Introduction

What is the epistemic significance of disagreement? That is, how should discovering that another disagrees with you concerning some proposition affect your credence in that proposition? Discovering that another individual disagrees with you is a common occurrence. We frequently discover that another disagrees with us over a wide variety of issues such as politics, religion, ethics, and philosophy in general. An important epistemic question concerns how discovering that another disagrees with us on one of these topics ought to affect our beliefs on that topic. This question is the question of the epistemic significance of disagreement.

My dissertation defends a conciliatory view of disagreement. The view is conciliatory since it claims that one gains a reason to become less justified in believing what one does when one discovers that another disagrees. That is, discovering a disagreement gives one a reason to become less confident in believing what one does concerning the disputed proposition. If this reason is undefeated, then one becomes justified in adopting a credence in the proposition closer to that of the disagreeing party. The particular conciliatory view of disagreement I defend has it that conciliation is called for much more frequently than is commonly thought, and to a much greater extent than is commonly thought.

The first chapter of the dissertation aims to establish the truth of the Uniqueness Thesis. The Uniqueness Thesis claims that a body of evidence justifies at most one competitor doxastic attitude toward any proposition. In this chapter I explain and
motivate my formulation of the Uniqueness Thesis, as well as criticize motivations for
the Uniqueness Thesis put forward by Roger White. I then defend the Uniqueness
Thesis from several extant objections in the literature and note one important
consequence of the Uniqueness Thesis. I examine objections from vagueness, the
nature of doxastic attitudes, and from the Naïve Theory of meaning. The consequence
of the Uniqueness Thesis that I highlight is that if the Uniqueness Thesis is true, then
there are no cases where two disagreeing parties have the same evidence, yet each is
justified in adopting their competitor doxastic attitude toward the disputed proposition.

In the second chapter I give motivation for accepting a conciliatory view of
disagreement. I examine several cases in the literature that provide motivation for such
a view. A conciliatory view of disagreement claims that when one becomes justified in
believing that an epistemic peer has adopted a competitor doxastic attitude toward a
proposition, that one becomes less justified in adopting the doxastic attitude one has
toward that proposition.

In the third chapter I examine a series of objections to conciliatory views of
disagreement based upon considerations of higher-order evidence. I explain three
reasons that Thomas Kelly gives for doubting the truth of such views and argue that
each is mistaken. The bulk of this chapter focuses on responding to a canceling-out
argument. I explain and motivate two distinct responses to this argument that are
compatible with conciliatory views of disagreement.
In the fourth chapter I examine the charge that conciliatory views of disagreement are self-defeating. Such a charge has been made by Alving Plantinga, Adam Elga, and Brian Weatherson. I examine each of these charges individually and argue that such considerations give us no reason here to think that conciliatory views of disagreement are false. While it might be true that contingent facts have it that defenders of such views are not justified in believing that their view is correct, this does not show that such views are false. Such concerns, however, do call for a reformulation of what a conciliatory view of disagreement is. As originally formulated conciliatory views can conflict with evidentialism. I reconcile this tension by arguing that instead of conciliatory views claiming that one becomes less justified in adopting the doxastic attitude one has upon discovering the relevant kind of disagreement, such views should only claim that one gains a reason for becoming less justified. I argue that in cases where one is justified in believing that conciliatory views of disagreement are false, this reason gained from the discovery of a disagreement will itself be defeated and no conciliation will in fact be called for.

In chapter 5 I examine some other circumstances in which one has a defeater-defeater and is not required to make any conciliation after discovering a disagreement of the relevant kind. First, I examine whether considerations involving self-trust are such that in discovering the relevant kind of disagreement one always has a defeater-defeater since one is permitted to trust oneself. I argue that even if self-trust provides a legitimate response to skepticism, it does not provide the relevant defeater-defeater in
cases of peer disagreement. Second, I consider whether cases of extreme disagreements give one such a defeater-defeater. I examine several reasons why extreme disagreements might have such a consequence and find all wanting. Finally, I argue that it is plausible that conciliation is to be made in cases of extreme disagreement as well.

In chapter 6 I turn to the issue of how much conciliation is to be made. I argue that in cases of ideal peer disagreement one ought to split the difference. A case of ideal peer disagreement is one where a party of the disagreement is justified in believing that his peer has epistemic credentials x, y, and z and has adopted a competitor attitude toward p, and is as justified in believing these things as he is in believing them about himself. I then strip away the idealized conditions to examine what epistemic impact disagreement has in everyday contexts. While I do not believe that anything interesting and true can be said about the non-idealized cases that is both universal and informative, I do make some gestures at what kind of epistemic impact messing with the idealized conditions would have, while noting that how one’s evidence adds up on any particular occasion will depend upon what the particular bits of evidence are.
Chapter 1: The Case for Rational Uniqueness

1.1 Introduction

Suppose that you have a body of evidence. Given all your evidence, precisely how open are your doxastic options, rationally speaking, regarding any given proposition? Does this body of evidence rationally permit you to believe whatever you want or are the doxastic restrictions much more stringent? The Uniqueness Thesis claims that one’s doxastic options are rationally quite constrained by any given total body of evidence. In fact, according to the Uniqueness Thesis there is at most one rational doxastic attitude to adopt towards any one proposition given any particular body of evidence.

The Uniqueness Thesis, or rational uniqueness\(^1\), is a strong claim about the permissiveness of rationality. Although it has been put to much use in the current debates regarding the epistemology of disagreement, the Uniqueness Thesis tends to receive rather little explicit attention.\(^2\) In what follows I will explain and clarify a version of the Uniqueness Thesis which I will be defending. Although this characterization of the Uniqueness Thesis will differ from other accounts in the literature, it is a more general characterization which adequately captures the claim of rational uniqueness. I will then examine the relationship that this claim has with evidentialism. In the following sections I will examine some good and bad motivations that have been offered

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\(^{1}\) I will be using the terms ‘Uniqueness Thesis’ and ‘rational uniqueness’ interchangeably. ‘The Uniqueness Thesis’ is Feldman’s (2007) term, whereas Christensen (2007) uses ‘rational uniqueness’.

\(^{2}\) White (2005) is a notable exception.
on behalf of the Uniqueness Thesis, and will then proceed to defend my characterization of the Uniqueness Thesis from several objections and examine one important implication of it.

1.2 Some Clarifications

First, what is the Uniqueness Thesis? As mentioned above, the claim is that given a body of evidence, there is no more than one justified doxastic attitude to have toward a proposition. I will be defending a precisification of this thesis which claims the following:

(UT) For any body of evidence E and proposition P, E justifies at most one competitor doxastic attitude toward P.

Some clarifications are in order to make this claim precise. First, bodies of evidence are possessed by individuals at times. They can be shared by more than one individual, and they can change from time to time. (UT), however, makes no reference to individuals or times since (UT) claims (in part) that who possesses the body of evidence, as well as when it is possessed, makes no difference regarding which doxastic attitude is justified (if any) toward any particular proposition by that body of evidence.

(UT) concerns justification. In what follows, I will be using the terms ‘justified’, ‘reasonable’, and ‘rational’ all interchangeably unless otherwise noted. My concern will be with epistemic justification, so when I speak of a belief’s reasonability or rationality it will concern the reasons to think that it is true, and not any means-ends or pragmatic
considerations to which rationality or reasonability are sometimes used to refer.\(^3\) As I understand epistemic justification, an individual can be *justified in believing* a proposition without actually believing it. To say that an individual is justified in believing a proposition is to say that it would be epistemically appropriate for that individual to take on that belief – that belief is the doxastic attitude that the individual ought to have toward that proposition at that time, if he is going to have any doxastic attitude at all toward that proposition at that time. It is worth emphasizing that while being justified in believing \(p\) means that one ought to believe \(p\) in some sense, this obligation is merely conditional. If one is to have any doxastic attitude at all regarding \(p\), then one ought to believe \(p\), given that one is justified in believing \(p\).\(^4\) I take it that an individual may be such that he ought to believe \(p\), in our sense, even though he may be incapable of actually forming the belief that \(p\).

