

Reply to Geoff Pynn's Comments

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Overview

My paper: Fallibilism (CF), and the standard view of epistemic possibility (SV), leads to an abominable conjunction: There is a chance that p, and p is impossible.

The conjunction is abominable for three reasons:

1. It seems obviously false,
2. is contradictory, and
3. sounds really, really bad.

Geoff's two objections

1. Reject (CF) in favor of a different characterization of fallibilism,
2. Provide a warranted assertibility maneuver, or WAM, to show why the abominable conjunction seems false even though it's true.

Replies to objection 1

1. Alternative conjunctions *do* sound abominable.

Characterizations of fallibilism:

(Reed) Possibly, S knows p on the basis of justification J and S's belief that p on the basis of J could have failed to be knowledge.

(F&M) Possibly, S knows p and S is not maximally justified in believing p.

(Stanley) Possibly, S knows p and S's evidence is logically consistent with not-p.

Related abominable conjunctions

(Reed-AC) My belief that p on the basis of J could have failed to be knowledge, and not-p is impossible.

(F&M-AC) I am not maximally justified in believing p, and not-p is impossible.

(Stanley-AC) My evidence is logically consistent with not-p, but not-p is impossible.

Using dual rules to eliminate negations:

(Reed-AC-Dual) My belief that p on the basis of J could have failed to be knowledge, but p is necessary.

(F&M-AC-Dual) I am not maximally justified in believing p, but p is necessary.

2. If you deny (CF), you're left with a different, equally abominable conjunction.

The denial of (CF) entails:

(Anti-CF) When S knows p, there isn't a chance that not-p.

Combined with Reed's and F&M's characterizations of fallibilism above:

(Reed-New-AC) My belief that p on the basis of J could have failed to be knowledge, but there isn't a chance that not-p.

(F&M-New-AC) I am not maximally justified in believing p, but there isn't a chance that not-p.

Replies to objection 2

The pragmatics

1. Dougherty and Rysiew's WAM is used **against** the standard view of epistemic possibility.
2. Albritton-inspired conversation wrangling doesn't seem to succeed.

The semantics

1. To make abominable conjunctions semantically consistent, (CF) needs to be about evidential, not epistemic probabilities. Why think (CF) is about evidential probabilities?
2. Why would one think epistemic probabilities and evidential probabilities are different?
(AC-T) There is a non-zero evidential probability of P, but P is epistemically impossible.
=? There is a non-zero probability of P, but P is impossible.