

## I. Introduction

Recent work has argued for Epistemic Partiality (EP): intra- or inter-personal duties require agents to believe “against the evidence,” or to hold a different evidential standard for intra- and interpersonal beliefs.

Recipe for EP cases: present a case where agent should believe  $p$  from the epistemic point of view, then show that this belief is incompatible with intra- or inter-personal commitments.

Thesis: EP cases rely on a deficient conception of the “epistemic point of view,” and fail to appreciate a key feature (evidential asymmetries) that drives our intuitions. If we fix this, there is no case for EP.

## II. The Case for Epistemic Partiality

COMMITMENT

FRIENDSHIP

The agent cannot embody the epistemic ideal – the Disinterested Bookie, The Detached Observer – and also live up to their moral and interpersonal duties.

## III. The Bookie

The Bookie: no significantly different position from us; assigns probabilities to propositions; avoids incoherence; impartial; disinterested; doesn’t care about outcomes but aims to make money over the long run.

Claim: the Bookie’s view is the Epistemic Point of View:

The Epistemic Point of View (EPV): the epistemic outlook (or outlooks) that is (or are) sanctioned by the epistemic norms that apply to creatures like us.

*First*, he doesn’t care whether his beliefs are true.

*Second*, he doesn’t care how his beliefs go together. He ought to make them as independent as possible to diversify his risk. He doesn’t care about explanations.

Here are some plausible constraints on the EPV (h/t Gilbert Harman)

1. Clutter Avoidance
2. Facilitating Practical and Theoretical Reasoning
3. Avoid Inconsistency
4. Simplicity

→ The Bookie does not embody the EPV.

## Section III. The Detached Observer

Not a view from nowhere – no epistemologist thinks that! (contra S. Stroud)

Strawsonian Epistemology:

- Objective Stance (detached observer)
- Interpersonal Stance (friend)

Interpersonal-in-the-minimal sense: it involves an interaction between two persons.

→ EPV cannot be the Strawsonian Objective Stance

## Section IV. Relationship-Constituting Special Duties

Special duties of friendship: maybe epistemic duties are among that?

Interpersonal relationships come with an enriched epistemic situation. If we remove the asymmetries, does the tension remain?

RABBI

- Rabbi is tracking reliable indicators.
- Tracking reliable indicators does not require that we know their reliability in order to be justified.
- The features that the Rabbi is tracking make the conclusion warranted.

How do statistics play a role in grounding rational belief? This is complicated (see Munton, Gardiner). But its very plausible that the Rabbi is

COMMITMENT\*

NEMESIS & NEMESIS\*

A basic feature of interpersonal relationships is that we are constrained by *intelligibility*. Friend and Nemesis draw the same conclusion because the account is either (a) in character, or (b) not in character (and so both have evidence against it)

Conclusion: relationship-constituting special duties could only emerge in borderline cases: we ought to interpret friends *charitably*.

Not a special duty: The epistemic case for interpreting all persons charitably.

Conclusion: No case for epistemic partiality has been made.

## CASES

### COMMITMENT

You are considering whether to marry your beloved. You've lived together a while, and you are ready to commit to spend the rest of your life with this person. But you also know that half of all marriages end in divorce. And in order for you to sincerely promise your marriage vows (that you will love, honor, and cherish, until death parts you), you must *believe* that you can make good on those promises. But you know that many others have been in the same position as you, and yet their marriages did not last. So, according to the evidence, you should not believe you will fulfil your promise, and so you cannot sincerely commit to marry your beloved.

### RABBI

You are a rabbi who has been asked to marry a couple. Both of the individuals grew up in your synagogue. You have been present for all official life events. You have witnessed them in situations that display their character and personality. You have talked with them in depth about their life goals and relationship, which seem quite compatible. You know they've lived together a while, and you've seen them show genuine love and affection for each other. But you also know that half of all marriages end in divorce. As a matter of personal conviction, you do not agree to marry anyone unless you are strongly convinced that the relationship will last. Given the evidence, should you believe that the relationship will last (and agree to marry them)?

### COMMITMENT\*

You are considering whether to marry your beloved. You are both 17 and expecting a child together. Neither of you has a job, nor have you yet completed high school. You know your community support will be slim, if you decide to marry. You also know that half of all marriages end in divorce. And in order for you to sincerely promise your marriage vows (that you will love, honor, and cherish, until death parts you), you must *believe* that you can make good on those promises. According to the evidence, you should not believe you will fulfill your promise, and so you cannot sincerely commit to marry your beloved.

## FRIENDSHIP

You overhear two acquaintances discussing a close friend.

The story they report about your friend paints him in a bad light. It shows him to have done something inconsiderate and rude. And indicates something quite bad about your friend's character. Epistemically speaking, you ought to believe the negative things about your friend. But this is inconsistent with being a good friend. If you are to be a good friend, you have a duty to search for the charitable explanation and *not* believe the negative things about your friend.

### NEMESIS

You know your Nemesis quite well. You have a – perhaps unhealthy – obsession with following their career. They post prolifically on social media, and you follow all their posts. You take pains to be professional and friendly in social settings. Deep down, you want to best them professionally, so you don't actually have any concern for their welfare and success. But you've known each other for a long time, and you know how they respond in various social settings, how they conduct their professional life, and how they treat their grad students. You are not friends by any stretch, but you have a fairly well-formed notion of their character and you know them to be non-nefarious. One day, you overhear two acquaintances discussing your nemesis. The story paints your nemesis in a bad light. It shows them to have done something inconsiderate and rude, and indicates something quite bad about your nemesis' character.

### NEMESIS\*

Just like NEMESIS, except you have known your nemesis to treat people badly on many occasions.