Thus, I am concerned with what is known as propositional justification, rather than doxastic justification.\(^5\) It is easy to see that (UT) concerns propositional justification and not doxastic justification since no mention is made of any particular individual actually having any particular doxastic attitude toward any proposition.

\(^3\) To see how these two distinct conceptions of rationality can come apart see Conee (1987),

\(^4\) This understanding of the normative implications of epistemic justification avoids potential problems involving being justified in believing an infinite number of propositions or simply avoiding doxastic clutter, as well as any concerns about the epistemic ought implying can. See Harman (1986) for doxastic clutter considerations, and Feldman (2000) for a similar understanding of the ought involved in epistemic justification.

\(^5\) Doxastic justification concerns not only the factors which support adopting a certain doxastic attitude toward a proposition, but also how those factors are utilized in the formation of that doxastic attitude. Thus, doxastic justification concerns the status of a doxastic attitude which is held by an individual and depends in part upon how that individual came to have that doxastic attitude or upon what that doxastic attitude is based.
Nonetheless, bodies of evidence are possessed by individuals, so in our examples it will be important to keep clear that we are evaluating the status of a doxastic attitude toward a certain proposition and not a particular doxastic attitude which the individual in question has adopted toward that proposition. The kind of justification relevant to (UT) is solely a relation between a body of evidence, a doxastic attitude, and a proposition. How individuals have come to have the doxastic attitudes they have toward the proposition in question will not be relevant to our discussion.

Importantly, it is not a necessary condition for being justified in believing p that one is able to demonstrate that one is justified in believing p. The project of justifying or giving a defense of one’s belief that p is distinct from the state of being justified in believing that p. One need not be able to articulate one’s reasons for believing p in order to be justified in believing p.6

The version of the Uniqueness Thesis which I have given differs from other accounts in the literature in that it claims that at most one doxastic attitude is rational as opposed to claiming that there is exactly one doxastic attitude which is rational.7 In most cases there will be exactly one rational doxastic attitude, but as Feldman (2006) notes, it may be that no doxastic attitudes are rational to adopt towards a proposition which one does not or cannot understand. That is, it may be that a necessary condition for the rationality of any doxastic attitude towards a proposition is that the individual understands or grasps, or at least is able to understand or grasp, the proposition in

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6 See Pryor (2000) for a more detailed defense of this claim.
7 Contrast White (2005) and Kelly (forthcoming), for two examples.
question. So, to at least avoid taking a stand on that issue, I think that the Uniqueness Thesis is best stated in this slightly weaker way.

What are the doxastic options which (UT) concerns? Often doxastic attitudes are seen as ‘all-or-nothing’ affairs and are limited to three possibilities: (i) belief, (ii) disbelief, and (iii) suspension of judgment. Others think of the doxastic options in a more fine-grained way and speak instead of degrees of belief. Those within the degreed camp can be distinguished by how expansive each doxastic attitude is conceived to be, from a single point value or probability function, to a range of probability functions. (UT) makes no claim regarding which doxastic picture is correct, and in what follows I will stay silent on this issue.

(UT) states that there is no more than one competitor doxastic attitude toward a proposition which is justified by a body of evidence. This modification leaves open that on a degreed framework one is both justified in believing p (in terms of all-out belief) and justified in believing p to degree 0.8, for example. Though there may be two such doxastic attitudes, I take it that these doxastic attitudes would not be competitors. Rather, the latter is a doxastic attitude that is simply nested within the former. In the

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8 Richard Feldman is an example of one who takes this approach in the literature on disagreements.  
9 David Christensen and Roger White are examples here.  
10 See Kaplan (1996) for more on favoring sets of probability functions to identify doxastic attitudes.  
11 See Foley (1993) esp. pp. 170-173 for some reasons why one should favor an all-or-nothing conception of doxastic attitudes.  
12 It might not always be that a more fine-grained doxastic attitude is simply nested within a more coarse-grained doxastic attitude (belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment). For instance, perhaps one might be able to adopt a doxastic attitude which is a range of degrees of belief, 0.4 – 0.5. Such a doxastic attitude may not nest neatly within any one of the doxastic options on a tripartite taxonomy. The point to
bulk of this chapter I will be examining the prospects of (UT) given a tripartite doxastic taxonomy, but I will conclude by briefly examining additional concerns which a more fine-grained doxastic taxonomy may bring with it.

Finally, it is important to clarify how a body of evidence should be understood. (UT) makes a claim about how many doxastic attitudes are justified toward a proposition by a body of evidence. (UT) does not make any claims regarding how many doxastic attitudes are justified toward a proposition by distinct bodies of evidence which contain identical bodies of evidence as proper parts. Both Conee (forthcoming) and Goldman (forthcoming) have illustrated that there can be cases where individuals who differ in terms of their higher-order evidence (their evidence about the character of their first-order evidence) can be justified in adopting competitor doxastic attitudes toward a proposition, even when these disparate bodies of evidence share the same first-order evidence (or ‘evidence relevant to the dispute’ as Conee refers to it). Conee and Goldman each give examples of cases where two individual’s have the same first-order evidence regarding a proposition, but have different evidence regarding the various relevant epistemic principles (or ‘E-systems’ as Goldman talks of them). Given this, the two individuals are justified in adopting distinct doxastic attitudes toward the relevant proposition. These considerations, however, do not tell against (UT). (UT) is not a claim restricted to one’s first-order evidence (or ‘evidence relevant to the dispute’). (UT) claims that a body of evidence supports at most one competitor doxastic
attitude toward a proposition; it makes no claim whatsoever regarding the number of competitor doxastic attitudes which could be justified towards that proposition if that single body of evidence were supplemented in distinct and diverging ways resulting in disparate total bodies of evidence.

1.3 Uniqueness and Evidentialism

Before going any further it will be beneficial to examine the relationship between (UT) and Evidentialism. Evidentialism is the claim that which doxastic attitude one is justified in adopting toward a proposition at a time is determined entirely by one’s evidence at that time. More formally the evidentialist thesis is as follows:

\[(ET) \text{ For any subject } S, \text{ proposition } P, \text{ time } T, \text{ and doxastic attitude } D, \text{ S is justified in adopting } D \text{ toward } P \text{ at } T \text{ if and only if having } D \text{ toward } P \text{ fits the evidence } S \text{ has at } T.\]

Evidentialism is a strong supervenience claim – it claims that which doxastic attitude is justified for an individual regarding a proposition at a time supervenes upon that individual’s evidence at that time.

\[(ET) \text{ might be thought to entail (UT), but this is not the case. Even if which doxastic attitude is justified for an individual at a time is entirely determined by that individual’s evidence at that time, it needn’t be that there is no more than one competitor doxastic attitude which is so justified. That is, it could be that although evidence alone determines which doxastic attitude(s) are justified for me, I nevertheless} \]

\[13 \text{ This closely resembles the (EJ) principle Conee and Feldman define and defend as evidentialism. See Conee and Feldman (1985).}\]
have doxastic options.\textsuperscript{14} It could be that my evidence justifies a wider set of options, such as the disjunctive option of belief or suspension of judgment, where either (or even both) of these particular attitudes would be justified for me. It could be that what supervenes on the evidence is broader than any one doxastic attitude. So, it is possible that a body of evidence is such that either believing or suspending judgment would be justified for any individual with that body of evidence – that it is rationality of this disjunction of doxastic attitudes which supervenes on the evidence.\textsuperscript{15} The evidential thesis does not rule this out. I will critically examine below whether a body of evidence could in fact be like this, but for now my task is simply to illustrate that one could consistently endorse evidentialism and yet deny (UT).

