



Cesar Biojo

Disagreement

PHIL 4207

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Disagreement is hardly a new phenomenon. Yet there is a widespread sense that we are living in a time of remarkably sharp and persistent disagreement – a sense gestured at by the mysterious, and perhaps self-defeating, description of our time as the “post-truth” era. We seem no longer able to agree even about the basic facts of the world, from which we would each reason our way to our views.

In recent years, philosophers, too, have begun to take disagreement more seriously and both the phenomenon itself, as well as the matter of how we ought rationally to respond to it, has turned out to be deeply puzzling. In the first half of this course, we will critically explore some contemporary literature on the epistemology of disagreement: this is a cutting-edge area of work within social epistemology. What is the rational

response to disagreement – in particular, disagreement among epistemic “peers,” i.e., those we have reason to think are our intellectual equals? Does the disagreement of such an epistemic peer give you a reason to change your own view, or at least, the strength with which you hold your view? Or is such a concession self-defeating?

In the second half of the course, we will turn our attention to the specifics of moral disagreement, where the literature is somewhat less developed, but where the problem of disagreement is also closely intertwined with the question of the rational acceptability of moral testimony: Is it ever rational to believe that something is right or wrong on the basis of someone else’s say-so?