

Conciliating to *Avoid* Moral Scepticism

It is commonly assumed that moral conciliationism entails epistemological moral scepticism. Proponents of moral conciliationism have so far played defence, arguing that this entailment relation does either not obtain or is else insignificant. In this paper, I go on the offensive: I argue that moral conciliationism *saves* us from epistemological moral scepticism.

First, I argue that only views taking moral disagreement seriously as a threat to our moral beliefs can utilise moral *agreements* to support these moral beliefs (call this symmetry). Both disagreements and agreements are concerned with the epistemic significance of an interlocutor's belief regarding a proposition you have already entertained. In both cases, you receive testimony regarding a claim you yourself have already considered. Whether or not this testimony happens to align with your beliefs should be irrelevant for the epistemic significance you ascribe to it since the level of trust in a particular piece of testimony depends on the antecedent trust in the testimony's source.

I discuss two objections to symmetry. First, while disagreements always seem to provide you with a new reason against your belief, agreements can occur also when the agreeing party relies on the same reason to justify their belief. If so, they do not provide you with a new reason for your belief. This objection can be traced back to two different kinds of disagreements and agreements. Both either give you a new reason for/ against or they can support/question your interpretation of the reasons you already have. The alleged asymmetry stems from comparing the wrong kinds of agreements and disagreements.

The second objection concerns the nature of believing. Since you already believe in the proposition, agreements seem epistemically vacuous—following up on an agreement you continue to believe in the proposition. In contrast, when encountering a disagreement, your doxastic state may change. Here, the apparent asymmetry can be traced back to a difference in *expectations*. In believing something, you expect other capable people to agree with you. Thus, if someone agrees with you, your evidential basis does not change while a disagreement changes your evidential basis significantly. Had you, however, expected a disagreement instead, its epistemic significance would have been minor while an agreement would have had more epistemic significance.

Having substantiated the symmetry claim, I argue that utilising agreements as an epistemic resource can save us from an epistemological kind of moral scepticism. While accepting moral conciliationism may mean accepting uncertainty about some moral beliefs (given that they are subject to disagreement), it also offers a way out of the uncertainty. I argue that moral conciliationism is best understood as advising suspending belief *for the time being*. The uncertainty is therefore not terminal, but transitional. However, epistemological moral scepticism is best understood as requiring suspending belief as a terminal attitude. Since moral conciliationism advises suspending judgment only as a transitional attitude and offers a way out of this transitional attitude (an increase in agreement), moral conciliationism helps us evade epistemological moral scepticism.