Similarly, (UT) might incorrectly be thought to entail (ET). If one’s evidence always picks out at most one rational doxastic attitude concerning a proposition, then it must be that the evidence (and the evidence alone) is what is conferring the justificatory status upon the doxastic attitude. However, (UT) is silent as to how this uniquely rational attitude is determined by the evidence. (UT) is clearly consistent with (ET) in that it may be the attitude which best fits the evidence which is the uniquely justified one, but (UT) is also consistent with ‘anti-evidentialism’ which claims that the uniquely justified attitude is the one which has the least or worst fit with the evidence.\textsuperscript{16} Anti-
evidentialism is not a very plausible theory, but it does show that (UT) does not entail (ET). (UT) is also consistent with evidential theories that claim that the justified attitude is the one which has the third-best fit with the evidence, and so forth. These broadly evidentialist theories are not very plausible either, but they also show that (UT) does not entail (ET).

Nevertheless, the implausibility of these other broadly evidentialist theories shows that there is an intimate relation between (UT) and (ET). If (ET) is false, then it seems that (UT) will also be false since these other broadly evidentialist theories are not very plausible. So, the falsity of evidentialism would spell trouble for rational uniqueness. However, I will not here be examining indirect attacks to (UT) via criticisms of evidentialism, though such critiques do affect the plausibility of (UT), given the implausibility of anti-evidentialism and other ways of having (UT) true while (ET) is false. Rather, in what follows I will be assuming the truth of evidentialism, or (ET), and will proceed to assess the prospects for (UT) given that assumption regarding the nature

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17 Presumably, rival accounts of epistemic justification will have their own rival accounts of a uniqueness claim where the feature or features they see as relevant for epistemic justification will be held fixed and replace the body of evidence in (UT). Thus, for process reliabilism we might expect something like:

(UT') For cognitive belief forming process C, subject S, proposition P, and time T, C justifies at most one doxastic attitude for S toward P at T.

Or,

(UT'') For any degree of reliability D had by a belief forming process C, Subject S, proposition P, and time T, the D of C justifies at most one doxastic attitude for S toward P at T.

Now it seems that the reliabilist would reject (UT'), although I'm not sure what they would say about (UT''). However, I will not here explore rival accounts of the Uniqueness Thesis nor their plausibility within rival accounts of epistemic justification.
of epistemic justification. There are enough challenges to (UT) worthy of our consideration within this restricted domain.\(^{18}\)

### 1.4 Motivating Rational Uniqueness (Good and Bad)

Before turning to these challenges to (UT), it is worth motivating this epistemic claim. White (2005) has given the most in depth defense of rational uniqueness. White defends the Uniqueness Thesis by pointing out troubles that accompany the endorsement of any ‘permissive’ alternative, where a permissive alternative is seen as a rival to rational uniqueness.\(^{19}\) Such rival theses are *permissive* since they permit more than one competitor doxastic attitude to be rational given a single body of evidence, contra (UT).

Following White, we can divide permissive epistemologies into two broad camps: extreme permissivism and moderate permissivism. Extreme permissivism is the claim that sometimes there are not any limits as to which doxastic attitude one can rationally adopt toward a proposition given a particular body of evidence. So, given one body of evidence, belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment (or any degree of belief) could be equally rational to adopt toward a proposition, according to extreme permissivism. Roughly speaking, according to extreme permissivism, there are some cases in which anything goes. Since we are working under an assumption of evidentialism, this has the consequence that rationality is quite permissive. According to evidentialism what it is

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\(^{18}\) If the reader is not convinced that evidentialism is correct, then the rest of this chapter can be treated as defending a conditional claim: if evidentialism is true, then the Uniqueness Thesis is correct.

\(^{19}\) It should be noted that White never explicitly endorses the rational uniqueness claim which he defends.
rational to believe is determined by one’s total evidence alone, and according to extreme permissivism there are cases where one’s total evidence does place any rational constraints on the subject – she can adopt whichever doxastic attitude she pleases toward the relevant proposition, and be rational in so doing.

More formally, we can understand extreme permissivism as follows:

*Extreme Permissivism:* There are possible bodies of evidence that are such that they justify all competitor doxastic attitudes toward a single proposition.\(^{20}\)

Moderate permissivism, on the other hand, is the claim that while there are limits to the doxastic attitudes which one may rationally adopt, there can nonetheless be rational options – distinct competitor doxastic attitudes which are equally rational. So, moderate permissivism denies (UT) in a weaker way than extreme permissivism does, claiming that more than one, but not necessarily all, doxastic attitudes can be rational to adopt toward a proposition given a single body of evidence. More formally:

*Moderate Permissivism:* There are possible bodies of evidence that are such that they justify competitor doxastic attitudes toward a single proposition.\(^{21}\)

Extreme permissivism is not very plausible. Surely any body of evidence places some epistemic constraints on a cognizer. A body of evidence cannot on balance support both p and not-p. Further, if the body of evidence is neutral between p and

\(^{20}\) Here is White’s definition of extreme permissivism: There are possible cases where given a subject S, a body of evidence E, and a proposition P, any doxastic attitude is as rational for S to adopt toward P given E as any another. White (2005): 4. This definition does not broaden its application in an obvious way to situations involving two subjects who share the same total body of evidence.

\(^{21}\) This definition follows White (2005): 12 ff.
not-p it is not that believing or disbelieving p would both be rational. Suspension of judgment is always an option, and it is this doxastic attitude that would be rationally demanded in such an evidentially tied situation.\textsuperscript{22} In this way, one’s doxastic options are more expansive than one’s practical options. Thus, James (1911) is mistaken in likening one’s doxastic options to a practical choice such as whether to offer a marriage proposal. While not deciding whether to offer the proposal gives the same result as deciding to not offer the proposal, in the doxastic cases, suspension of judgment offers a third distinct alternative. This third option is unparalleled in the practical cases. So, given our evidentialist assumption, it is hard to see how extreme permissivism could be correct. There does not appear to be any way for a body of evidence to by such that each doxastic attitude fits it (and fits it equally well).\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22} Feldman (2006a) and (forthcoming) emphasizes how (contra James) the option of suspending judgment eliminates the supposed forced option between belief and disbelief.

