

HUL 841: Philosophy of Science  
IInd Semester, 2016-17  
Assignment #1

Arudra Burra

February 1, 2017

## Instructions

1. This is an open-book, open-notes take-home assignment. Please hand in a hardcopy of your assignment in class on Thursday, 9 February. Focus on clarity of exposition and understanding. Stick to the questions asked, and try to state your answers as clearly as possible.
2. *Your written work must be your own.* Please stick to the assigned texts as far as possible: if you do choose to read an outside source, please acknowledge it.<sup>1</sup> Feel free to discuss the questions with others, but make sure to acknowledge them.

## Question 1 (10 marks), 1000 words

Richard Feldman discusses four different arguments for scepticism in chapter six of *Epistemology*. Which of these arguments can be traced to passages in Descartes' *First Meditation*? Match each of these arguments in Feldman with the relevant passages in the First Meditation.

Is it possible to match each premise of Feldman's arguments with specific lines in Descartes' text? If not, does this show that there is something wrong, either with Feldman's arguments, or with Descartes' text?

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<sup>1</sup>You may find it helpful to consult <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page357682> or <http://abacus.bates.edu/cbb/quiz/intro/integrity.html>

HUL 841: Philosophy of Science  
IInd Semester, 2016-17  
Assignment #2

Arudra Burra

March 23, 2017

**Instructions**

1. This is an open-book, open-notes take-home assignment. Please email me your assignment by midnight of Friday, Wednesday, 31 April.
2. *Your written work must be your own.* Please stick to the assigned texts, though you may also consult the reading by Kahane for Q. 1. Feel free to discuss the questions with others, but make sure to acknowledge them.

**Question 1 (10 marks), 1000 words**

Both Peter Singer and Joshua Greene have argued that scientific evidence from evolutionary history, cognitive psychology, and neuropsychology give us indirect grounds for believing in utilitarianism. Explain their arguments in your own words. What do you think is the strongest argument for this claim?

**Question 2 (10 marks), 1000 words**

According to Sharon Street (p. 123), her view “acknowledges the point that we are self-conscious and reflective creatures, and in a sense seeks to honor that point about us *better* than alternative views, by asking what reflective creatures like ourselves should conclude when we become conscious of what Kant would call this “bidding from the outside” affecting our judgements.”

How does the fact that we are self-conscious and reflective creatures form a basis to criticise Street’s view? What is her response to this criticism, and why does she think that her view “better” honours this point than alternatives? Are you convinced by Street’s responses? Explain your answer.

HUL 841: Philosophy of Science  
IInd Semester, 2016-17  
Assignment #3

May 2, 2017

**Instructions**

1. This is an open-book, open-notes take-home assignment. Please email me your assignment by midnight of Tuesday, 9 April.

**Question 1 (20 marks), 1500-2000 words**

In “Epistemic Relativism”, Richard Feldman claims (p. 189) that “In the situations most plausibly thought to be cases of reasonable disagreement, suspension of judgment is the reasonable attitude to take toward the disputed proposition.” Feldman claims in particular that the following principle is false:

R8. It is possible for a person to be justified in believing  $p$ , and justified in believing that other people are justified in believing not- $p$ , and not have any reason to believe that his or her reasons (or methods) are superior to those of other people.

On what grounds does Feldman reject R8, and with it the possibility of genuine, reasonable disagreement? How would Kelly respond to Feldman? Are you convinced by Kelly’s response? Why or why not?

**Question 2 (10 marks), 1000 words**

Both Cohen and Sher argue that in some circumstances, reflection about the origin our our beliefs should lead us to be less confident of the content of those beliefs. What, in your view, are the main similarities and differences in their arguments for this view? Do you find one more compelling or interesting than the other?