

2. Feldman 2006: Can we agree to disagree?

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I. Arguments

An *argument* consists of a string claims (*premises*) followed by another claim (*conclusion*).

An argument is *valid* if it's impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false.

An argument is *sound* if it's valid and the premises are true.

An argument is *potentially persuasive* if a reasonable person could come to believe the conclusion on the basis of the premises.

Example 1:

P1. If you ought to brake for animals, then God exists.
C. Therefore, God exists.

Valid? Sound?

Example 2:

P1. If you ought to brake for animals, then God exists.
P2. You ought to brake for animals.
C. Therefore, God exists.

Valid? Sound?

Example 3:

P1. God exists.
C. Therefore, God exists.

Valid? Sound?

Example 4:

P1. Everything has a cause.
P2. If the universe has a cause, then God exists.
C. Therefore, God exists.

Valid? Sound?

II. Feldman's Question

Propositional attitude psychology. Epistemology focuses on *doxastic*—"belief-like"—states (vs. *conative*, "desire-like" states).

Feldman: for every proposition p , you either **believe** it, or **disbelieve** it, or **suspend judgment** on it.

You and I *disagree* about p if one of us believes it, and the other disbelieves it.

E.g. $p = \text{God exists}$.

Our disagreement is *reasonable* if each of our beliefs is justified by our evidence.

Epistemic (vs. practical) justification.

We are *epistemic peers* (about p) if we have comparable background knowledge, reasoning powers, etc. as regards p .

We have *shared our evidence* if we've had a full discussion of our reasons for our beliefs.

Q1: Can epistemic peers who've shared their evidence continue to reasonably disagree?

Q2: Can they, further, both think the other is reasonable too?

"Agree to disagree."

Feldman argues *no*.

III. The options

1) Different takes (or starting points) on evidence?

Uniqueness Thesis: For any body of evidence E and proposition p , E justifies at most one of: believing p , disbelieving p , or suspending judgment on p .

Detective; Lefty vs. Righty

Different "starting points"? This just pushes the problem back. Suppose you and I share evidence but disagree:

- P1. Either we have reasons for our starting points, or not.
- P2. If not, we should give them up, and so stop disagreeing
- P3. If so, we should be able to share them and then (sharing both evidence and starting points), stop disagreeing.
- C. Differing starting points can't justify persistent disagreement.

2) Evidence not fully shared?

Special insight from all we've seen.

Compare: both looking at the quad, you and I disagree about whether the Dean is standing there.

Evidence of evidence is evidence. So even if we can't share evidence, since we *can* share the fact that we *have* evidence, this difference can't justify persistent disagreement.

Disanalogies with Dean case?

3) Think (wrongly) that the other side is unreasonable?

Yes to Q1, no to Q2.

If you don't have reasons to think you're more reasonable, don't think it!

If you do, shouldn't you be able to share those reasons?

Upshot: "modest" skepticism.

Feldman thinks that when we realize we disagree with a peer, we should suspend judgment on the issue.

How "modest" is this skepticism?

Consider some political belief you're *very* confident in.

Was Trump a good president?

- Can you dismiss the other side as unreasonable?
- If not, can you hold onto your belief in the face of disagreement?
- Even if so, does the arbitrariness of your belief undermine it?
- How far does the threat of undermining extend?

Part II.

Part III.

Part IV.

Part V.