\textsuperscript{23} At this point one might worry about a case where an individual believes a proposition with a doxastic range of degrees of belief 0.4 – 0.6, or a case where such a range would be justified for an individual. One might think that if it were possible for an individual to be justified in adopting this doxastic range toward a proposition, then we would have a case of the sort posited by extreme permissivism, at least applied to a tripartite doxastic taxonomy. There are a couple things to note here however. If our subject is justified in adopting the doxastic range 0.4 – 0.6 toward the proposition, then isn’t he also justified in believing, disbelieving, and suspending judgment towards that proposition as well? If so, then there would be a serious challenge to the conjunction of (UT) with a tripartite doxastic taxonomy. However, I think that this worry dissolves once we consider what the subject’s evidence would need to look like for a doxastic range of 0.4 – 0.6 to be justified for him. In such cases the subject’s evidence is symmetrically balanced for and against p. As mentioned above, on a tripartite account such an evidential state calls for suspending judgment. What this brings our attention to is that various doxastic ranges would be nested under the coarser-grained doxastic attitude of suspension – any doxastic range which is symmetrically balanced around 0.5 would be such an attitude (0.2-0.8, 0.4-0.6, 0-1, etc.). These disparate ranges would identify different \textit{kinds} of suspension of judgment, but they would each be \textit{types} of suspension of judgment. They would differ in terms of when any of these attitudes would fit a body of evidence. The narrower the justified range, the more one can rule out in terms of how much the evidence could support p or not-p. The broadest range (0-1) fits an individual’s evidence when he has no clue as to how his evidence relates to p. Narrower ranges are fitting when the subject can rule out that his evidence strongly supports p and similarly for not-p. More will be made of such distinctions between kinds of justified suspension of judgment in Chapter 3. So, the possibility of such doxastic ranges being justified for an individual does not show that any of the tripartite options are justified for him. Such ranges are
Moderate permissivism, however, is not so easily dismissed. White provides two arguments against moderate permissivism. White’s first argument against moderate permissivism is that it creates trouble for practical deliberation since it allows for one’s beliefs to be arbitrary in an importantly problematic way. Suppose that Jones is on a jury which is to decide the innocence of Smith regarding a murder. White asks us to imagine that Jones becomes (suppose justifiably) convinced that Smith committed the murder but that Jones is also (suppose justifiably) convinced that moderate permissivism is true and that one could just as rationally conclude that Smith is not guilty. White claims that given this, Jones could reason that since it is due to some arbitrary factor that he believes Smith is guilty given the evidence, he would do no better in terms of serving justice if he were to vote according to his belief as were he to vote not guilty, so he can vote not guilty since he rather likes Smith. But, White concludes, it cannot be right to let someone go free when you are rationally persuaded that he is a murderer. So, the claim is that one cannot consistently (i) (suppose justifiably) believe Smith is guilty, (ii) (suppose justifiably) believe it would be just as rational to vote not guilty, and (iii) vote not guilty.

White notes that one might think that Jones should vote not guilty since evidence that it is rational to have doubts regarding Smith’s guilt can make a guilty vote
inappropriate. However, White claims that if this is so, then Jones should not maintain his conviction that Smith is guilty. Having Jones vote against his convictions (letting someone who you rationally believe is a murderer, go free) is claimed by White to be an absurd consequence of holding a moderate permissivist epistemology. The problem is that Jones’s believing that Smith is guilty would not give him any special reason for action (voting guilty) since he can acknowledge other equally rational, yet conflicting, attitudes towards this proposition (even given the same evidence).

Nevertheless, it seems that what you in fact believe can be of critical importance in practical deliberations, so something has gone wrong. In other words, it seems that the fact that you believe something as an inquirer is not simply an arbitrary matter, but according to moderate permissivism it seems to be arbitrary at least to some degree in at least some cases.

The first thing to note about White’s argument is that it simply cannot show that moderate permissivism is incorrect since it only examines one case and moderate permissivism only claims that there are some possible epistemically permissive cases. The moderate permissivist can simply claim that White’s case is not one of the alleged permissive cases. White’s example does not sufficiently generalize in any straightforward way to every other case of possible epistemic permissiveness. For one thing, White’s case involves a murder trial. As such, the importance of this deliberation
and decision is much greater than typical instances of deliberation one engages in. Arbitrariness is likely to not be so bothersome in cases where much less is at stake.\textsuperscript{24}

Further, the trouble that White finds for the moderate permissivist regards practical deliberation – it regards cases where one is going to perform an action that is at least related to the issue under rational deliberation. Not all of our rational deliberations are such that there is some impending \textit{action} which is related to our conclusion in some intimate way. Some deliberations may be purely hypothetical or theoretical. Thus, the conflict that White sees for the moderate permissivist simply will not arise in cases where there is no corresponding action for the deliberator to take. At most White has shown that there is a problem in Jones’s forming a particular doxastic attitude and proceeding to perform a ‘conflicting’ action, but with this the moderate permissivist can agree.

Most notably on this point, White’s example concerns a case where an individual (suppose justifiably) believes moderate permissivism. In fact, the problems for White’s subject directly stem from the fact that he (suppose justifiably) believes that moderate permissivism is correct. As such, it is hard to see how any problems found here would reflect on the thesis moderate permissivism itself. It could be that moderate permissivism is true, but it is such that it cannot be justifiably believed, or that if one is justified in believing moderate permissivism then one should not believe anything on a

\textsuperscript{24} White’s case does generalize in a limited way in that we could redescribe the case so as to make any proposition the relevant proposition, but it would nonetheless be relying on the fact that some important behavior was at stake. In this way the case insufficiently generalizes to pose an objection to moderate permissivism.
matter that one justifiably believes to be a permissive case of rationality.\footnote{This latter point is made by White (2005): 9, 14. White refers to this problem as the self-undermining problem for permissivist epistemologies.} To show that a view is self-undermining in this way, however, is not to show that it is false.\footnote{For more on this see Chapter 3.}

Another problem with White’s argument is that it ignores other ways in which it might be wrong for Jones to believe that Smith is guilty and yet vote not guilty. Even if Jones’s belief that Smith is guilty is just one among several rational doxastic responses to the evidence, it could be that given that it is the belief that Jones \textit{in fact has}, simply having this belief places certain constraints upon Jones. Plausibly, these constraints would include Jones’s voting guilty. White does not see how my believing p could be privileged in practical and theoretical reasoning if other doxastic attitudes toward p are equally rational for me to have. However, it seems that principles of subjective rationality, where one’s attitudes are assessed apart from the objective reasons for them, can explain why such a conflict in Jones is bad, even if there is nothing unreasonable (in our sense) about his belief that Smith is guilty. There is a sense of irrationality (though not our sense) which is exhibited when an individual fails to have a certain attitude given other attitudes that he has, \textit{even if he has no reason to have these other attitudes}.\footnote{For more on principles of subjective rationality see Niko Kolodny (2005). Pryor (2004) seems to give another account of such doxastic conflict. He argues that when you fail to believe a proposition that you are rationally committed to believe given some other proposition you believe (even if you have no justification for believing this proposition), you thereby exhibit a rational failing (p. 364). It seems like this account could be extended to cover the imagined cases as well.} If I (without reason) believe that the coin will land heads, then the

\footnote{Similar considerations seem to apply to Christensen’s (2007) motivation for the Uniqueness Thesis. Christensen imagines a case where two doctors come to conflicting conclusions regarding a patient. Christensen notes that it seems wrong for one doctor to admit that the other doctor is equally rational in}
mere fact that I have this belief places a kind of rational constraint (though not in our sense of ‘rational’) on my other beliefs, intentions, and actions. For instance, it would be irrational of me (in this alternate sense) to bet on tails given that I believe the coin will land heads. Simply having such a belief places constraints on what it would be rational (in this alternate sense) for me to do. Further, this is so, even though I may have no reason to believe that it will land heads. It seems that Jones does exhibit this kind of irrationality by exhibiting this same some sort of inconsistency by both believing that Smith is guilty and nonetheless voting not guilty. So, this case fails to show that the problem lies with a kind of epistemic permissiveness.

