Engaging Opponents and the Duty to Object

“Agreement and Disagreement Beyond” Conference – University of Kent, October 2021

The notion of the *duty to object* has generated substantial discussion in recent literature, and plausibly offers a prominent response to various arguments against the prospect of (wholly or uniquely) epistemic duties. However, it raises a number of questions that warrant consideration: Firstly, it is not clear what it is for a duty to be wholly or uniquely epistemic in nature, whether it is grounded in entirely epistemic considerations or whether it is simply a subset of duties that aren’t clearly moral or practical. Secondly, insofar as we can have epistemic duties, are they of a kind that is comparable to moral and practical duties, are each of these kinds of duties alike in the scope and extent of their normative force? And finally, if we do indeed have a duty to object to false or unwarranted claims, does it only extend to mere objections? Or does the duty extend further to engaging our opponents in dialogue, striving to persuade them to change their opinions or negotiate a compromise? In this paper, I will aim to briefly survey answers to all three questions, focusing in particular on the third and identifying two tensions that may suggest that we have, at best, a limited duty to engage with our opponents.