ABSTRACT: Susanna Rinard aims to show that it is possible to rationally persuade an external world skeptic to reject external world skepticism. She offers an argument meant to convince a skeptic who accepts her views on “several orthogonal issues in epistemology” to give up their external world skepticism. While I agree with Rinard that it is possible to reason with a skeptic, I argue that Rinard overlooks a variety of good epistemic grounds a skeptic could appeal to in rejecting her argument and its conclusion. More specifically, I argue that the external world skeptic can resist Rinard’s conclusion by (1) distinguishing between skepticism about knowledge and skepticism about justification, (2) by prioritizing obtaining true beliefs over being rational, and (3) by treating suspension of judgment as the default rational doxastic attitude.

In her paper “Reasoning one’s Way out of Skepticism,” Susanna Rinard rejects the view that it is impossible to rationally persuade an external world skeptic that we have knowledge of the external world. She does so by offering an argument that she claims “should be rationally persuasive to a skeptic” who agrees with her position “on several orthogonal issues in epistemology,” such as her positions on the role of memory in complex reasoning and whether doxastic dilemmas are possible.

Like Rinard, I reject the view that it is impossible to rationally persuade an external world skeptic that we have knowledge of the external world. I think it is possible for the non-skeptic to reason with the skeptic and vice versa. Furthermore, I think that reasoned engagement between skeptics and non-skeptics can be good for both skeptics and non-skeptics alike. Rinard’s paper is a good example of this. The arguments in her paper could indeed rationally convince a skeptic with a certain set of plausible assumptions and values to give up their external world skepticism.

Still, I think Rinard overlooks a variety of good epistemic grounds a skeptic could appeal to in rejecting her argument and its conclusion. As a result, I think her claim that her argument should be rationally persuasive to a skeptic who agrees with her on the orthogonal issues in epistemology she identifies is too strong.

My goal here is to discuss three routes not dealt with by Rinard via which the skeptic can resist Rinard’s arguments and their conclusion on epistemically respectable grounds. These three routes are the following:

1. The skeptic can hold that, while we lack knowledge of the external world, we can still be justified in believing things about the external world.
2. The skeptic can reject the view that we should aim to be rational even under circumstances where we lack reason to think that being rational helps us form accurate doxastic attitudes.

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1 Rinard 2019, 240.
2 Rinard 2019, 241.
The skeptic can argue that there are good epistemic grounds to treat suspension of judgment as the default doxastic position. These considerations lead me to disagree with Rinard over how persuasive her argument against the skeptic is. Still, my response is friendly to her larger goal. This is because my response aims to continue and extend the project of reasoning with the skeptic. Each of the three routes I identify for the skeptic to use in response to Rinard creates an opportunity for additional philosophical reasoning and discussion between skeptics and non-skeptics about external world skepticism. I briefly summarize Rinard’s argument in the next section. I then discuss the additional routes by which I argue the external world skeptic could reject Rinard’s conclusions in the three sections that follow.

I. Rinard’s Argument

A high-level summary of the first part of Rinard’s argument is that accepting external world skepticism rationally requires accepting skepticism about the past, which in turn rationally requires accepting skepticism about complex reasoning, which in turn rationally undermines one’s grounds for accepting external world skepticism in the first place. This first part of the argument aims to show that acceptance of external world skepticism is rationally self-undermining.

Rinard begins her argument by offering what she takes to be an ecumenical reconstruction of the external world skeptic’s argument. Rinard frames her paper as an attempt to show that one can “rationally persuade an external world skeptic that we have knowledge of the external world.” However, her reconstruction of the skeptic’s argument appeals not only to knowledge of the external world, but also to justification. Where “Normal” refers to a situation in which the external world is largely as it seems and “BIV” refers to a situation in which you are a brain-in-a-vat with experiences that create false impressions about the nature of your external world, the reconstructed skeptical argument goes like this:

1. One’s basic evidence about the external world is restricted to propositions about the way the external world appears.

2. Propositions about the way the external world appears are evidentially neutral between Normal and BIV.

3. Neither Normal nor BIV is intrinsically more worthy of belief, independently of one’s evidence.

Sub-conclusion from (1) – (3): one neither knows, nor is justified in believing, that

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3 Rinard 2018, 240. Rinard discusses various ways in which one might reject some of these premises, but for the sake of focusing on novel challenges to Rinard’s argument, I will not object to the argument on those grounds.
BIV is false.