A second argument White gives against moderate permissivism concerns responding to the evidence. White imagines two individuals who share their total evidence. Suppose that S1 believes p to degree x and S2 believes p to degree y, where x does not equal y. Let us assume that both degrees of belief are within the permitted range of the correct permissive view. It doesn’t matter how close x and y are, so long as they are distinct doxastic attitudes, and a moderate permissivism maintains that there are such cases where there are two equally rational doxastic attitudes toward a given proposition given a single body of evidence. White asks us to then suppose that S1 and S2 each acquire some new evidence for p, and S1 and S2 each increase their confidence, thinking that treatment B is better but nonetheless prescribing treatment A, where treatment A can cause a great deal of pain. Christensen explicitly wants to increase what is at stake to show problems with a permissive epistemology, but considerations concerning what are at stake are irrelevant to determining which doxastic attitude is justified (at least given our assumption of evidentialism). This shows that what is motivating our intuitions in this case can at least be explained equally as well by some principle governing action (i.e. you should not do x where x involves great pain and doing some alternative to x is equally reasonable).
S1 to degree $x'$ and S2 to degree $y'$ and both continue to believe within the now permitted range. As it happens, suppose that $y' = x$ (that S2’s new degree of belief is equal to S1’s original degree of belief). Supposing that such a case is possible\textsuperscript{29}, White questions why S1 should have moved from $x$ to $x'$ since the two doxastic attitudes are equally rational given his evidence according to this supposed permissive view. As White puts it, “why shouldn’t I just keep my confidence in p at x, if it suits me?” even though as he notes, “the net effect is that I remain entirely unmoved by [the new evidence], even though I correctly recognize that it confirms p.”\textsuperscript{30}

Again, even if such a case would not allow for multiple competitor doxastic attitudes to be justified for S1, it is hard to see how this case could show that moderate permissivism is false. The moderate permissivist can simply claim that such a situation is not one of the situations in which rationality is permissive. So, it is hard to see how this consideration can tell us anything regarding the correctness of moderate permissivism.

White is right that there seems to be a problem with S1 doxastically staying put upon discovering the new evidence for p, even when his original doxastic attitude falls within the range of permitted attitudes after the new evidence is acquired. Nonetheless, it is not clear that this is evidence that tells against moderate permissivism in even this case. There are numerous epistemic principles (even if there is only one fundamental epistemic principle), and it seems that what goes wrong in the above scenario can be captured by another epistemic principle. For instance, it is plausible

\textsuperscript{29} A supposition which needn’t be granted by the defender of moderate permissivism.

\textsuperscript{30} White (2005): 15-16.
that acquiring new (and undefeated) evidence in favor of p at least typically requires one to increase one’s confidence that p.\textsuperscript{31} In fact, such a principle seems required by (UT) – so, it seems to be a more fundamental epistemic principle. It seems that the reason why there would be no more than one rational doxastic attitude to adopt toward a proposition given a body of evidence is that each bit of undefeated evidence for p increases the degree of confidence that is rationally required for one to have in p. While such a principle is friendly to (UT), it does not entail it, for it might be that though some doxastic movement is required upon discovering evidence, there is \textit{no unique amount} of doxastic movement required – rather, there is a permissible range of increased confidence. This story is compatible with moderate permissivism and seems to explain in a plausible way what goes wrong in White’s envisioned scenario. Acquiring undefeated evidence for p requires one to increase one’s confidence that p – at least some. Since the moderate permissivist can endorse this claim, there does not appear to be an independent problem\textsuperscript{32} for moderate permissivism here either.

\textsuperscript{31} One might think that the ‘at least typically’ modifier is required in the above principle since the smallest degree of epistemic support might still be larger than the smallest degree of evidential support. That is, it might be that in some case one acquires so little evidence that it does not make a justificatory difference. For instance, it might seem that looking at the one hundredth copy of today’s New York Times I do not become any more justified in believing its reported claims. While I have doubts about the need of such a modifier, the response to White here goes through just as well with this slightly weaker principle. While I agree that I should not become much more confident in those claims, it still seems that I now have a little reason to be more confident. This increased confidence may be negligible and psychologically indistinguishable from the slightly lower level of confidence, but it seems like it is increased nonetheless. \textsuperscript{32} I say that there is no independent problem since one might well object to the principle that there is a range of increased confidence which is rational. The truth of this principle seems to depend upon the truth of moderate permissivism, so we can only reject my imagined response to White’s case by first finding reason to reject moderate permissivism.
Although White’s arguments against permissivism are lacking, I do think that (UT) is correct. Given a tripartite account of our doxastic options (that our doxastic options are belief, disbelief, or suspension of judgment), I think that the considerations which told against extreme permissivism also indicate that rational uniqueness is correct. It seems that a body of evidence either supports p, supports not-p, or is neutral between p and not-p. As such, there seems to be a unique doxastic option which fits each type of possible evidential situation. If the evidence supports p, then believing p is the uniquely justified doxastic attitude regarding p. If the evidence supports not-p, then disbelieving p is the uniquely justified doxastic attitude regarding p. If the evidence is neutral between p and not-p, then suspending judgment is the uniquely justified doxastic attitude regarding p. So, there are three ways that a body of evidence can be, and, at least given a tripartite doxastic taxonomy, one unique doxastic response for each such way. A body of evidence cannot on balance support p and on balance support not-p, nor can it on balance support p and on balance be neutral between p and not-p. So, there appears to be only three ways a body of evidence can be with respect to p, and there is one corresponding doxastic attitude for each of these ways. So, consideration of the tripartite account of doxastic attitudes and ways that a body of evidence can be indicate that rational uniqueness is correct.

In what follows I will examine various objections to the Uniqueness Thesis and respond to each. I will consider objections concerning disagreements, being cautious,
the breadth of justified doxastic attitudes, problems concerning vagueness, and a semantic objection to (UT).

1.5 Rational Uniqueness: Some Objections

1.5.1 Disagreement

The Uniqueness Thesis is not without its detractors. Rosen (2001), for instance, takes it as an obvious fact that individuals can reasonably disagree even given a single body of evidence. He explains,

When a jury or a court is divided in a difficult case, the mere fact of disagreement does not mean that someone is being unreasonable. Paleontologists disagree about what killed the dinosaurs. And while it is possible that most of the parties to this dispute are irrational, this need not be the case. To the contrary, it would appear to be a fact of epistemic life that a careful review of the evidence does not guarantee consensus, even among thoughtful and otherwise rational investigators.33

Here Rosen seems to take it that cases of disagreement show that rational uniqueness is clearly false.34 Cases of disagreement have been used in ethics to argue that there is no universal objective moral code, and it seems that Rosen takes it that a similar case can be made against rational uniqueness.

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34 While Rosen does not claim that the disagreeing members of the jury or court have all the same evidence, in claiming that ‘disagreement does not mean that someone is being unreasonable’ I take it that Rosen is claiming that regardless of how we fill in the details (even stipulating the the parties have all the same evidence) the mere fact of disagreement cannot show that at least one of the disagreeing parties is being unreasonable – that rationally responding to the same evidence needn’t result in consensus.
Rosen, however, thinks that there is an important asymmetry between the epistemic and ethical cases of disagreement. He thinks that even if ethical disagreement does not tell against ethical objectivism, the same is not true regarding the effect of disagreement upon rational uniqueness. He writes,

Rational permission differs from moral permission in the following respect. There is no presumption that when an act is morally impermissible, we should be able to lead any clear-headed, open-minded, intelligent agent to see that it is. That’s why rationally irresolvable moral disagreement is a possibility. In the epistemic case, on the other hand, a claim to the effect that one is obliged to follow a certain rule is undermined if we can describe a reasonable-seeming, fully reflective, and fully livable human practice that eschews it . . . You can charge [the disagreeing party] with irrationality, and they will listen to the indictment. But what will you say to back it up? When they ask you, “What’s wrong with our way of proceeding?”, what will you say? If you have nothing to say, then the charge will not stick. Not only will they (quite reasonably) fail to heed you. If you have nothing to say, then in my view the charge is mistaken.35

