

Pluralism and Peer Review in Philosophy

Forthcoming in *Philosophers' Imprint*

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Abstract

Recently, mainstream philosophy journals have tended to implement more and more stringent forms of peer review (e.g., from double-anonymous to triple-anonymous), probably in an attempt to prevent editorial decisions that are based on factors other than quality. Against this trend, we propose that journals should relax their standards of acceptance, as well as be less restrictive about whom is to decide what is admitted into the debate. We start by arguing, partly on the basis of the history of peer review in the journal *Mind*, that past and current peer review practices attest to partisanship with respect to philosophical approach (at least). Then, we explain that such partisanship conflicts with the standard aims of peer review, and that it is both epistemically and morally problematic. This assessment suggests that, *if feasible*, journals should treat all available and proposed standards of acceptance in philosophy as epistemically equal, and that philosophical work should be evaluated in terms of the novelty and significance of its contribution to developing thought in ways that are of value. Finally, we show, in a programmatic way, that improving the current situation *is* feasible, and can be done fairly easily.

Krist Vaesen acknowledges support from The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (VIDI grant 276-20-021)

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1. Introduction

Peer review is the main way in which philosophy journals determine what enters into the (official) record of philosophy. We examine the role peer review had in two important episodes in the history of twentieth-century philosophy, episodes that centre on changing editorial policies at the journal *Mind* under the editorships of G. E. Moore and G. Ryle. We show that bias about philosophical approach radically affected *Mind*'s contents. We thus illustrate the impact such bias can have on academic philosophy. We also take a look at the role peer review has in (recent) mainstream philosophy, which we identify with the kind of philosophy that has dominated prominent philosophy journals in the English speaking world over recent decades, journals such as *Mind*, *the Philosophical Review*, *Noûs*, *Ethics*, *Analysis*, *the British Journal for Philosophy of Science* and *Philosophy of Science*. We point out that peer review (in journals) has been, and continues to be, partisan about philosophical approach in much the way it was in *Mind* under Moore and Ryle. We also note that such partisanship should not, on the official view of the role of peer review, be part of peer review. We go on to consider whether we ought to accept the verdict that peer review in mainstream philosophy is problematic. Two features of mainstream philosophy are important here, namely the absence of established to be reliable ways of answering philosophers' substantive questions and professional philosophers' dependence on funds provided by others. In view of these features, current peer review practices turn out to be epistemically and morally problematic.

Finally, we examine what, if anything, should be done about the epistemic and moral problems we have identified. We outline two desiderata that need to be fulfilled in order to alleviate these problems, including fostering pluralism regarding philosophical approaches and evaluating philosophical work according to its contribution to developing thought in ways that are of value. We argue that these desiderata can be better fulfilled with relative ease and, therefore,

should be better fulfilled. We outline several proposals that are relatively easy to implement, including diversifying journals' editorial boards and review committees as well as making peer review much more public and far less selective than it currently is.¹ In effect, we suggest minimising, as far as feasible, the role of peer review in determining what enters into the debate.

We look at the history, and current practice, of peer review in philosophy in section 2. We consider the partisanship involved in section 3. Section 4 argues that this partisanship is problematic. Section 5 examines what, if anything, should be done to change peer review in philosophy.

2. Two episodes in the history of peer review in philosophy and their legacy

Some background to our philosophical case studies can be provided by a variant of a distinction that was used in Britain and elsewhere during the first half of the twentieth century, namely the distinction between speculative and critical approaches to philosophy (See, e.g., Broad, 1924; Mackenzie, 1930; Stedman, 1937). Roughly, speculative philosophy has as a central aim the making of substantive claims about reality as a whole as well as the aim of doing so in a way that is epistemically independent of science, ordinary language and common sense. Critical philosophy, by contrast, tends to avoid making claims to knowledge that are independent in this way; in some (particularly critical) variants, critical philosophy aims to avoid making any claims to new knowledge at all and, instead, merely aims to illuminate or clarify what is already known.

One of the main approaches to philosophy in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century is British idealism. It is, as Mander (2011, pp. 88-89) observes, predominantly speculative and, further, holds that reality is ultimately mind-like. One important school within

¹ Based on the APA/BPA survey mentioned earlier, we calculated that for the responding journals, the average rejection rate in 2013 was 88.3% (SD = 6), with a maximum of 98% (*The Philosophical Review*) and a minimum of 71% (*The American Journal of Bioethics*).

British idealism, a school that is most prominently represented by F. H. Bradley, is British absolute idealism. Absolute idealism has at its heart the idea that reality is ultimately one, mind-like concrete whole. British pluralistic idealism is another prominent school within British idealism, one that takes ultimate reality to be a community of minds and that arises largely as a response to absolute idealism.² Opposed to British idealism during the period at hand are a number of approaches that are predominantly critical. These include classical analytic philosophy, which emphasises the importance of logical and linguistic analysis and grew out of the work of Moore and B. Russell, as well as realist approaches that take the analysis of perception as their starting point; the latter approaches include new realism, which was a form of direct realism, and critical realism, which borrowed from both direct and representational realism.³ Another approach to philosophy that is important in Britain during our period is philosophical psychology. This approach can, in principle, be combined either with critical or with speculative approaches to philosophy and centres on the idea that psychological analysis can solve, or help to solve, many, or all, of the problems of philosophy.⁴

The first of our two historical case studies concerns the editorial policies of Moore in his role as editor of *Mind* from 1921, when he took over the role from G. Stout, through until 1948, when Ryle took over the editorship. We will see that Moore's partisan editorship of *Mind* results, already in the 1920s, in the marginalisation of philosophical psychology and of British idealism. Going through the volumes of *Mind* shows that, during the first four years of Moore's editorship, *Mind* was pluralistic in a way that was similar to its pluralism under Stout, whose policy of impartiality between different schools of philosophy Moore claimed (Schilpp, 1942) to continue. Absolute idealism, pluralistic forms of idealism, philosophical psychology, new and critical

² For more on British idealism see Mander (2011) and Boucher and Vincent (2012).

³ For more on these forms of realism see Marion (2000a and 2000b).