(4) If one neither knows nor is justified in believing Q, and one knows that P entails Q, then one neither knows nor is justified in believing P.

(5) Therefore, for many external world propositions P, one neither knows nor is justified in believing P.\(^4\)

Note that the sub-conclusion states that one neither knows nor is justified in believing that BIV is false, which in turn is used to generate the conclusion that one neither knows nor is justified in believing many propositions about the external world.

Rinard needs to include the “nor is justified in believing” part of her claim in order for the next two steps of her argument to work as intended. This next step is to show that there is a parallel argument for skepticism about the past which looks like this, where “BIV(NoPast)” refers to the view that you are a brain-in-a-vat who just came into existence with false memories:

(1*) One’s basic evidence about the past is restricted to propositions about the way the past appears (i.e. the way one seems to remember things having been).

(2*) Propositions about the way the past appears are evidentially neutral between Normal and BIV(NoPast).

(3*) Neither Normal nor BIV(NoPast) is intrinsically more worthy of belief, independently of one’s evidence.

(4*) If one neither knows nor is justified in believing Q, and one knows that P entails Q, then one neither knows nor is justified in believing P.

(5*) Therefore, for many propositions P about the past, one neither knows nor is justified in believing P.\(^5\)

Rinard’s key move is to convince the skeptic that if they believe they lack knowledge or justified beliefs about the external world, then they must rationally conclude that they also lack knowledge or justified beliefs about the past because the two arguments are the same in all relevant respects. Crucially, in the third step of Rinard’s argument it is lacking any knowledge or justification for beliefs about the past that undermines one’s ability to trust complex reasoning, which in turn undermines the grounds for accepting external world skepticism in the first place. This is because accepting conclusions generated by complex

\(^4\) Rinard 2018, 243-44.
\(^5\) Rinard 2018, 244-45.
reasoning requires trusting one’s memory about having properly conducted the earlier steps in the argument. But Rinard argues that if one accepts skepticism about the past, then they cannot rationally so trust their own memory. If Rinard’s argument had only been about knowledge, the skeptic would not be self-undermined in their skepticism. This is because the skeptic could claim that, even without knowledge, they remain justified in trusting their memories, in retaining beliefs about the past, and, as a result, in relying on complex reasoning. But Rinard thinks that once someone believes that they have neither knowledge nor justification for believing in the external world or any apparent memories about the past, then they fail to be rational if they accept a conclusion of an argument that requires complex reasoning.

But Rinard aims to show more than that the skeptic fails to be rational if they accept external world skepticism. Later, Rinard argues that any position other than rejection of external world skepticism is rationally self-undermining, and that as a result the one should reject (i.e. disbelieve) external world skepticism.

Rinard makes her case for this additional conclusion via the following line of reasoning. Consider someone who once accepted external world skepticism but who, due to a rational argument like Rinard’s, now decides that the rational course of action is to suspend judgment about external world skepticism. Rinard suggest that such a suspender runs afoul of the following plausible principle of rationality.

“Belief Endorsement: Rationality prohibits combinations of attitudes of the following kind: One believes P, but one takes some doxastic attitude, other than belief, toward the proposition that belief in P is rational.”

Rinard points out that when P stands for the proposition that “rationality requires suspension of judgment on external world skepticism,” such a suspender gets into trouble. This is because the suspender believes P but rationally must suspend judgment about whether P is rational to believe—given that believing P rationally entails suspending judgment about the reliability of complex reasoning.

A suspender might then give up their belief that rationality requires suspension of judgement on external world skepticism. They may instead opt to suspend judgment about whether rationality requires suspension of judgment on external world skepticism. But Rinard argues that this will not work because such a suspender runs afoul of a different plausible principle of rationality.

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7 Rinard 2019, 257.
8 Rinard 2019, 257
9 Rinard 2019, 257.
“Endorsement: Rationality prohibits combinations of attitudes of the following kind: One takes doxastic attitude D toward P, but one takes some doxastic attitude, other than belief, toward the proposition that taking D to P is rational.”10

This is because this latter kind of suspender suspends judgment about P but fails to believe that suspending judgment about P is rational. We now have a sufficient sketch of Rinard’s argument to begin examining routes by which the skeptic might resist Rinard’s argument in epistemically respectable ways that are not considered by Rinard.

II. Knowledge versus Justification

Rinard’s reconstructed argument for external world skepticism is supposed to be an ecumenical presentation of standard philosophical arguments for external world skepticism. If it is, all standard philosophical skeptics have the burden of finding a flaw in Rinard’s reasoning at a later step. But I do not think Rinard’s presentation of the standard philosophical argument is as ecumenical as she suggests. This is because one can be a skeptic about knowledge of the external world, without being a skeptic about justification of the external world.