There are a couple of things worth noting about Rosen’s comments. First and foremost, Rosen seems to confuse the project of justifying one’s beliefs with the state of having justified beliefs or being justified in believing certain things. As mentioned above, being epistemically justified in believing p does not entail that one is able to convince others that p or to even give a non-question begging defense of p. Being unable to articulate why one’s claim is correct, or what is wrong with an opponent’s claim, does not have the consequence that one’s claim is not justified or that the opponent’s claim is not unjustified. Whether either claim is justified will depend upon its fit with the evidence,

so one’s inability to convince another does not tell to the justification of either’s belief; thus, it does not show that (UT) is false.\textsuperscript{36}

Second, it is not clear that morality permits rationally irresolvable disagreements in the way Rosen imagines – Rawls (1951, 1971) and Firth (1952) at least think otherwise. Rawls and Firth are concerned with rational procedures and thus are using ‘rational’ in a sense other than we are, but if we closely examine Rosen’s comments, it seems that he too is thinking of rationality in this procedural way. In the first quote given above, Rosen refers to each individual ‘carefully weighing the evidence’, and ‘being thoughtful’. Such responsible inquiry and careful consideration, however, does not guarantee that one’s resulting beliefs will be epistemically justified.\textsuperscript{37} As we are understanding it, epistemic justification is a matter of evidential fit alone.\textsuperscript{38} So, even if ideal agents could undergo rational procedures and come to different conclusions, this is not to say that those distinct conclusions are each epistemically justified by the evidence. To maintain that this is the case would be contrary to our evidentialist assumption.

I agree with Rosen that individuals can each undergo \textit{rational procedures} and come to different conclusions, but this is not the type of rational permissiveness that is

\textsuperscript{36}See Christensen (2007) and Prior (2000) for more on this claim.
\textsuperscript{37}A similar distinction is made by Shafer-Landau (2003) and utilized in attacking an anti-realist argument from moral disagreement. See especially Ch. 9.
\textsuperscript{38}It is worth noting that some who reject evidentialism do take epistemic justification to be tightly tied to one’s undergoing ‘reasonable’ procedures (in Rosen’s sense). See Kornblith (1983) for one such example. Since such accounts of epistemic justification are contrary to our evidentialist assumption, I will not address such views here.
relevant to (UT). So long as ideal agents are still fallible judges of the evidence, two such individuals could each carefully weigh the same body of evidence and yet come to distinct conclusions. This, however, does not show that the body of evidence does not support only one of the competing doxastic attitudes.

So, it is hard to see how Rosen’s considerations regarding disagreements show that (UT) is false. Importantly, (UT) does not claim that it will always be easy to determine which doxastic attitude is the uniquely justified one to adopt toward a proposition given a body of evidence. Often it will not. In fact, this difficulty in part explains the widespread and persistent disagreement which we often encounter in our lives over a variety of topics.

1.5.2 The Breadth of Justified Doxastic Attitudes

Goldman (forthcoming) briefly questions the Uniqueness Thesis concerning potential mismatches between one’s doxastic options and the prescriptions made by a body of evidence. Goldman claims that it seems unlikely that the correct epistemic principles will make doxastic prescriptions only in the narrowest doxastic categories (whichever these may be). Goldman notes that there are psychological limits as to how narrow or wide a doxastic state can be (regardless of the correct doxastic taxonomy). Given that there is some narrowest doxastic state, Goldman questions why we should think that the correct epistemology will have it that solely one of these narrowest doxastic states will be justified by any body of evidence. Goldman thinks that this criticism applies
equally to a tripartite taxonomy of doxastic attitudes as well as a degree notion of belief. On the tripartite picture, Goldman maintains that the prescribed doxastic attitude could plausibly be a disjunctive category such as ‘belief or suspension of judgment’.39

From considerations explored above, it is hard to see how Goldman could be correct on this point. On the tripartite doxastic taxonomy a body of evidence simply could not support one of Goldman’s disjunctive doxastic categories.40 A body of evidence either on balance supports a proposition, on balance supports its denial, or is on balance neutral on the matter. A body of evidence can on balance do no more than one of these. Given which of these ways the body of evidence in question is, belief, disbelief, or suspension of judgment respectively will be the justified doxastic attitude to have toward the proposition in question. A body of evidence cannot both be on balance neutral regarding p and also on balance support p, so it is not plausible that Goldman’s disjunctive categories could be justified for an individual to adopt toward a proposition given a body of evidence.41

1.5.3 Borderline Cases and Caution

Kelly (forthcoming) does not think that rational uniqueness is especially plausible even on a tripartite picture of one’s doxastic options. He thinks that marginal cases cast

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39 Goldman even offers invented labels for such states such as ‘belension’ and ‘disbelension’ – the disjunctive category of disbelief and suspension of judgment.
40 For this reason it seems that the doxastic ranges which are not symmetrically balanced on 0.5 or do not entirely fall between 0 and something less than 0.5 or between something greater than 0.5 and 1 would never be justified for an individual to adopt toward a proposition.
41 We will consider this charge applied to a more fine-grained doxastic taxonomy below.
insurmountable doubt upon the claim that there is at most one rational doxastic
attitude to adopt toward a proposition given a body of evidence. Kelly asks us to imagine the following case:

Suppose that the evidence available to me is just barely sufficient to justify my belief that it will rain tomorrow: if the evidence was even slightly weaker than it is, then I would be unjustified in thinking that it will rain. Suppose further that you have the same evidence but are slightly more cautious than I am, and so do not yet believe that it will rain tomorrow. It is not that you are dogmatically averse to concluding that it will rain; indeed, we can suppose that if the evidence for rain gets even slightly stronger, then you too will take up the relevant belief.

Given this setup, Kelly thinks that it is by no means clear that the reader is being any less reasonable than Kelly.

Perhaps this is being dogmatic, but I simply do not follow Kelly here. After all, the evidence does favor p over not-p – Kelly even declares so in the story he gives. As we have seen above, when the evidence on balance favors p, believing p is the justified doxastic attitude to adopt toward p. The evidence only favors believing p slightly, but it favors belief nonetheless. Being cautious is often a good thing, but in this case

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42 Chisholm (1977) makes room for such cases. In setting out his terms of epistemic appraisal, Chisholm asserts that one such status is acceptable. He defines this epistemic status as follows: “h is acceptable for S =Df Witholding h is not more reasonable for S than accepting h.” (p. 9). Chisholm goes on to claim that not all propositions that are acceptable, in this sense, are also beyond reasonable doubt (such that accepting them is more reasonable than withholding). The motivation that Chisholm gives for this claim comes from what he sees might be an adequate theory of perception. He states that such a theory of perception might require us to say, “if I have that experience which might naturally be expressed by saying that I “seem to see” a certain state of affairs (e.g., “I seem to see a man standing there”), then the state of affairs that I thus seem to perceive (the proposition that a man is standing there) is one that is, for me, ipso facto, acceptable. It may be, however, that although the proposition is thus acceptable, it is not beyond reasonable doubt; i.e., although withholding it is not more reasonable than believing it, believing it cannot be said to be more reasonable than withholding it.” (p. 9-10).

exercising caution is causing an individual to adopt a doxastic attitude which is a competitor to the doxastic attitude toward p justified by the reader’s evidence. So, in this case, the reader has adopted the wrong doxastic attitude regarding the proposition that it will rain tomorrow. This follows from evidentialism and Kelly’s given description of the case. The cautious reader has not adopted the attitude which best fits the evidence.

This being so, nothing in (UT) dictates how bad of an epistemic crime it is to fail to adopt the uniquely correct doxastic attitude toward a proposition, particularly in borderline cases. In borderline cases such as this one, the reader’s suspension of judgment seems to be much less of an epistemic transgression than one who remains skeptical even after much more positive evidence comes in on the matter. It would be a mistake, however, to confuse a slight failure of rationality with rationality. In the case described, Kelly can be properly reproached for not believing in accordance with the evidence, though he still does epistemically better than he might have.

