

## Dissertation Summary

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My dissertation is entitled *Defending Philosophical Knowledge* and its aim is to save the discipline of philosophy from two different (but related) kinds of arguments for philosophical skepticism. The first concerns the supposed widespread philosophical practice of appealing to intuitions as evidence to justify philosophical theses. Many now argue that this practice is unjustified because either intuition cannot legitimately be counted as evidence, or even if they can be legitimately counted as evidence, they are an unreliable source of justification. The second concerns the undeniable fact that there is widespread disagreement among philosophers about all, or nearly all, substantive philosophical theses. Many now argue that this undeniable fact shows that philosophical knowledge is untenable because philosophers rarely, if ever, resolve their philosophical disagreements despite spending their professional lives attempting to do so. In brief, the purpose of my dissertation is to show that philosophical knowledge is not threatened by either intuition or disagreement skepticism.

To address and rebut these skeptical arguments, my dissertation proceeds as follows:

Chapter one concerns the preliminary question of whether reliability is a necessary condition for knowledge. This question is significant because if knowledge does not require reliability, then philosophical knowledge is not threatened by the unreliability of intuitions or by philosophy's poor track-record of resolving disagreements. In this chapter I argue that this way of avoiding philosophical skepticism is mistaken because reliability must be a necessary condition for knowledge. To accomplish this, I first respond to John Turri's recent arguments against the reliability condition for knowledge and then show that the reasons why Turri's arguments fail help to demonstrate why reliability must be a necessary condition for knowledge.

Chapter two concerns the challenge to philosophical knowledge posed by intuition skepticism. The intuition skeptic argues that because intuitions are not a proper kind of evidence or are unreliable, they cannot render knowledge. Philosophers like Pust, Bealer, and Bonjour have argued that any such argument is self-defeating because the premises of any such argument will be, at least in part, supported by some intuitions. While intuition skeptics are keenly aware of this danger, they either respond to this threat directly or take measures to avoid this threat by limiting the scope of their intuition skepticism. Examples of the former include Silva who argues that epistemic self-defeat is not a threat to an Unreliability Argument for a global kind of intuition skepticism. Examples of the latter include Machery who argues that experimental data supports an Unreliability Argument for a near-global skepticism against *philosophers' use* of the method of cases, which itself (allegedly) does not rely on intuitions about cases. The aim of this chapter is to show that the self-defeat challenge is not as easily dealt with or avoided as the above philosophers would have us believe, and that this challenge places severe limits on the kind of intuition or philosophical skepticism that an Unreliability Argument can establish. In short, I argue that the power and scope of the self-defeat challenge has been underappreciated in this literature.

Chapter three concerns whether disagreement among philosophers leads to philosophical skepticism. Conciliationism is roughly the family of views that hold that rationality requires agents to reduce confidence or suspend belief in *p* when epistemic peers (i.e. agents who are about as equally well-informed and intellectually capable) disagree about *p*. While Conciliatory views are

*prima facie* plausible, they seemingly lead to a pervasive philosophical skepticism since a great many (if not all) philosophical propositions are disagreed upon by philosophical peers. In this chapter I aim to save philosophical knowledge from this kind of disagreement skepticism by arguing that all plausible versions of Conciliationism are false because they are epistemically self-undermining, veridically self-undermining, and lead to a hitherto unrecognized *reductio ad absurdum*. I then explain how these results can be extended to other competing views to Conciliationism and conclude by reflecting on the counterintuitive consequences of these results.

Chapter four extends the arguments in chapter three about general philosophical disagreements to combat one of the oldest and most discussed challenges to moral knowledge: the argument from *moral* disagreement to moral skepticism. While there are many different versions of this argument, it seems that all (or nearly all) moral disagreement arguments share an underlying structure. In this chapter I argue that all moral disagreement arguments that satisfy this underlying structure cannot establish moral skepticism because this underlying structure leads to a previously unrecognized *reductio ad absurdum*. In short, I argue that this *reductio* argument (very likely) refutes all versions of the moral disagreement to moral skepticism argument in one fell swoop.

In sum, my dissertation argues that, while reliability is a necessary condition for knowledge, philosophical knowledge is not threatened by either intuition or disagreement skepticism.