Such a skeptic could, for example, reject Rinard’s third premise—that neither Normal nor BIV is intrinsically more worthy of belief, independently of one’s evidence. Such a skeptic about knowledge could argue instead that they have limited epistemic reason to favor Normal over BIV, while denying that this limited justification is sufficient for knowledge. Alternatively, a skeptic could deny the inference from (1) – (3) to the sub-conclusion that one neither has knowledge nor is justified in believing that BIV is false. They could hold that the sub-conclusion only rules out knowledge, but not some lower level of justification for belief by appeal to some kind of default principle whereby one is justified in believing that things are as they appear in absence of a defeating reason to do otherwise. Such a skeptic could then accept a parallel argument concerning skepticism about the past, but the parallel argument would only undermine their knowledge about the past, not their justification in their beliefs about the past.

Importantly, I think the kind of limited skepticism I am discussing here, whereby one denies knowledge of the external world but not justification for beliefs about it, represents a live skeptical position, not merely a contorted theoretical position. It is standard to think that a certain threshold of justification higher than the bare minimum must be met in order for something to count as knowledge. This is certainly true for the infallibilist, who requires some kind of maximal justification, but it is just as

10 Rinard 2018, 258.
true for most fallibilists.\textsuperscript{11} Thus, Rinard’s argument only works for a subset of external world skeptics: those who are skeptical about knowledge and justified belief of the external world.\textsuperscript{12} But perhaps this is not much of a problem for Rinard. After all, perhaps it is the skeptic about knowledge and justified belief of the external world who is best viewed as the quintessential lost cause for rational persuasion. But I think the class of skeptics for whom Rinard’s arguments ought to be persuasive can be narrowed more still.

III. Rationality versus Truth

Rinard’s argument, if correct, shows that taking any doxastic attitude toward external world skepticism other than disbelief (i.e. believing that it is false) is \textit{irrational} for at least some external world skeptics. But Rinard does not claim, explicitly at least, that her argument shows that external world skepticism is \textit{false}. On the contrary, Rinard says that she does not “try to diagnose the flaw in the skeptical argument” and that she does not “isolate a particular premise as false, and explain why, despite its falsity, we found it compelling.”\textsuperscript{13}

I think there are two plausible ways of interpreting Rinard’s argument. The first interpretation is that Rinard is not arguing, even indirectly, that external world skepticism is false. On this interpretation, she is merely arguing that the only rational doxastic position available is believing that external world skepticism is false. The second interpretation is that—given some connection between rational belief and true belief—Rinard is indirectly arguing that external world skepticism is false by arguing that the only rational doxastic position available is believing that external world skepticism is false.

\textsuperscript{11} For some recent defenses of infallibilism see Kyriacou 2017, 2021, Climenhaga 2021, and Stoutenburg 2021. (In most contexts, I think ‘infallibilism’ and ‘skeptical invariantism’ can be treated as interchangeable. Although this is not true, when, for example, someone thinks we can know a lot with epistemic certainty or thinks we often have maximal justification.) Note also, that the invariantist position that philosophers typically take other than skeptical invariantism is ‘moderate invariantism,’ which requires some moderate level of justification. See, for example Rysiew 2001, Brown 2006, and Gerken 2017. For a discussion of skeptical and moderate invariantism, see Hawthorne 2004. Note that contextualists and proponents of pragmatic encroachment also permit cases where one is justified but does not know. It is just that on these views how big the gap is between minimal justification and justification-sufficient-for-knowledge (or in the contextualist’s case: justification-sufficient-for-‘knowledge’) can change. See, for example, DeRose 1992 and Stanley 2005.

\textsuperscript{12} For the sake of simplicity, I am treating ‘knowledge’ as if it refers to a single epistemic state. Things get even more complicated if one thinks that there is more than one epistemic state that can properly be picked out by the term ‘knowledge.’ On such a view, one might be skeptical about ‘knowledge’ in sense A but not in sense B. For some defense of ambiguity theories of ‘know’ see Malcom 1952, van Woudenberg 2005, Reed 2013, and Satta 2018a, 2018b, and 2020.