Alternatively, it might be that what Kelly is calling ‘reasonable’ is that the reader compensates his attitude given the evidence to accommodate his cautiousness. There seems to be a kind of reasonableness that one displays by having one’s attitude fit not just the evidence but some more complex set of facts such as the evidence as well as

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44 I will discuss the challenge to UT posed by borderline cases themselves below.
one’s dispositions (including one’s caution). The reader is adjusting his attitude to the evidence and his cautiousness, so isn’t the reader being reasonable in this sense?45

It may be that the reader is being reasonable in this sense. In fact there may well be numerous senses in which the reader has been reasonable in coming to this cautious conclusion. Nonetheless, none of these senses of ‘rational’ are relevant to (UT). (UT) concerns only reasonability understood as correctly responding to the evidence alone. So, if Kelly understands the reader’s reasonability in any other sense than this one, this case will simply fail to apply to (UT).

1.5.4 Vagueness

Considerations concerning borderline cases of justification can lead us to think that justification and rationality are vague concepts. Individuals who endorse this claim would deny that there is a clear and distinct line separating when one is justified in believing a proposition and when one is not. The borders between cases where a doxastic attitude is justified and those where it is not may well be fuzzy and such that no amount of inquiry or conceptual analysis would settle whether that doxastic attitude was justified. In this way, the justification relation may be like the ‘is close to’ relation.

Why think justification is vague? First, it could be that it is vague whether a certain body of evidence supports a proposition or whether a given doxastic attitude fits that body of evidence. This seems to be particularly likely where there are a lot of

45 Thanks to Earl Conee for bringing this possible response to my attention.
evidential considerations at hand and there are numerous defeaters and defeater-
defeaters on both sides of the issue. In addition, it could also be vague whether a
certain piece of evidence is part of a given body of evidence. Whatever the conditions
for evidence possession are, it is quite plausible that at least some of them are vague.

Access internalists, for instance, claim that a necessary condition on something
being part of one’s evidence is that one is aware of it (or aware that it is a mental state
which one is in). So, one’s evidence is restricted to the mental states that one is aware
of being in. However, it seems that it can be vague whether one is aware of being in a
particular mental state. To see this we can examine a sorites series on awareness
between clear cases of awareness and clear cases of unawareness. Although there are
clear cases on both sides of the spectrum, there does not appear to be any sharp divide
between cases of awareness and cases of unawareness. So, justification and rationality
are quite plausibly vague concepts.

The vagueness of justification might be thought to create problems for (UT). If
justification is vague, then there will be bodies of evidence such that it is not clear
whether a certain doxastic attitude is justified or not regarding a proposition. Given
that possibility, one might wonder how (UT) could be correct. One might be tempted to
reason that if justification is a vague concept, then at least in these cases of
indeterminacy, there can be competitor doxastic options that are such that one would
be justified in adopting either attitude towards a proposition.
Vagueness will not present a challenge to (UT) in cases where it is indeterminate whether a body of evidence justifies one doxastic attitude, yet it determinately does not justify any competitor doxastic attitudes towards that a particular proposition. In such a case, it may be that the evidence justifies no doxastic attitude toward that proposition, but (UT) is consistent with this. Recall that (UT) claims only that at most one competitor doxastic attitude is ever justified by a body of evidence toward a proposition.

Things might be thought to be more problematic in cases where it is indeterminate whether a body of evidence justifies each of two competitor doxastic attitudes. However, such cases will only present a problem for (UT) if the indeterminacy has it that both of these competitor doxastic attitudes are then justified toward the relevant proposition by this body of evidence. However, it is hard to see why the indeterminacy of justification would have this result.

To give an analogous case, it can plausibly be vague whether a certain color patch is blue and vague whether that same color patch is green. This fact, however, does not suffice to show that the color patch is both blue and green at the same time. Similarly, it may be vague that a certain individual is tall and vague that that same individual is not tall. However, there is no obvious route from this fact to his simultaneously being both tall and not tall. Some responses to vagueness deny bivalence, but the consequence examined above would be much more drastic than that. Such a response would seemingly permit the truth of contradictions.
So, indeterminacy in cases of justification does not entail the permissiveness of rationality. Even if it is vague whether each of two competitor doxastic attitudes fits the evidence, it does not follow that each doxastic attitude is justified to have towards that proposition given that body of evidence.\textsuperscript{46} So, it is at best unclear how vagueness will present any challenge to (UT).\textsuperscript{47}

1.5.5 Naïve Theory of Meaning: A Semantic Challenge

The naïve theory of meaning (hereafter NT) is a plausible semantic theory which claims that the semantic content of a singular term is its referent in its context of use, the semantic content of a predicate is the property or relation it expresses, and that the semantic content of a sentence (on an occasion of use) is a proposition composed of the semantic contents of its parts.\textsuperscript{48} For example, the sentence ‘Socrates is wise’ expresses a singular proposition consisting of the individual Socrates and the property wisdom. According to (NT), propositional attitude ascriptions are ascriptions of a relation between an individual and a proposition. So, the substitution of co-referring names

\textsuperscript{46} Christensen (2007, p. 192) makes a similar point.
\textsuperscript{47} The question remains as to what one ought to do in cases where it is vague which doxastic attitude one’s justification supports. While the answer to this interesting question is not the focus of this work, I do want to suggest an answer to it. It seems to me that (at least on a tripartite doxastic taxonomy) suspension of judgment has a privileged position. That is, it seems that even when one is justified in suspending judgment as to whether suspension is the justified doxastic attitude to adopt toward \( p \), suspension may still be the justified doxastic attitude for that individual to adopt toward \( p \). This is importantly different than how things work for belief and disbelief (more on this in Chapter 3). So, I lean towards believing that in cases where it is not clear which attitude is justified for one to adopt toward \( p \), one should suspend regarding \( p \). In this way, suspension is something like a default doxastic attitude. Things might be much messier on a degreed doxastic taxonomy since there are plausibly many ways in which one might suspend judgment toward a proposition. Perhaps adopting the broadest doxastic range (0-1) would be the appropriate way to suspend judgment on this picture when one is also justified in suspending judgment as to whether one should suspend judgment toward the target proposition.
\textsuperscript{48} For more on defenses and explications of the naïve theory of meaning see Salmon (1991), Soames (2002), and Braun (1991).
within a cognitive attitude ascription does not affect which proposition is expressed by the ascription since it does not affect which proposition is being related to the individual in question.

Consider Lois Lane and Clark Kent. At t1 Lois has interacted with Clark for a while at the Daily Planet, and she is justified in believing that Clark cannot fly. Suppose that she even forms the belief that Clark cannot fly. Later at t2, when Lois is introduced to someone named ‘Superman’ and sees what he is capable of, she becomes justified in believing that Superman can fly. Suppose that she also forms this belief and continues to believe that Clark cannot fly. According to (NT), since ‘Clark’ and ‘Superman’ are singular terms that co-refer, the proposition expressed by ‘Superman can fly’ and ‘Clark Kent can fly’ is one and the same proposition. As such, according to (NT) Lois both believes and disbelieves the very same proposition.

Now, Lois does not realize that ‘Clark’ refers to the same individual as ‘Superman’. She is unaware that the sentences ‘Superman can fly’ and ‘Clark can fly’ express the same proposition, which according to (NT) they do. As such, it does not seem that Lois gains evidence at t2 that counts against her believing that Clark cannot fly. Lois is unaware that her evidence gained at t2 is also evidence against the proposition expressed by ‘Clark cannot fly’. Thus, it seems Lois is still justified in believing that Clark cannot fly after seeing Superman fly. Similarly, it seems that Lois is justified in believing that Superman can fly, despite the evidence she has against this proposition from her interaction with Clark in the office. Thus, it seems that Lois is
simultaneously justified in both believing that Superman can fly and disbelieving that Clark can fly – but this is the very same proposition according to (NT).