⁴ For more on philosophical psychology see van der Schaar (1995).

realism, classical analytic philosophy and the history of philosophy are all prominent in the journal. More idiosyncratic approaches to philosophy and pragmatism are also present, though pragmatism is only found in the work of F. C. S. Schiller. Here, we do find substantial representation of the radically different approaches to philosophy found in Britain at the time. In 1925, there is a flourish of work on Bradley's absolute idealism and J. Ward's pluralistic idealism; this flourish is attributable to the death of Bradley in 1924 and the death of Ward in 1925. After this, however, *Mind* changes. Work associated with new and critical realism, work in the history of philosophy and, especially, work in classical analytic philosophy are prominent in the journal; pragmatism continues to be represented, largely by Schiller's work. However, from 1926 through until at least 1940, *Mind* includes no full-length papers that favour pluralistic idealism and only three that favour absolute idealism.⁵ These three papers aside, absolute and pluralistic idealists publish full-length papers in *Mind* only when the papers are compatible with realist and analytic approaches, e.g., when the papers are purely historical.⁶ As for philosophical psychology, two full-length philosophical psychology papers appear in the journal in 1926, but we count only six more through until 1940, four of which appear in 1931; by contrast, for example, there are at least twelve full-length papers in philosophical psychology in the journal during the years 1920-1923.⁷

In sum, around 1924-1925 editorial policy at *Mind* appears to have changed so as to favour some of the approaches to philosophy that were still thriving in Britain over others that were doing so. For instance, it is well documented that British idealism continued to be productive until at least the 1950s (Broadie 2009; Akehurst 2011; Mander 2011). Moreover, while Moore's policy is plausibly thought to have pushed some British idealist work into books or, as our

⁵ The three papers are Hoernlé (1927), MacKenzie (1927) and Foster (1931).

⁶ See, e.g., Loewenberg (1934) and Hoernlé (1936).

⁷ The post-1925 philosophical psychology papers are Rignano (1926), Strong (1926 and 1928), Mace (1931), Piaget (1931), Ritchie (1931), Morgan (1931) and Duncker (1939).

discussion of R. G. Collingwood below will suggest, out of print altogether, British journals did continue to publish work that supports British idealism. In particular, *Philosophy* – which interestingly enough was founded in 1926 – and *the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* continued regularly to publish work supporting British idealism.⁸ When *the Philosophical Quarterly* was founded in 1950 with the idealist T. M. Knox as its editor, it also provided a regular venue for speculative thought, including idealism.⁹ At least some British idealists published work in American journals such as *the Journal of Philosophy*, *the Personalist* (which became *the Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* in 1980) and *the Philosophical Review*.¹⁰ Thus, while *Mind* was supposed – as Sorley attests in his 1926 *Mind* article celebrating 50 years of *Mind* – to be a journal that served all philosophical approaches in Britain, it no longer did. That the shift in journal contents can be attributed to editorial policy is suggested by the suddenness of the shift. Moreover, since Lewy’s (1976) contribution to the special edition of *Mind* put together for its 100th anniversary makes clear that Moore was essentially solely responsible for reviewing submissions to *Mind* and deciding on whether they should be published, it seems Moore was responsible for the change in policy and its implementation. Moore thus failed to continue the impartial policy of Stout.¹¹

Our description of what Moore included in *Mind* fits with what Lewy (1976) tells us about this; Lewy’s description is merely understated, and substantially incomplete, regarding the mid-1920s changes in the journal. Our description does, however, conflict with Warnock’s (1976) contribution to the 100th anniversary special edition of *Mind*. Warnock claims that it was during

⁸ See, e.g., Mackenzie (1930), Fawcett (1932), Jeans (1932), Kamiat (1938), Oakeley (1945) and Mure (1949) in *Philosophy*; see, also, Hallett (1931), Bowman (1932), Paton (1935) and Stedman (1937) in *the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.

⁹ See Knox’s paper “Thought and its objects” (1969) for a taste of his views. Examples of idealist and speculative papers in *the Philosophical Quarterly* in the 1950s include, Harris (1953 & 1956), Leclerc (1953) and Hartshorne (1958).

¹⁰ The pluralist idealist H. W. Carr, for example, publishes articles in all of these journals (See his 1926, 1929 and 1949); he dies in 1931, after having moved to America from Britain in 1925.

¹¹ Lewy was sub-editor of *Mind* in the early 1940s, when Moore was in the United States of America.

the Second World War that an orthodoxy emerged in Britain and in *Mind*, one which comprised an agreement that British idealism was not to be taken seriously and another agreement to take empiricism, positivism, analysis and the trio Russell, Moore and L. Wittgenstein seriously (Warnock, 1976, pp. 48-49). Further, he claims that this orthodoxy emerged after a battle in the 1930s among radically different species of philosophy. In support of this, Warnock mentions an early 1930s exchange in *Mind* between H. W. B. Joseph and L. S. Stebbing, and Ryle's 1935 criticism of Collingwood's treatment of the ontological argument.¹² According to Warnock's reconstruction, then, the changes in *Mind* were not the result of Moore's policy, as they took place only at the very end of Moore's editorship and were the result of a debate which was decided in favour of the new orthodoxy.

Yet, Joseph's discussion of Stebbing's work is a criticism of the Russellian application of the new logic in analysing natural language; this target not only reflects a rather limited disagreement when compared with the broad range of disagreements found in *Mind* before 1926, but is consistent with the orthodoxy described by Warnock and is in the spirit of the (partly Moore inspired!) ordinary-language philosophy of the 1930s.¹³ With respect to philosophy that is not part of Warnock's orthodoxy, Warnock mistakes its presence as an object of criticism or historical interest in *Mind* of the 1930s for something else. Collingwood responds to Ryle in private correspondence and writes there that no editor would consider publishing the response (Vrijen 2006). The response to Ryle in *Mind* comprises only a short discussion note by E. E. Harris (1936), albeit one that defends *Hegel's* treatment of the ontological argument. J. M. E. McTaggart's idealist views are discussed extensively in *Mind* in 1930, but in a purely critical way.¹⁴ Indeed, unanswered criticism of British idealist positions – sometimes by British idealists

¹² See Ryle (1935) and, for the start of the Joseph-Stebbing exchange, Joseph (1932) and Stebbing (1933).

¹³ See, e.g., J. Wisdom's (1938) ordinary-language treatment of Joseph's arguments.

¹⁴ See Gotshalk (1930) and Oakeley (1930).

– continues throughout the decade.¹⁵ In sum, a decisive battle between approaches to philosophy never occurred in *Mind*. Instead, Moore’s partisanship about approaches to philosophy gave rise to an orthodoxy in the journal already in the second half of the 1920s.

Our second historical case study concerns Ryle’s editorship of *Mind*, which continued until 1972 from the end of Moore’s editorship. Ryle, like Moore, was essentially solely responsible for reviewing submissions to *Mind* and deciding on their fate (See Warnock 1976). Moreover, his decisions on this matter reflected at least three relevant policies regarding *Mind*’s contents. First, Ryle substantially reduced the presence of the history of philosophy in *Mind* (Hamlyn 2003), thus reversing Moore’s policy on the matter. Second, Ryle believed that philosophical problems could be addressed briefly (Hamlyn 2003). It is thus no surprise that, as Findlay (1976) points out, Ryle reduced the length of articles in *Mind* drastically. Moore, and Stout before him, regularly published articles in two to three instalments, each of which could be over twenty pages in length. Ryle almost never published articles much longer than twenty pages in length. Findlay judges that the short-article policy favoured a piecemeal approach to philosophy. According to Findlay, it changed “*Mind* from being a catholic journal into being the organ of a school, and drove those who did not belong to a school into either founding new journals or writing major books” (Findlay, 1976, p. 60). Given what we have seen, Findlay, no less than Warnock, is wrong about when *Mind* ceased to be a ‘catholic’ journal. But it is plausible that the emphasis on short articles in *Mind* encouraged the more piecemeal approach to philosophy that was on display in its pages during Ryle’s tenure. As a corollary, though more tentatively, it seems plausible that the short-article policy encouraged, by encouraging articles comprised of responses to other articles, a particularly combative form of philosophy, one in which adversarial argumentation plays a

¹⁵ See, e.g., Stedman (1934) and Acton (1936).

growing role.¹⁶ Further encouragement along these lines was provided by the proliferation of discussion-notes in *Mind* – papers with short comments on, or a few counter-arguments to, positions developed in the more substantive articles published in the journal (Hamlyn, 2003).