\textsuperscript{13} Rinard 2018, 242.
I argue in this section that the skeptic who values truth over rationality can resist Rinard’s argument, regardless of which interpretation of the argument one takes. If a skeptic adopts my first interpretation of Rinard’s argument, they can reject the argument because it does not provide evidence that external world skepticism is false. If a skeptic adopts the second interpretation, they can reject Rinard’s argument by denying that Rinard’s conception of rationality promotes truth, at least concerning external world skepticism.¹⁴

This response to Rinard is grounded in two things: (i) what the skeptic values, and (ii) how the skeptic understands the relationship between rationality and what the skeptic values. It is common to value having true beliefs. It is also common to value rationality. Often, promoting one of these values simultaneously promotes the other. Thus, under many circumstances we need not ask which, if either, value is more fundamental. But to the extent that the two aims do come apart, it is not clear that rationality has any value independent of the role it normally helps us in achieving other goals, like true beliefs, justified beliefs, or knowledge.

While the matter is controversial, one viable position the skeptic can take is that truth is valuable for its own sake and that rationality is valuable only as a means to other ends, like truth or accuracy.¹⁵ Another way to put the matter is that the skeptic can intrinsically value truth, while only instrumentally valuing rationality.

The skeptic who values truth intrinsically but rationality only instrumentally should care about being rational only to the extent that doing so helps the skeptic achieve truth or other things the skeptic values.¹⁶ This is why the skeptic need not be moved by the first interpretation of Rinard’s argument, on which the argument does not aim to provide evidence that external world skepticism is false. What we must now assess then is how plausible the second interpretation of Rinard’s argument is from the skeptic’s perspective.

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¹⁴ This second route indirectly supports the position argued for by Robert Weston Siscoe (2021) that rational belief is distinct from justified belief. Another way to frame the challenge to Rinard’s argument in this section is that satisfying Rinard’s criteria for rationality does nothing to increase the justification one has for rejecting external world skepticism, because rationality (at least as Rinard conceives of it) comes apart from justification.

¹⁵ Various philosophers have put forward a view of rationality which suggests it is valuable in virtue of its role in promoting truth or accuracy. See, for example, Horowitz 2014, Wedgwood 2017, and Schoenfield 2019. For further discussion, see Ye (forthcoming). Once again, this picture can be made more complicated if one adopts certain theories about the nature of rationality (or ‘rationality’). For example, Siscoe (forthcoming) argues that ‘rationality’ is an absolute gradable adjective, and Roeber (2020, p. 3) writes that as “L.J. Cohen notes in the opening paragraph of his Blackwell Companion to Epistemology entry on rationality, however, ‘there are at least nine types of rationality’ (2010: 663); and as Plantinga (1993), Worsnip (2015), and others make clear, there are more than just the nine types enumerated by Cohen.”

¹⁶ The sense of ‘should’ I employ here is prudential.
The second interpretation says that Rinard indirectly argues that external world skepticism is false because of an implicit premise about the connection between rationality and truth. What I will argue is that the skeptic has good epistemic grounds to reject that there is such a connection between rationality (as Rinard conceives of it) and truth, at least concerning external world skepticism. Consider the following claim: Either rationality, as Rinard conceives of it, always promotes truth or it does not. If it does (and if Rinard’s argument is otherwise sound), then disbelieving external world skepticism promotes truth. If it does not, then showing that failing to disbelieve external world skepticism is irrational fails, on its own, to show that disbelieving external world skepticism promotes truth.

On what grounds can the skeptic determine whether rationality, as Rinard conceives of it, always promotes truth? I will put forward what I think are two epistemically respectable responses that the skeptic can give. The first is that Rinard’s style of argument and conclusion provides *prima facie* evidence that her conception of rationality does not always promote truth. This is because the skeptic does not think the evidence favors rejection of external world skepticism, yet the conclusion of Rinard’s argument is that rationality requires the skeptic to reject external world skepticism. Rinard’s argument reaches this conclusion without changing the skeptic’s evidence and without directly challenging how the skeptic has interpreted their evidence. A skeptic could plausibly conclude that the explanation that best promotes the truth of the matter is that this is because rationality, as Rinard understands it, does not always promote truth.

The second response the skeptic can give seeks to *explain*, at least in part, why Rinard’s conception of rationality (as inferred by what she says rationality requires) does not always promote truth. The explanation, in brief, is that Rinard’s account of rationality seems to require belief consistency even when belief consistency is detrimental to truth maximization. To start, note that there are plausible arguments aimed at showing that seeking to have consistent beliefs can sometimes be detrimental to the goal of maximizing true beliefs.

