgement: Cognitivism 76.65%; Non-Cognitivism 15.86%; Other 7.49%. Moral Motivation: Externalism 43.44%; Internalism 39.82%; Other 16.74%.
Normative Ethics	Eating Animals and Animal Products: Yes and Yes 47.05%; No and Yes 23.92%; No and No 16.5%; Other 12.53%. Experience Machine: No 76.86%; Yes 13.34%; Other 9.81%. Footbridge: Do not push 55.8%; Other 22.64%; Push 21.55%. Normative Ethics: Other 33.83%; Virtue Ethics 25.04%; Consequentialism 21.42%; Deontology 19.7%. Trolley Problem: Switch 62.5%; Other 24.88%; Don't Switch 12.62%.	Eating Animals and Animal Products: Yes and Yes 38.66%; No and Yes 25.21%; No and No 23.53%; Other 12.61%. Experience Machine: No 84.66%; Yes 9.09%; Other 6.25%. Footbridge: Do not push 65%; Push 20.45%; Other 14.56%. Normative Ethics: Other 36.59%; Deontology 22.63%; Consequentialism 19.83%; Virtue Ethics 20.95%. Trolley Problem: Switch 71.23%; Other 18.72%; Don't Switch 10.06%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Philosophy of Mathematics	Abstract Objects: Nominalism 41.37%; Platonism 37.83%; Other 20.81%. Logic: Classical 48.69%; Other 29.54%; Non-Classical 21.77%.	Abstract Objects: Platonism 51.02%; Nominalism 24.49%; Other 24.49%. Logic: Classical 55.10%; Other 30.61%; Non-Classical 14.29%.
Philosophy of Race, Gender, and Sexuality	Gender: Social 43.01%; Other 35.93%; Biological 15.12%; Psychological 4.3%; Unreal 1.63%. Race: Social 52.82%; Other 24.32%; Biological 11.46%; Unreal 11.4%.	Gender: Social 58.18%; Other 40%; Biological 1.82%; Psychological 0%; Unreal 0%. Race: Social 60%; Other 36.36%; Biological 1.82%; Unreal 1.82%.
Philosophy of Action	Free Will: Compatibilism 57.68%; Libertarianism 18.2%; Other 13.54%; No Free Will 10.58%.	Free Will: Compatibilism 53.57%; Libertarianism 21.43%; Other 16.96%; No Free Will 8.04%.
Philosophy of Physical Science	Laws of Nature: Non-Humean 53.73%; Humean 30.82%; Other 15.45%. Science: Realism 71.52%; Anti-Realism 14.27%; Other 14.21%. Time: Other 39.45%; B-Theory 35.71%; A-Theory 24.84%.	Laws of Nature: Non-Humean 48.39%; Humean 37.1%; Other 14.52%. Science: Realism 70.77%; Anti-Realism 10.77%; Other 18.46%. Time: B-Theory 47.54%; Other 36.07%; A-Theory 16.39%.
Philosophy of Religion	God: Atheism 66.72%; Theism 18.64%; Other 14.63%. Meaning of Life: Other 29.16%; Subjective 28.35%; Objective 27.59%; Non-Existent 14.9%.	God: Theism 68.79%; Atheism 19.86%; Other 11.35%. Meaning of Life: Objective 65.71%; Other 14.29%; Subjective 13.57%; Non-Existent 6.43%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Social and Political Philosophy	Eating Animals and Animal Products: Yes and Yes 47.05%; No and Yes 23.92%; No and No 16.5%; Other 12.53%. Gender: Social 43.01%; Other 35.93%; Biological 15.12%; Psychological 4.3%; Unreal 1.63%. Meaning of Life: Other 29.16%; Subjective 28.35%; Objective 27.59%; Non-Existent 14.9%. Politics: Egalitarianism 38.26%; Other 29.41%; Communitarianism 22.06%; Libertarianism 10.28%. Race: Social 52.82%; Other 24.32%; Biological 11.46%; Unreal 11.4%.	Eating Animals and Animal Products: Yes and Yes 39.02%; No and Yes 27.18%; No and No 19.86%; Other 13.94%. Gender: Social 50.53%; Other 34.52%; Biological 9.96%; Psychological 3.91%; Unreal 1.07%. Meaning of Life: Subjective 33.45%; Other 29.58%; Objective 24.65%; Non-Existent 12.32%. Politics: Egalitarianism 49.11%; Other 29.18%; Communitarianism 12.1%; Libertarianism 9.61%. Race: Social 61.23%; Other 21.01%; Biological 7.97%; Unreal 9.78%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Metaphilosophy	Aims of Philosophy: Other 38.23%; Understanding 29.59%; Truth/Knowledge 17.67%; Wisdom 10.05%; Goodness/Justice 3.11%; Happiness 1.36%.	Aims of Philosophy: Other 48.72%; Understanding 28.21%; Truth/Knowledge 15.38%; Wisdom 5.13%; Happiness 1.28%; Goodness/Justice 1.28%.