The third relevant policy concerns British idealism. On the one hand, as we have already noted, it still attracted many supporters in Britain during the 1950s. On the other hand, the pages of *Mind* during this decade reflected an orthodoxy as to who is worthy of discussion, as we have seen Warnock (1976) notes. *Mind* largely limits its contents to approaches that came to be part of mid-century analytic philosophy, namely approaches inspired by classical analytic philosophy and by logical positivism.

In summary, philosophy in *Mind* during Ryle's period comes closer to resembling the standard picture of analytic philosophy than did philosophy in *Mind* during Moore's period. Under Ryle, philosophy in *Mind* does tend to be a-historical, piecemeal and frequently involves approaches that can be traced back to Moore, Russell, Wittgenstein and logical positivism. Adversarial argumentation also seems to receive encouragement. To a substantial extent, these changes can be attributed to Ryle's decisions about what was appropriate content for *Mind*.

We can here only touch on the legacy of the above episodes of partisanship in peer review. We do so by noting one important aspect of journal peer review that has arguably survived and spread during the substantial changes in philosophy since Ryle's editorship, namely the commitment to a certain argumentative, adversarial approach to philosophy and an associated approach to clarity. Let us call the admittedly somewhat heterogeneous, but nevertheless related by strong resemblance, standards applied over recent decades in judging inference and clarity in

¹⁶ Philosophical dialogue in the adversarial mode “consists of objections and counterexamples to which the best responses are *refutations* of objections and counterexamples followed by *more of the same*” (Friedman, 2013, p. 28, italics in the original).

mainstream philosophy *m-rigour* and *m-clarity* respectively.¹⁷ M-rigour predominantly characterises argumentation that aims to uncover the correct answers to substantive philosophical questions (Brennan, 2010; Chalmers, 2015). In addition, as argued by Hundelby (forthcoming) and observed by Moulton (1983) and Friedman (2013), m-rigour predominantly characterises argumentation that is adversarial. To this we add that m-rigour predominantly includes a certain perspective on what counts as a reasonable or plausible starting point for argumentation. What counts will change somewhat in response to discussion in mainstream philosophy and with its subfields, but will largely be constrained at any given time/subfield by which authors and discussions are to be cited and by a conservative bias with respect to these; the default assumption is that good reasons need to be found for rejecting these authors' positions. No doubt, there is more to m-rigour than just suggested.

The standards of m-clarity can plausibly be partially characterised in terms of the requirement that an author's work be relatively easily understood by other mainstream philosophers, especially by those having the work as their area of specialisation. The standards of m-clarity also plausibly involve the requirement that concepts, propositions, inferences and larger-than-inference level argumentative structures that make up written philosophical work be presented using one of a limited repertoire of standardised language forms; at the most general level, these forms will borrow from symbolic logic and/or regimented, informal reasoning, but they will also borrow from more domain specific forms such as the terminology of recent analytic metaphysics or recent meta-ethics. Worked out definitions of m-clarity are hard to find, and it would be premature to settle on any single substantive definition.

¹⁷ We use the terms 'm-rigour' and 'm-clarity' rather than 'rigour' and 'clarity' in order to remain neutral about what rigour and clarity are. In this context, note that we do not object to using the perhaps natural '(recent) analytic philosophy' instead of 'mainstream philosophy', though we caution that how recent mainstream philosophy relates to the analytic tradition discussed earlier in this section may not be straightforward.

The full details of what m-rigour and m-clarity involve are not, however, of importance to our arguments. What matters is that the mainstream philosophy journals we are concerned with are, in employing m-rigour and m-clarity as criteria for assessing submissions, partisan with regard to which approach to philosophy they serve and thus which papers they are willing to publish. Who suffers from this partisanship is something we discuss in the next section.

We need to make three final remarks. First, we do not mean to imply that Moore and Ryle were the sole or even the primary individuals responsible for how philosophy developed during their periods of editorship. Yet, it seems reasonable to assert that their policies were one salient contributing factor, given the prominence of *Mind* in the profession and given the role that publishing in *Mind* had on certifying practitioners in philosophy.

Second, the extent of systematic bias in peer review in philosophy remains to be explored, but certainly extends beyond the examples we have documented here. Thus, for example, Howard (2003) has documented R. Rudner's exclusion of work on values, politics or societal concerns from *Philosophy of Science* after 1958. Haslanger (2008) points to the near absence of feminist thought from prominent journals, including *Mind*. We have documented (2017) how a group of analytic philosophers by and large excluded speculative philosophy from the pages of *the Philosophical Review* after they took over the journal in the late 1940s.

Third, one might think that the trend towards out-of-house peer review has substantially diminished the discretionary power of journal editors and, consequently, that their partisanship is insufficient to explain the present-day convergence of approaches. We believe, however, that there is still ample room for editors to exercise their commitments. For instance, among philosophy journals, desk-rejections by editors are still common practice (Lee and Schunn, 2011). Further, even under triple blind review, editors make crucial decisions which are open to partisanship, e.g., on who will serve as a reviewer and on what to do with reviewer reports, be

they positive, negative or conflicting. Finally, reviewers are presumably as subject to partisanship as editors. If they are selected in virtue of sharing similar philosophical commitments, their judgments can be expected to align with those the editor who selected them would make.

3. The official function of peer review and its role in philosophy

Let us turn to describing the official view of the role of peer review and to considering what this view implies about the policies of Moore and Ryle, and about more recent peer review in mainstream philosophy journals. The official function of peer review is certification: peer review certifies the quality of research output (an epistemic role) and of the scholars producing such output (a non-epistemic role) (Shatz, 2004). Ideally, it is merely in virtue of this certifying role that peer review regulates the research agenda of a field.

The epistemic role of peer review is assessing the quality of research. From the hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of manuscripts submitted on a yearly basis,¹⁸ it weeds out those which are not sound, significant or novel. Peer review is thought to be a particularly powerful procedure because it is carried out by people whose opinion on the subject is authoritative, who, as scientists, are more likely to judge work on scientific merit than in terms of more ordinary concerns (e.g., market considerations, politics), and who can be assumed to be impartial, in the sense of not being too closely linked to the author(s) whose work is being reviewed (Lee et al., 2013). The authoritative nature of peer review is widely supposed partly to rest on the fact that work is to be judged on shared standards of excellence and expediency (Lee et al., 2013). In this way, peer review is supposed to reflect existing knowledge rather than the perspective of this or that reviewer or group of reviewers.