One such class of arguments are given as responses to the Preface Paradox.\(^\text{17}\) The Preface Paradox takes as a starting point the fact that academics sometimes include the following kind of note in the preface to their books: “all errors in this work are solely my responsibility.” Such a phrase implies that the author thinks that there are errors in the book. But if the author thinks there are errors in the book, why not just fix the errors? The answer is that for any given claim in the book, the author does not think it is an error. Rather, the author knows that their book contains a large number of claims. They may think as

\(^{17}\) The paradox was introduced by David Makin (1965).
a result that it is likely that their book contains at least some errors because of the sheer volume of claims made. Under such circumstances, the author believes of each claim made in their book that it is true, but they believe of the total conjunction of all the claims in their book that it is false (because all it takes to make a conjunction false is for at least one conjunct to be false). Such an author permits some inconsistency in their belief system for the sake of increasing the accuracy and truth of their beliefs. Many think such a move is epistemically warranted.

Many of Rinard’s claims about what rationality requires appear rooted in the view that rationality requires consistency. For example, Rinard argues that the skeptic about the external world should also be a skeptic about the past because the argument for skepticism about the past is analogous to the argument for skepticism about the external world. The implicit premise here seems to be that one should adopt a consistent response to such analogous arguments. Similarly, the implicit grounding for Rinard’s principles Belief Endorsement and Endorsement seems to be that one should hold consistent doxastic attitudes. One violates these principles when they hold doxastic attitudes that are inconsistent.

The skeptic who values obtaining true beliefs or avoiding false beliefs over having rational beliefs may conclude that the route which maximizes their chance of having true beliefs or avoiding false beliefs is to accept a limited amount of inconsistency in their belief system. If this inconsistency is the ultimate ground for the charge that they are being irrational, they can decline to let this charge of irrationality influence what they believe in an epistemically defensible manner. Such an action would in fact contribute to their being consistent in another regard—namely, consistently choosing to prioritize truth and accuracy over rationality.

IV. Belief versus Suspension

So far, I have argued that a skeptic can reject Rinard’s argument (1) by being a skeptic about knowledge but not justification of the external world or (2) by prioritizing obtaining true belief or avoiding false beliefs over being rational. But for even the skeptic who thinks we lack both knowledge and justification of the external world and who, as a general matter, wants to prioritize being rational, I think there is yet another way to reject Rinard’s conclusion that one must reject external world skepticism. This third response is available to the skeptic who Rinard refers to as an unconfident suspender—i.e. a skeptic who both suspends judgment about external world skepticism and who

18 Rinard 2018, 244-45. 
19 Rinard does not provide an argument for these principles, although she says the principles are “highly plausible” and she offers an argument for her Anti-Denouncement principle, which she notes Belief Endorsement entails. The argument for Anti-Denouncement relies on an example of inconsistent doxastic attitudes.
suspends judgment about whether it is rational to do so. The only part of Rinard’s argument that the unconfident suspender needs to respond to is Rinard’s claim that the unconfident suspender violates the following principle of rationality:

“Endorsement: Rationality prohibits combinations of attitudes of the following kind: One takes doxastic attitude D toward P, but one takes some doxastic attitude, other than belief, toward the proposition that taking D to P is rational.”

The unconfident suspender can reject this principle by positing an asymmetry in when different doxastic attitudes are rational. More specifically, the unconfident suspender can argue that Endorsement is false, at least when suspension of judgment is included as one of the relevant doxastic attitudes, by arguing that suspension of judgment is the rational default doxastic attitude.

By “the rational default doxastic attitude,” I mean the doxastic attitude that it is presumptively rational to adopt unless one has reason to do otherwise. On this picture, one who holds the rational default doxastic attitude about a proposition does not bear the burden of proof, while those who take any other doxastic attitude toward that proposition do have a burden of proof (or at least a burden of justification).

That there should be a default doxastic attitude fits neatly with Rinard’s rejection of the possibility of doxastic dilemmas—i.e. her rejection of situations in which “rationality prohibits believing P, rationality prohibits disbelieving P, and rationality prohibits suspending judgment on P.”

The rational default doxastic attitude is the one that it is permissible to fall back on when the evidence or rationality does not dictate that we do otherwise. That there is some such rational default doxastic attitude seems plausible. In addition, it seems plausible that suspension of judgment is that rational default doxastic attitude. Typically, we think that when we lack reason to believe or disbelieve something that suspension of judgment is the rational option to go with instead.