	A Priori Knowledge: Yes 72.67%; No 18.3%; Other 9.03%.	A Priori Knowledge: Yes 66.67%; No 20.51%; Other 12.82%.
	Metaphilosophy: Naturalism 49.39%; Non-Naturalism 30.34%; Other 20.27%.	Metaphilosophy: Naturalism 50%; Other 25.64%; Non-Naturalism 24.36%.
	Philosophical Progress: A Little 45.8%; A Lot 41.24%; Other 9.18%; None 3.77%.	Philosophical Progress: A Little 43.59%; A Lot 35.9%; Other 14.1%; None 6.41%.
	Philosophical Methods - Conceptual Analysis: Useful/Important 70.92%; Other 17.48%; Against 11.6%.	Philosophical Methods - Conceptual Analysis: Useful/Important 57.69%; Against 21.79%; Other 20.52%.
	Conceptual Engineering: Other 39.93%; Useful/Important 39.47%; Against 20.6%.	Conceptual Engineering:Useful/Important 46.15%; Other 28.21%; Against 25.64%.
	Empirical Philosophy: Useful/Important 60.01%; Other 25.51%; Against 14.48%.	Empirical Philosophy: Useful/Important 61.54%; Against 19.23%; Other 19.23%.
	Experimental Philosophy: Against 35.95%; Useful/Important 32.6%; Other 31.45%.	Experimental Philosophy: Against 46.15%; Useful/Important 34.62%; Other 19.23%.
	Formal Philosophy: Useful/Important 55.51%; Other 31.62%; Against 12.87%.	Formal Philosophy: Useful/Important 52.56%; Other 30.77%; Against 16.67%.
	Intuition-Based Philosophy: Useful/Important 49.45%; Against 29.02%; Other 21.53%.	Intuition-Based Philosophy: Useful/Important 42.31%; Against 39.74%; Other 17.95%.
	Linguistic Philosophy: Useful/Important 46.16%; Other 32.32%; Against 21.52%.	Linguistic Philosophy: Useful/Important 51.28%; Against 24.36%; Other 24.36%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Metaphysics	Abstract Objects: Nominalism 41.37%; Platonism 37.83%; Other 20.81%. Free Will: Compatibilism 57.68%; Libertarianism 18.2%; Other 13.54%; No Free Will 10.58%. Gender: Social 43.01%; Other 35.93%; Biological 15.12%; Psychological 4.3%; Unreal 1.63%. God: Atheism 66.72%; Theism 18.64%; Other 14.63%. Laws of Nature: Non-Humean 53.73%; Humean 30.82%; Other 15.45%. Personal Identity: Psychological 39.44%; Other 31.58%; Biological 15.6%; Further-Fact 13.37%. Race: Social 52.82%; Other 24.32%; Biological 11.46%; Unreal 11.4%. Science: Realism 71.52%; Anti-Realism 14.27%; Other 14.21%. Teletransporter: Death 39.68%; Survival 34.79%; Other 25.52%. Time: Other 39.45%; B-Theory 35.71%; A-Theory 24.84%. Truth: Correspondence 48.33%; Deflationary 22.22%; Other 20.69%; Epistemic 8.76%. Vagueness: Semantic 42.56%; Other 26%; Epistemic 16.28%; Metaphysical 15.16%.	Abstract Objects: Platonism 50.94%; Nominalism 28.84%; Other 20.22%. Free Will: Compatibilism 51.62%; Libertarianism 24.05%; No Free Will 12.16%; Other 12.16%. Gender: Social 43.37%; Other 33.43%; Biological 18.98%; Psychological 2.71%; Unreal 1.51%. God: Atheism 61.35%; Theism 24.86%; Other 13.78%. Laws of Nature: Non-Humean 65.74%; Humean 22.56%; Other 11.7%. Personal Identity: Psychological 33.62%; Other 31.36%; Further-Fact 18.64%; Biological 16.38%. Race: Social 52.27%; Other 25.08%; Biological 12.39%; Unreal 10.27%. Science: Realism 78.24%; Other 13.22%; Anti-Realism 8.54%. Teletransporter: Death 45.48%; Survival 