¹⁸ Björk et al. (2009; cited in Lee et al., 2013) estimate that 1,346,000 peer-reviewed papers were published in 2006. An average rejection rate of 50% would thus already lead to over than 2 million submissions for that year.

As regards non-epistemic certification, peer review serves as an evaluative standard in hiring, conferring tenure, promotion and grant committee decisions. Peer-reviewed articles are taken to demonstrate a scholar's ability to (continue to) contribute to a field, in a way recognized by that field and, at least in comparison to invited contributions, independently from the scholar's personal and professional networks.

For our purposes, what matters is that, from the standard perspective just described, the partisan approaches of Moore and Ryle during their editorships of *Mind* should be avoided in peer review. The epistemic role of peer review was undermined because the epistemic standards of evaluation employed during these editorships were not shared among the scholars served by the editorships.

Things get more complicated when it comes to more recent partisanship about approaches to philosophy. It is natural to think that the community currently served by, say, *Mind* just comprises contemporary, mainstream philosophers. This community does, it might be suggested, share standards for evaluating philosophical work. Thus it might be thought that, although the journal has recently been partisan about how philosophy should be carried out, its peer review practices have been in accord with the standard requirements of peer review.

Such a line of thought is, however, too quick. *Mind* and other prominent journals collectively play an important role in determining how resources such as jobs, funding and research time are distributed among academics working, and seeking to work, in academic philosophy in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and other countries. Accordingly, the community these journals serve extends well beyond those who accept the standards of mainstream philosophy; it includes, for example, many working in African philosophy, feminist philosophers critical of mainstream philosophy, many continental philosophers and many of those who see themselves as trying to bridge the analytic-continental divide. The community in question also

includes those who are not quite a good fit for any particular, widely adopted approach to philosophy. The journals being considered are thus, deliberately or not, partisan about whom they support from among the community of actual and potential academic philosophers in countries they influence.¹⁹

4. Epistemic and moral problems with peer review in mainstream philosophy

Our discussion thus far has aimed to be descriptive. The question remains whether peer review that is partisan in the way it was under Moore and Ryle, and, with all the differences acknowledged, in the way that it still is in prominent mainstream philosophy journals, should be avoided. In this section we argue that it should be avoided in the context of mainstream philosophy, at least if feasible. We argue, first, that there is no good reason to prefer the approach of mainstream philosophy, including its emphasis on m-clarity and m-rigour, over available alternatives and, second, that there are good epistemic and moral reasons for avoiding partisanship in peer review. In the next section we argue that, given how easy it is to improve current practice, it should be improved.

A popular argument for scepticism about philosophy, namely *the argument from disagreement*, can be used to support the claim that there is no good reason to prefer the standards of mainstream philosophy over available alternatives. The argument from disagreement concerns (at least) disagreement about the correctness of answers to substantive philosophical questions, that is, about the correctness of philosophical positions, including philosophical pictures, theories and definitions. The starting point of the argument from disagreement is the observation that

¹⁹ This does not mean that, on the standard perspective of peer review, journals specializing in specific approaches are generally biased in a problematic way. Such specialization might, for example, have limited influence on those not sharing in the specialization, or might even serve to provide a temporary correction to a bias against an approach.

philosophy is characterized by pervasive, persistent disagreement between epistemic peers about what the correct answers to substantive philosophical questions are. Given this observation, the argument would have us infer that philosophy cannot settle substantive philosophical questions in an epistemically acceptable way (See, e.g., van Inwagen, 2004; Gutting, 2009; Brennan, 2010; Frances, 2010; Dietrich, 2011; Kamber, 2011; Sosa, 2011; Plant, 2012; Kornblith, 2013; Lycan, 2013; Goldberg, 2013; Chalmers, 2015; Matheson, 2015; Haack, 2016).

Whether the argument of disagreement succeeds in undermining some set of standards for assessing philosophical work might depend, to begin with, on the extent to which the standards in question are and have been employed. If the standards have only been employed to a limited extent, then the existence of disagreement in philosophy might be thought not to undermine the supposition that they are able appropriately to settle disagreements. Thus, for example, Williamson (2007, p. 286) seems to suggest that rigour and clarity are still largely absent from much of mainstream philosophy, even though, on his view, the best of mainstream philosophy realises them more persistently than they have been realised in the past. If Williamson is correct, then perhaps disagreement in mainstream philosophy is largely a matter of the unfulfilled potential of rigour and clarity. Kamber (2011), to offer another example, suggests that it is experimental philosophy that may grow to enable overcoming disagreement in philosophy.

A standard response to claims that philosophy is about to be put on a firm footing is to point out their unsuccessful history, a history that appears to undermine similar claims made in the present (See, e.g., Hacker, 2009; Brennan, 2010; Chalmers, 2015). A further response relates specifically to mainstream philosophy. If the claim that mainstream philosophy is by and large far from instantiating some set of standards is to block the argument from disagreement, even the supposedly very best of mainstream philosophy cannot be supposed substantially to meet the standards in question. For if the very best of it substantially meets these standards, the ability of

the standards acceptably to settle the questions at hand will still be undermined. The candidate best results of mainstream philosophy are subject to much the same disagreement as are other parts of philosophy. As many (e.g., Kornblith, 2010 and Sosa, 2011) have put it, disagreement in philosophy, including mainstream philosophy, is pervasive; it leaves no answers to substantive issues within philosophy untouched.

A more popular response to the argument from disagreement is that the appropriate standards for accepting answers to substantive philosophical questions are low enough so as not to be rendered problematic by the disagreement we find among philosophers (See, e.g., Brennan, 2010; Sosa, 2011; Goldberg, 2013; Siepel, 2016). This response acknowledges that if reliability is demanded of standards for accepting answers to substantive philosophical questions, then no acceptable standards are to be found. But, we are told, the relevant standards of acceptance in philosophy should not be so high. Thus, for example, Sosa writes that philosophy, art criticism, politics and morality are an essential part of life and that, accordingly, we need to pursue them with what good standards we have even if these are not those of science (2011, p. 200). Similarly, Goldberg (2013, p. 189) tells us that in contexts where, as in philosophy, the standards of justification and knowledge cannot be met and it is agreed that there is a need for information on certain topics, lower epistemic standards can license assertion.