Recently, A.K. Flowerree has identified some important ways in which suspending judgment (which she refers to as “withholding judgment”) differs from its doxastic compatriots, belief and disbelief. I will argue that these differences—which Flowerree usefully refers to as “asymmetries”—support the view that suspending judgment is the rational default doxastic attitude. For our purposes, two asymmetries are especially worth noting.

First, Flowerree identifies that while belief and disbelief should be “understood in terms of the evidence being sufficiently strong for holding some attitude,” suspending judgment is best understood

\[\text{Rinard 2018, 259.}\]
\[\text{Flowerree 2022, 129.}\]
as a function of neither believing nor disbelieving being rational. That is to say, rational suspension of judgment is a “via negativa”—i.e. rational suspension of judgment “is a function of whether the evidence fails to make rational belief or disbelief.” This means, as Flowerree notes, that rational suspension of judgment “does not hold a symmetrical place in the rationality economy, but rather a contrastive one.” In other words, suspension of judgment is the position one can rationally retreat to when no other doxastic attitude is appropriate. This is precisely what it means for suspending judgment to be the rational default doxastic attitude.

Second, Flowerree notes that while “belief that \( p \) and disbelief that \( p \) involve...staking a claim about the way the world is,” in contrast, “withholding is not a commitment to anything being the case in the actual world.” That is to say, unlike belief and disbelief, suspension of judgment, is “only a reflection of one’s evidential relationship to \( p \).” The observation could provide the skeptic with a principled ground for rejecting the move from Rinard’s Belief Endorsement principle to her more general Endorsement principle. This also provides another reason why suspension of judgment makes a plausible default rational doxastic attitude. It is an attitude where—in the absent of evidence sufficient for one to stake a claim about the way the world is—one merely adopts an attitude about the nature of one’s evidence.

If suspension of judgment is the rational default doxastic attitude—and it seems we have good reasons to think that it is—then the skeptic may reasonably reject the move from Belief Endorsement to Endorsement on the grounds that Endorsement is false because, unlike belief or disbelief, rationality does not prohibit combinations of one from believing or disbelieving \( p \) while suspending judgment about whether doing so is rational. Even for a skeptic who might think this solution comes at some theoretical cost, such a skeptic could argue that it is less of a theoretical cost than the implications of Rinard’s argument. To see why consider the following: If the external world skeptic accepts everything that Rinard has put forward, they end up concluding that they are rationally required to reject external world skepticism, even though they do not think that their evidence supports rejecting external world skepticism. The skeptic could argue that this violates the following plausible principle of rationality:

*Non-Evidential Disbelief:* It is irrational to disbelieve \( p \) when one’s evidence does not support disbelieving \( p \).

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22 Flowerree 2022, 128-29.
23 Flowerree 2022, 130.
24 Flowerree 2022, 130.
25 Flowerree 2022, 130.
26 Flowerree 2022, 130.
Just as many of Rinard’s principles and assumptions are plausible but controversial, so too Non-Evidential Disbelief is plausible but controversial. If a skeptic takes Non-Evidential Disbelief to be more plausible than Endorsement, then arguably the skeptic could rationally reject Endorsement because Endorsement combined with the rest of Rinard’s argument led the skeptic to violate Non-Evidential Disbelief.27

V. Conclusion

Rinard provides a creative means by which to reason with the skeptic. For a skeptic with a certain set of assumptions and values, I suspect that Rinard’s argument could be convincing. But for many external world skeptics, Rinard’s argument relies on assumptions that I suspect the external world skeptic would and reasonably could reject. But my response to Rinard bolsters her claim that there is plenty of reasoned discussion for skeptics and non-skeptics to have with one another.28

References:


27 Alternatively, the skeptic could argue that adding Non-Evidential Disbelief to their set of background assumptions means that the skeptic does not violate Endorsement. They could do this by arguing that none of Rinard’s arguments are sufficiently strong to overcome the skeptic’s rational default presumption to suspend belief about external world skepticism. This would remove any violation of Endorsement because the skeptic could continue to believe that they are rational in suspending judgment about external world skepticism. This latter route would also work for Rinard’s “confident suspender.”

28 Rinard and I have both provided examples of one kind of issue the skeptic and non-skeptic can reason about: whether external world skepticism is true. But there are other kinds of reasoned discussions to be had about skepticism, such as what counts as external world skepticism and what the moral or practical significance would be if external world skepticism were true. A good discussion of some of these issues can be found in Chalmers 2005.