34.75%; Other 19.77%. Time: B-Theory 44.9%; A-Theory 28.28%; Other 26.82%. Truth: Correspondence 56.83%; Other 22.58%; Deflationary 19.67%; Epistemic 1.91%. Vagueness: Semantic 44.41%; Other 24.58%; Epistemic 14.53%; Metaphysical 16.48%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Philosophy of Language	Analytic-Synthetic Distinction: Yes 62.01%; No 25.48%; Other 12.51%. Knowledge Claims: Contextualism 52.17%; Invariantism 24.29%; Other 19.54%; Relativism 4%. Mental Content: Externalism 53.83%; Other 24.24%; Internalism 21.93%. Proper Names: Millian 37.51%; Fregean 34.75%; Other 27.74%. Truth: Correspondence 48.33%; Deflationary 22.22%; Other 20.69%; Epistemic 8.76%.	Analytic-Synthetic Distinction: Yes 70.71%; No 23.93%; Other 5.36%. Knowledge Claims: Contextualism 49.43%; Invariantism 29.12%; Other 15.71%; Relativism 5.75%. Mental Content: Externalism 64.44%; Other 19.26%; Internalism 16.3%. Proper Names: Millian 45.65%; Fregean 30.43%; Other 23.91%. Truth: Correspondence 46.59%; Deflationary 25.45%; Other 24.73%; Epistemic 3.23%.
Philosophy of Mind	Mind: Physicalism 51.59%; Non-Physicalism 31.85%; Other 16.56%. Mental Content: Externalism 53.83%; Other 24.24%; Internalism 21.93%. Perceptual Experience: Representationalism 36.13%; Other 32.88%; Disjunctivism 13.83%; Qualia Theory 13.3%; Sense-Datum Theory 3.85%. Zombies: Conceivable but Not Metaphysically Possible 35.78%; Metaphysically Possible 24.22%; Other 24.16%; Inconceivable 15.84%.	Mind: Physicalism 55.21%; Non-Physicalism 27.89%; Other 16.9%. Mental Content: Externalism 54.91%; Other 22.83%; Internalism 22.25%. Perceptual Experience: Representationalism 44.84%; Other 26.84%; Disjunctivism 14.45%; Qualia Theory 11.8%; Sense-Datum Theory 2.06%. Zombies: Conceivable but Not Metaphysically Possible 39.26%; Inconceivable 21.49%; Metaphysically Possible 20.63%; Other 18.62%.

Subject-Matter	General Population	Specialists Alone
Applied Ethics	Eating Animals and Animal Products: Yes and Yes 47.05%; No and Yes 23.92%; No and No 16.5%; Other 12.53%. Experience Machine: No 76.86%; Yes 13.34%; Other 9.81%. Footbridge: Do not push 55.8%; Other 22.64%; Push 21.55%. Meaning of Life: Other 29.16%; Subjective 28.35%; Objective 27.59%; Non-Existent 14.9%. Normative Ethics: Other 33.83%; Virtue Ethics 25.04%; Consequentialism 21.42%; Deontology 19.7%. Politics: Egalitarianism 38.26%; Other 29.41%; Communitarianism 22.06%; Libertarianism 10.28%. Trolley Problem: Switch 62.5%; Other 24.88%; Don't Switch 12.62%.	Eating Animals and Animal Products: Yes and Yes 35.56%; No and No 26.22%; No and Yes 24.89%; Other 13.33%. Experience Machine: No 77.83%; Yes 15.84%; Other 6.33%. Footbridge: Do not push 61.71%; Other 19.37%; Push 18.92%. Meaning of Life: Subjective 31.22%; Other 29.41%; Objective 27.15%; Non-Existent 12.22%. Normative Ethics: Other 38.84%; Deontology 22.77%; Virtue Ethics 19.64%; Consequentialism 18.75%. Politics: Egalitarianism 47.71%; Other 27.06%; Communitarianism 17.89%; Libertarianism 7.34%. Trolley Problem: Switch 66.37%; Other 19.73%; Don't Switch 13.9%.

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