The just mentioned proposals according to which answers to substantive philosophical questions need not be reliably arrived at might provide an appropriate response to the argument from disagreement, but it is one that makes partisanship about mainstream philosophy unreasonable. The proposals themselves, note, do not distinguish between different approaches to philosophy; the claim is that philosophy as such can proceed with less than reliable standards. The proposals thus, and despite often being made by representatives of mainstream philosophy, do not bring with them arguments as to why we ought to prefer specific approaches to

philosophy, such as those emphasising m-clarity and m-rigour. Indeed, it would be hard to defend partisanship about mainstream philosophy as a whole by appeal to what is needed, or valued, from a human perspective as such. As Kitcher points out (2011), it is a challenge for much of mainstream philosophy to show that it reflects human needs and values, except perhaps those of its practitioners.

In any case, the need for answers to philosophical questions will at best serve to place weak constraints on the standards of assessment used in philosophy. That we need to, or should, address philosophical, political, ethical and aesthetic questions in some context might plausibly be thought often to require a modicum of clarity and argumentation; it, however, does not seem to require the peculiar standards associated with any specific approach to philosophy, something that is made clear by societally relevant, non-mainstream philosophy, including philosophical literature and art.

Similar considerations apply to the suggestion that m-clarity and m-rigour, and mainstream philosophy more broadly, should be pursued because they promote values other than truth and other than what we clearly value qua humans, e.g., elaborate philosophical positions, the systematic noting of distinctions, m-rigour and m-clarity themselves and so on. Thus, one ought to wonder whether the argumentative apparatus of mainstream philosophy is needed in order to have its distinctions or its elaborate philosophical positions. More broadly, non-mainstream philosophical approaches promote many of the same valuables; they, of course, also promote their own alternatives to m-rigour and m-clarity. In any case, promoting what might be valuable in mainstream philosophy is not in tension with the pursuit of non-mainstream approaches to

philosophy, so the wish to pursue whatever it is that mainstream philosophy provides is hardly reason for partisanship.²⁰

Thus far, our discussion recommends responding to the argument from disagreement by accepting that no philosophical approach has been established to be a reliable means of answering substantive philosophical questions and trying nevertheless to legitimate some standards of acceptance in philosophy. We have also suggested that, once the reliability of mainstream philosophy is held to be an open issue, there appears to be no good reason to prefer its standards. We now turn to arguing that there are good reasons to avoid partisanship in peer review in philosophy. Our argument proceeds in two steps: first, we argue that there are (among mainstream, and thus among contemporary, philosophers) no intersubjectively established grounds for taking available philosophical approaches to be reliable means for settling substantive philosophical questions. While the argument from disagreement supports the conclusion that there are no good reasons for thinking that available approaches are reliable, our focus now is on the absence of any agreed reasons for thinking that available approaches are reliable. We do not deny that there is widespread agreement among mainstream philosophers about how to do philosophy. Our point is that, nevertheless, mainstream philosophers who have examined the issue of the reliability of philosophy do not provide agreed grounds for supposing that any available approach to philosophy is reliable. Second, we argue that, in the absence of intersubjectively agreed grounds for taking available approaches to philosophy to be reliable, there are good epistemic and moral reasons not to prefer any particular available approach to philosophy in peer review.

²⁰ Rescher (1985) responds to the argument from disagreement by distinguishing between our attitude to philosophical claims when practicing philosophy and our attitude to such claims when reflecting on philosophy. According to Rescher, the argument from disagreement only affects the latter. We agree with Plant (2012), however, that one cannot separate reflection on philosophy and philosophical practice. Philosophical reflection is applied in peer review, awarding of funding for research in philosophy, hiring and firing and so on.

On what basis do we claim that there are no intersubjectively established grounds for taking available approaches to philosophy to suffice reliably to settle substantive philosophical questions? We base this claim on a reading of a body of literature that has already been extensively cited in our discussion of the argument from disagreement. While the history of the argument of disagreement goes back at least to the Pyrrhonists (Sextus Empiricus, I, 178) and extends beyond the boundary of mainstream philosophy (See, e.g., Vattimo, 2000; McCumber, 2013), our focus has been on its discussion within mainstream philosophy. This discussion does not include an argued, largely agreed conclusion that some philosophical approach or another is reliable. By implication, contemporary philosophy does not include such agreement.

Gutting is, in comparison with most other mainstream philosophers who have recently written about the availability of philosophical knowledge, optimistic about what philosophical knowledge has been achieved. He argues that we have a substantial body of philosophical knowledge, one that comprises knowledge of philosophical distinctions and of which answers to philosophy's ultimate questions are currently viable—that is, can be defended and elaborated upon in philosophical discussion (Gutting 2009 & 2013, p. 135). This might suggest that, according to Gutting, philosophers are able reliably to settle some philosophical questions. But Gutting's two sorts of philosophical knowledge do not include knowledge of answers to what we have called substantive philosophical questions. Other relative optimists about philosophical knowledge tend to hold similar positions (See, e.g., Chalmers 2015). Hanna (2015) is perhaps particularly optimistic and maintains the existence of some philosophical knowledge of answers to substantive philosophical questions. So, although he does not explicitly address the issue of the reliability of philosophy, he may well suppose that philosophers are able reliably to settle substantive philosophical questions.

The majority of those mainstream philosophers who have recently addressed the question of the existence of philosophical knowledge are less optimistic than Gutting. They emphasise the extremely limited, or even nonexistence, of philosophical knowledge and are explicit that we do not know the answers to substantive philosophical questions. These philosophers do not think mainstream philosophy provides us with a reliable philosophical approach. Lycan (2013), for example, responds to Gutting, arguing that there is not even much philosophical knowledge of the sorts Gutting claims there is. Haack (2016) tells us that philosophy is not a discipline with ideas ranging from the solid through to the speculative; it is all speculative. Matheson (2015) tells us that philosophical investigation is unlikely to bring us closer to the truth. Sosa (2011) and Brennan (2010) write that philosophical method is unreliable. Kitcher (2011) writes that philosophers have no expertise. And so on.

There are, to be sure, arguments for the claim that philosophy's, and in the recent literature this usually means 'mainstream philosophy's', approach is reliable. But these are as contested as any philosophical thesis. Gutting claims that there is no reason to justify philosophy's approach because it proceeds to develop knowledge in much the same way as science does, that is, via the use of deductive, inductive and abductive inference (2009, p. 229). Yet the literature also contains many who argue that philosophy is not like science, including, most obviously, those already cited as being sceptical about philosophy. Williamson (2007) goes further than Gutting and offers an argument for optimism about philosophy. He tries to justify reliance on intuitions about particular cases in philosophy by claiming that doing so is merely an instance of our more general ability to reason with the help of counterfactuals. This argument, however, does not tell us that there is philosophical knowledge of answers to substantive philosophical questions. There are also many objections to the argument (see, e.g., Buckwalter, 2014; Machery, 2015).

Let us accept, then, that there are no intersubjectively established grounds for taking any available approach to philosophy to be reliable. Why conclude from this that no particular set of standards, including m-clarity and m-rigour, should be preferred in peer review? Our first argument for doing so is based on epistemic considerations. The recent mainstream literature on the existence of philosophical knowledge does not, as we have seen, distinguish between established approaches to philosophy. All approaches that have been extensively tried out are supposedly equally suspect with regard to reliability, and there is supposedly no agreed epistemic basis for preferring one of these approaches over another. Some approaches might claim that, since they are relatively new, they have more potential for improving the situation in philosophy than do other approaches; but whether this promise will be fulfilled remains to be seen. In such circumstances, it would seem to be a mistake to favour any one approach collectively. Given uncertainty about the reliability of available approaches, it makes sense to hedge one's epistemic bets and to try out these approaches as well as novel ones.

From a moral perspective, it seems problematic to prefer papers on the basis of standards that have not been intersubjectively established to be reliable. It is, to begin with, problematic in that the standards in question are treated as standards by which to judge the truth conduciveness of work on substantive philosophical issues and yet it is clearly an open issue whether they are appropriate standards for doing so. Honesty suggests that, in case of collective uncertainty such as that of philosophy, the standards for assessment should reflect the various approaches taken by *all* those competing for the same academic resources.

In addition, we need to consider the non-epistemic role of peer review. As mentioned in Section 3, peer-reviewed papers are widely used to decide how to allocate valuable, public resources (e.g., grants, academic positions, etc.). Consequently, standards for assessing philosophical articles indirectly regulate the distribution of such resources. The standards will,

accordingly, be unproblematic only insofar as they reflect the goals of the proprietors of the resources in question. In particular, standards that lead to a partisan distribution of resources among researchers might be unproblematic only if the proprietors of the resources in question have deemed it acceptable that the resources be distributed in a partisan way. The sources of funding in philosophy, e.g., government funding or tuition fees, do not typically provide approval for the partisan allocation of their resources.

Worse, it is only in special circumstances that partisanship on the basis of something like views might reasonably be tolerated, even if with reservations. Most obviously, such partisanship might sometimes be tolerable when it is not funded by taxes and is sufficiently limited in its impact on the society in which it occurs; it might also be tolerable when the partisanship is that of an institution that is particularly important to the cultural or religious life of the countries where it is located and is to some extent compensated for. But mainstream philosophy is, by and large, funded by taxes and is not usually taken to be particularly important to the spiritual life of the countries in which it thrives. Finally, the partisanship we have been discussing might be tolerable when there is no feasible alternative. As we will see in the next section, however, improving the situation we find in mainstream philosophy is feasible.

It might, in response, be observed that contemporary philosophy is diverse and that some philosophy journals cater to non-mainstream approaches to philosophy; other avenues of publishing further enhance diversity in the field. But this merely tells us that non-mainstream approaches have some avenues of development, not that the substantial epistemic and moral biases in our field are not as we have described them. Moreover, even where non-mainstream approaches to philosophy are favoured, the tendency is to favour non-mainstream *schools* such as phenomenology, post-structuralism, speculative realism and so-on. Our arguments do not favour approaches to philosophy adopted by schools over more idiosyncratic approaches.

Another response might be that we are wrong regarding the need to have intersubjectively established grounds for taking standards for assessing philosophical claims to be reliable before we are entitled to assume that they are reliable. Williamson (2011) claims that philosophy is, from a sociological perspective, a normal academic discipline and that there accordingly is a presumption that its practitioners have real expertise about issues in philosophy. Such a presumption obtains, according to Williamson, because progress requires it; if we insist that all claims to expertise be tested, progress would grind to a halt. Accordingly, Williamson claims, it is up to critics of an established philosophical approach to show that it does not lead to knowledge rather than for its practitioners to show that it does. Thus, one might add, it would arguably be up to critics of mainstream philosophy to show that it is unreliable when it comes to substantive philosophical questions rather than for its practitioners to show that it is reliable. Without something like the argument from disagreement, there would be no problem with the approach of mainstream philosophy.

To begin with, however, the above argument fails to establish that there is a general presumption that normal academic disciplines are reliable. For we do not have to choose between presuming that disciplines are reliable and showing that they are reliable. It is possible, for example, simply to let academic philosophers proceed in the hope that philosophy might progress on substantive issues. One might also allow academic philosophers to proceed because what they do is of value irrespective of whether they might make progress. Further, even if there is a general presumption regarding the reliability of normal academic disciplines, the argument from disagreement does undermine this presumption in the case of mainstream philosophy. The argument suggests that there should be no presumption favouring the reliability of any approach to philosophy. In any case, there is no general presumption regarding the reliability of normal academic disciplines. Since resources spent on research need to be justified in general, and with

respect to their distribution among academic disciplines, research in a discipline cannot simply be presumed to be reliable. So too, the approaches employed by academic disciplines, including that of mainstream philosophy and if only because of its role in academic education, including in ethics and logic classes, are potential sources of harm. This means that the approaches of academic disciplines cannot simply be presumed to be reliable.

The absence of established to be reliable approaches in philosophy, along with the observation that academic philosophy needs to justify its place in the world, might give rise to despondency about philosophy. Why, it might be asked, should one do philosophy at all never mind do, and fund, academic philosophy? With regard to philosophy in general, we have already noted that it is practically unavoidable as well as that it is of value, and one can make a case for its value by, for example, building on philosophy's historical role in shaping societies, cultures, the sciences and individual lives, and by bringing out its aesthetic and other non-epistemic virtues. However, the arguments that we have developed concern only the reliability of approaches to philosophy; they leave untouched the question whether philosophy is of value for reasons other than its reliability. We have, accordingly, not provided an argument for thinking that philosophy, in general or even in its current academic form, is not of value and thus do not now have to address such a worry. Even were it to turn out that mainstream academic philosophy is not of sufficient value to justify its current place in academia, this would be tangential to our claims here. The problems we have identified with it in its current form, as well as our proposals for its modification, stand irrespective of whether further, more radical changes are needed.

On a final note, one may wonder why our arguments should be accepted if they require accepting that available philosophical approaches, including whatever ours amounts to, are not established to be reliable. To begin with, note that we have been examining an issue that needs to be decided in practice, namely that of how to manage publishing in philosophy. We have

acknowledged that lower standards of assertion may well be acceptable in such contexts. This acknowledged, the question is whether the standards that we have met in this paper suffice in order to contribute, by means other than guaranteed to be reliable output, to addressing the issue of how to manage peer review in philosophy. In response, note that we have aimed to provide a paper that addresses the relevant literature in mainstream philosophy and that goes substantially beyond that literature, and we have aimed to do so with enough m-clarity and m-rigour so as to encourage further discussion of the issues we have raised.

A second response concerning the unproven reliability of our approach is Pyrrhonist in nature. Pyrrhonist scepticism can plausibly be thought of as aiming to undermine the positions of its opponents not by accepting certain arguments against the opponents' positions, but by dialectically leading the opponents to the conclusion that their positions are self-refuting (Castagnoli 2010). Similarly, we have aimed to use the existing literature about disagreement in mainstream philosophy, along with substantial concessions to the demands of m-clarity and m-rigour, in order to challenge the commitment to m-rigour and m-clarity in peer review. If one is committed to the mainstream approach, then one's own approach suggests that the claims of this paper should be engaged with.

5. Restructuring or replacing peer review

Two desiderata for adequate review processes in philosophy journals are suggested by the previous section. The first desideratum is that these processes should treat all available and proposed standards of acceptance in philosophy as epistemically equal (irrespective of who puts them forward). This desideratum is suggested by the thought that pluralism about philosophical approaches makes sense given the lack of an established to be reliable philosophical approach. The second desideratum is that review of philosophical work should include evaluating such

work in light of the novelty and significance of its contribution to addressing philosophical questions that we need to address as humans and indeed, more broadly, in light of its contribution to developing thought in ways that are of value. This desideratum is suggested by the observation that, plausibly, addressing questions that we need to address and developing thought comprise an important part of what is of societal value in philosophy apart from its potential ability to answer substantive philosophical questions in a reliable way.

Both of our desiderata clearly recommend that approaches to philosophy according to which it has something other than the correct answers to its questions as a goal – e.g., literary value, suspension of belief, a purely heuristic role in discovery – should be included among the repertoire of approaches to philosophy. The second desideratum also recommends pluralism in approaches to philosophy as the historical record shows that a wide variety of philosophical approaches, including the proposal of novel approaches, have been of value.

We emphasise that, while our arguments recommend taking different standards of acceptance in philosophy to be epistemically equal, these arguments do not suggest that all philosophical work be treated as being equal in the review process. In particular, our arguments do not suggest that all work be judged equal with regard to its novelty and significance. Indeed, plausibly, novelty and significance can often be reasonably estimated; the significance of philosophical work can sometimes be estimated because it includes societal importance and societal impact as well as aesthetic and other non-epistemic virtues. Thus, overall, our desiderata do not mean that anything goes in deciding what to publish in philosophy. For example, it is clear that student-level work as well as work that consists solely in affirmations based on scripture are very unlikely to meet our second desideratum; such work is unlikely to contribute anything novel or significant to our discussion of philosophical questions. In addition, philosophy that aims to be relevant to some practice or another will be constrained by the standards of that practice. Insofar as it is to

inform a practice, philosophy will have to make use of the standards for clarity and rigour of that practice, including of the practice's requirements regarding empirical evidence.

At the same time, our epistemic and moral case for pluralism means that acknowledging significance as a constraint on evaluating philosophical work should not justify an appeal by philosophers to significance in order to set up any kind of new, highly selective criteria for publication instead of m-clarity and m-rigour. Indeed, our desiderata call for far more philosophical freedom than is currently common in prominent journals. We, for example, see no in-principle epistemic problem with an approach to philosophy that, following Pyrrhonism, allows weak arguments a legitimate place in reasoning (Sextus Empiricus, III 280-1). So too, we allow approaches to philosophy which, like Neoplatonism and other forms of mysticism, leave open or reject the possibility that philosophical knowledge is articulable in clear or literal language. Appeals to the truth of scripture will be acceptable when they are part of contributions that, as a whole, contribute to philosophical thought, e.g., that are novel and societally relevant. And, since not only available approaches will count as acceptable, there will be room for non-academic philosophers, as well as academic philosophers who are in a minority, to put forward their own proposals about how to do philosophy.

The question that remains for us in this section is what, if anything, the two desiderata just outlined, and the underlying motivation for these desiderata, suggest about how peer review in philosophy journals should change. After all, one might acknowledge that peer review as currently practiced in mainstream philosophy fails to meet our desiderata while insisting that doing better in this regard is not feasible. We now argue that this response is untenable and do so by proposing, in a programmatic manner, ways of improving on the present situation, including some that are relatively easy to implement.

With regard to fostering pluralism of approaches in philosophy, the easiest option is for journals to adopt editorial policies that are pluralist about approaches to philosophy and, correspondingly, for them to diversify their editorial boards and review committees so that each paper is assessed by standards that match its approach. *Mind* has, very recently, partly gone down this route. But while this route is an improvement on the current situation it will, plausibly, not do full justice to the diversity of existing and potential approaches. If decisions about how standards fit articles' approaches are made in-house, that is, among only a selected group of individuals, there seems plenty of room for partisanship to undermine the pluralism of approaches we are proposing. For such a small sample will be unlikely to properly represent *all* available approaches. The review process itself faces similar problems. The restricted group that selects reviewers can be assumed to under-represent existing diversity; and the same holds for teams of reviewers, which usually consist of no more than three individuals.

A further change that retains the basic set-up of the current peer review system would be to lower the bar for acceptance. Journals could set rejection rates at, say, around 60% rather than at above 90% (as currently is the case, see footnote 1). Lower mainstream standards of acceptance should make it easier for work to meet the standards while also fulfilling non-mainstream ones. At least initially, when the goal of placing papers in prominent journals might still be strong, some journals might have to publish far more in each journal issue. Higher volume could be handled financially and practically by moving to online-only publishing. Editorial policies would, of course, have to change in line with the higher acceptance rates, e.g., editors would be more inclined to accept papers where reviewers disagree.

Additionally—also easy to implement—journals might disclose, at the time of article publication, relevant review reports (with optional blinding of reviewer names), author responses and editorial decisions. Aside from likely improving the quality of refereeing, these measures

would at least partly accommodate worries of partisanship regarding approach as well as provide an important opportunity for discussion of approaches to philosophy. In order to make progress on questions related to, for example, m-clarity—when it is instantiated, whether it is truth-conducive, etc.—it would be advisable to have a broad audience engaging with particular cases in which m-clarity judgments are made; and it is precisely these sorts of judgments that will hopefully be part of the correspondence between editors, reviewers and authors when disagreement about the basics is substantial.

One might worry that higher acceptance rates would mean lower standards of m-rigour and m-clarity in ‘top’ journals. However, while it may mean that more published papers will not meet these standards, it need not impact on the work of those who are dedicated to m-rigour and m-clarity. Further, the improved review process should in fact be expected to result in stricter adherence to whatever standards are being applied in review. In any case, given that the main selling point of m-clarity and m-rigour has been their truth-conduciveness and given that it is unclear whether they are truth-conducive in the context of philosophy, it is not clear that reduced emphasis on these would be problematic.

One might also worry that implementing the above suggestions would lead to higher total publication numbers in philosophy, to information overload for readers and to reviewers who are (even more) overworked. But if we assume that those submitting articles also review articles, that each article requires two reviewers and that each philosopher makes five submissions a year to journals, each philosopher will have to review only ten journal articles a year. As for information overload, scientists do not appear to engage any less with work published in high-profile journals with high acceptance rates and total publication rates, such as *Physical Review* and *PLoS ONE*.²¹

²¹ In the period 1948-1956, *Physical Review*, then the most prominent journal in physics, had acceptance rates of 80% for single-author papers, and of over 95% for multi-author papers (Zuckerman and Merton 1971). Over that period, *Physical Review* published a total amount of 11,609 papers (minimally). In 2014,

Conferences, professional networks, email alerts, the ability to follow the work of particular individuals, blogs and so on seem to be sufficient to guarantee that messages of particular significance come across. There is no reason to suppose that it would turn out to be otherwise in philosophy. Further, it is not clear that lower rejection rates would substantially increase total publication numbers. For it is unclear to what extent the increase in publication numbers in currently hard to get into venues would go along with an increase in total publication numbers; the increase in publications in previously hard to get into venues will, after all, arise partly because papers they publish would have otherwise been published elsewhere. More importantly, if philosophers are reasonably confident that they will be able to publish their work, they may opt to improve the significance of their work rather than, or even at the expense of, paper quantity. Indeed, a context in which publications are much easier to come by than they currently are is likely to create strong incentives to change the institutional setup that academic philosophers work in – including the way in which they are certified as academics – so that they are required to distinguish themselves by means other than publication numbers. Academic philosophers will thus have strong incentives to do something other than spend their time trying to increase their paper count.

There remains, finally, the issue of how academic philosophers are to be certified if publication is relatively easy and publication venue no longer very important. There are, however, alternative ways of certification. Authors should get credited for their contribution to the philosophical discussion. They may earn a reputation in virtue of the readership they reach (e.g., number and diversity of readers and of followers), in virtue of the amount of discussion their work provokes (e.g., number of substantive commentaries received, number of new papers it

PLoS ONE had an impact factor of 3.234, despite its publishing 30,040 papers in total, with an acceptance rate of nearly 70%.

gives rise too) and in virtue of the content of the discussion of their work (e.g., successful objections handled, novel positions developed, high standards set and met).

Plausibly, raising acceptance rates and changing editorial policy still cannot do full justice to the diversity of existing and potential approaches. Moreover, plausibly, coming closer to doing so would require more inclusive policies regarding who participates in peer review, or even the elimination of peer review. A feasible way of broadening the participation in peer review involves following the public reviewing practice of most of the journals issued by the European Geoscience Union (EGU), including, e.g., *Earth System Dynamics* and *Climate of the Past*. Any paper which passes a basic quality check is put online and made available for public review and discussion. Designated reviewers and all interested parties may provide comments, and authors get the opportunity to respond. Based on the open discussion, the editor takes a decision on whether the piece is to be published as is, needs revision or is to be rejected. Going beyond EGU practice, one could add that papers may be assessed not only against approach appropriate standards set by the journal but also by author selected standards. In order to ensure that the extra burden of commenting is taken up and rewarded, certification criteria should be extended to include criteria that take into account the care and effort spent on reviewing (e.g., credits from authors, number and variety of substantive comments made).

Blinding of authors' names is not part of the process at EGU Journals and does seem to be redundant in the review process we have been describing.²² Raising journal acceptance rates and diversifying review teams already helps to reduce the need for such blinding; these two steps presumably reduce biases relating to who authors are, e.g., those relating to their gender or seniority, by allowing much wider access to journals and broadening the group of people from

²² This redundancy does not arise because philosophical approaches might be unreliable means of providing answers to substantive philosophical questions. After all, blinding might still be needed in order to safeguard the objective application of review process desiderata such as ours.

which review teams are drawn. Making the peer review process public adds a further layer of critical scrutiny, one that makes bias easier to uncover and address. Optional blinding of reviewers is part of the review process at EGU and does still seem to be important insofar as some reviewers will need protection from some more influential reviewees.

There is an obvious way in which further to improve the extent to which review is pluralistic. For we have still left review primarily in the hands of editors and relatively small groups of reviewers. And editors might still be partisan in their final decisions and papers would probably still be assessed by relatively homogeneous, likely partisan subsets of the entire professional community, the latter due to the fact that neither authors nor reviewers are incentivised to engage with scholars and work outside their approach. This could be avoided by allowing authors to curate their own papers. Authors, rather than editors, would thus decide whether and how to revise in light of comments received, when to consider their paper to be final or to retract. Moreover, authors would record their decisions and the subsequent reception of their work in a public way, alongside their published work.

Thus far we have considered how to foster the kind of pluralism recommended by our first and second desiderata. The second desideratum can be further fulfilled by including among the criteria for certification criteria regarding the extent to which philosophical work instantiates what is of value in thought (beyond the direct contribution to the search for truth). An important issue that would need to be addressed is which, if any, of our two desiderata gets priority when their application gives rise to tensions. A point to keep in mind is that, as we have noted, the appeal to what is of value in thought should not be used by philosophers to set up highly selective criteria for deciding what is to be published. Such appeals should, accordingly, be made in a manner that is consistent with the implementation of diverse editorial boards, low rejection rates and so on.

This means that, if authors are given the right to decide whether their work is to be published, the criterion of philosophical significance will only have an impact via peer review.

We acknowledge that changes that to some extent realise our suggestions can, at most, be a first step in changing our discipline so that it more honestly represents philosophy's special requirements. Mainstream philosophy would remain much as it is merely by virtue of its current dominance, even were all of our suggestions put in place. Still, there is also reason for optimism. First, scholars would be acknowledged not only for their ability to engage others in discussion, but also for their participation in discussing the work of others. At least in this regard, different approaches to philosophy are on a par. Second, mainstream philosophy might need to put more effort into addressing the wider significance of their work. Yet, increased sensitivity to the issue of societal relevance plausibly also helps in promoting work to people deciding on the allocation of resources (university administrators, funding agencies).

To summarize, we doubt that the current peer review system is the best of the worst. Some of the adjustments discussed above, such as increasing acceptance rates and making the review process public and/or open, are implementable and would bring us closer to satisfying the desiderata we started this section with (i.e. pluralism and relevance). In light of available online resources, our democratic proposal doesn't seem to pose substantial technical problems either.²³ Here the main challenge might be changing the deeply ingrained habit of assessing scholars by the prestige of the journals they publish in or by how convincing we find them by our own standards, rather than, as we propose, by their contribution to ongoing discussion.

²³ See, for example, the resources at <http://www.peerevaluation.org>.

6. Conclusion

Peer review in philosophy has been, and still is, subject to partisanship that is hard to justify on epistemic, moral and, as we have argued in the previous section, pragmatic grounds. Thus, altogether, there seems to be no compelling reason for keeping current review practice as it is.

Pluralism about philosophical approaches, partly recommended in light of the lack of an established to be reliable approach in philosophy, and increased attention to what is needed, or valued, from a broad non-epistemic perspective, partly recommended in light of philosophers' dependence on funds provided by others, might require additional sorts of reform. These aims may for instance be fostered by training philosophers who have at least a basic competence in multiple approaches to philosophy and who place more importance on what is of societal value in philosophy. Further, tenure, hiring and grant committees may need to better reflect existing diversity. In sum, we hope that our study will provoke discussion of issues well beyond the way in which scholarly publishing in philosophy is currently organized.

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