So, if (NT) is correct, then it looks like Lois is justified in both believing and disbelieving the same proposition given a single body of evidence. This spells trouble for (UT). If (NT) is correct, then (UT) is false. Nonetheless, it seems that even if (NT) is correct, there is still room for something very much like the Uniqueness Thesis.

The resolution that I will offer here bears a great deal of similarity with Nathan Salmon’s resolution to Frege’s puzzle.\(^49\) Salmon relies on the notion of a mode of presentation, or a way of believing, to explain how it could be that an individual could have different cognitive attitudes towards one proposition. A mode of presentation is a way in which an individual is acquainted with a proposition. One can have a cognitive attitude toward a proposition via one mode while not via other modes. Salmon introduces the BEL relation to utilize modes of presentation in his solution to Frege’s puzzle. The BEL relation is a ternary relation between an individual, a proposition, and a mode. Thus, for belief:

\[
S \text{ believes } p \text{ if and only if } (\exists x)(S \text{ grasps } p \text{ by means of } x \text{ and } \text{BEL}(S, p, x)).
\]

This explains how it can be that Lois both believes that Superman can fly and disbelieves that Superman can fly. Since Lois grasps Clark differently through the names ‘Clark’ and


\(^{50}\) Similarly, for disbelief: \(S\) disbelieves \(p\) if and only if \((\exists x)(S \text{ grasps } p \text{ by means of } x \text{ and } \text{BEL}(S, \text{not-}p, x))\). For suspension of judgment: \(S\) suspends judgment regarding \(p\) if and only if \((\exists x) S \text{ grasps } p \text{ by means of } x \text{ and not-BEL}(S, p, x) \text{ and not-BEL}(S, \text{not-}p, \text{not}(\neg x))\).
‘Superman’, she is grasping the proposition that Superman can fly in different ways or under distinct propositional guises. Grasped in one way (as Superman) she believes he can fly, and grasped in another way (as Clark) she disbelieves it.

As it stands, (UT) regards a relation between a body of evidence, a doxastic attitude, and a proposition, and it says that only one such relation is epistemically justified. If (NT) is correct, then such a relation is too coarse grained to be correct. If (NT) is correct, then (UT) should concern a relation between an individual, a time, a body of evidence, a proposition, and a mode of presentation to deal with cases of co-referring names. So, if (UT) is to be compatible with (NT) it should state that:

$$(\text{UT}**) \text{ For any body of evidence } E, \text{ proposition } P, E \text{ determinately justifies at most one competitor doxastic attitude toward } P \text{ grasped via any particular mode of presentation.}$$

According to (UT**) there is an important 4-place relation which is a corollary to the 3-place (standard) justification relation in the same way that Salmon’s ternary BEL relation is a corollary to the binary believes relation. This 4-place relation has it that what one’s evidence supports is a proposition grasped via a mode. Thus, we can say for justification that:

An individual $S$ is justified in having doxastic attitude $D$ (belief/disbelief/suspension of judgment) towards proposition $P$ on body of evidence $E$ iff $(\exists x)(S \text{ grasps } P \text{ by means of } x, \text{ and } E \text{ supports } S's \text{ having } D \text{ toward } P \text{ via mode of presentation } x)$. This 4-place relation is exemplified when (i) an individual grasps a proposition by a mode, (ii) that individual’s body of evidence supports the relevant doxastic attitude toward that proposition when grasped in that way.
What is it for evidence to support a cognitive attitude toward a proposition when grasped in a certain mode? I cannot give a full account here, but we can sketch the general idea. We have been discussing propositions that are grasped via a particular mode, which is a way that one is acquainted with the proposition. It seems that evidence for a proposition need not be evidence for that proposition under every mode of presentation.\(^{51}\) This can be brought out by re-examining the case of Lois.

Lois is justified in believing that Clark cannot fly since she grasps that proposition under the ‘Clark’-mode and her body of evidence at t2 seems to still support her believing that proposition under the ‘Clark’-mode. None of the evidence that Lois acquires at t2 seems to be evidence against the proposition that Clark cannot fly when grasped under the ‘Clark’-mode for Lois (though it is evidence against that proposition). This newly acquired evidence does not seem to affect the justification of Lois’s belief grasped via the ‘Clark’-mode since Lois is not aware that ‘Superman’ and ‘Clark’ co-refer. Perhaps this is because a bit of evidence only supports p if there is another part of one’s evidence which connects that bit of evidence to p.\(^{52}\)

Intuitively, Lois is justified in disbelieving that Superman cannot fly and justified in believing that Clark cannot fly. This seems true regardless of one’s semantic theory. If (NT) is correct, there is only one proposition here, so if these intuitive verdicts are to be kept more must be said regarding how one’s evidence supports a proposition. If (NT)

\(^{51}\) This suggests that like the believes and justification relations, the evidential relation also needs a correlate which takes into consideration the mode of presentation of a proposition, if (NT) is correct.

\(^{52}\) In Chapter 3 I will further explain and defend such a conception of evidence.
is correct, then to capture these verdicts it seems that one must see a connection between one’s evidence and a proposition *grasped via a particular mode* in order for that evidence to justify a belief in that proposition grasped via that mode. This would explain why the evidence Lois gains at t2 does not affect her justification for believing that Clark cannot fly when grasped in the ‘Clark’-mode—Lois does not see any connection between that evidence and the proposition that Clark cannot fly, when it is grasped in the ‘Clark’-mode. So, this newly acquired evidence would not affect which doxastic attitude Lois ought to take on regarding the proposition that Clark cannot fly, as grasped via the ‘Clark’-mode. In this way, Lois is like the individual who is not justified in believing the logical consequences of her evidence since she does not see that her evidence connects her to the relevant proposition, or in this case, proposition grasped via the relevant mode.53

For these same reasons, Lois is justified in disbelieving that Clark cannot fly since she grasps that proposition under the ‘Superman’-mode and her body of evidence at t2 supports disbelieving that proposition under the ‘Superman’-mode. The evidence that Lois has in favor of the proposition that Clark cannot fly does not come into play here since it does not support that proposition grasped via the ‘Superman’-mode for Lois. Again, since Lois is unaware any connection between the evidence she has in favor of the proposition that the Clark cannot fly (grasped via the ‘Clark’-mode) and the

53 Similarly, Lois can be likened to the novice bird-watcher. Part of her evidence is shared with the analogue of the expert bird watcher – one who does see that ‘Clark cannot fly’ and ‘Superman cannot fly’ express the same proposition, and thus that this evidence counts against the truth of this proposition even when grasped in the ‘naive theory’ mode of presentation.
proposition expressed by ‘Superman can fly’, this evidence should not affect which
cognitive attitude Lois has toward the proposition that Clark cannot fly as grasped in the
‘Superman’-mode. This previously gained evidence is not evidence for that proposition
grasped via the ‘Superman’-mode.

These considerations bring out one way in which (UT**) must be clarified. (UT**) refers to a body of evidence which is typically understood as being constituted by propositions. However, if (NT) is correct, then these propositions can be grasped in different ways with justificatory implications. For instance, if Lois is justified in believing that Superman can fly (in the ‘Superman’-way alone) and justified in believing that if Superman can fly then someone who works at the Daily Planet can fly (in the ‘Clark’-way alone), she is not thereby justified in believing that someone who works at the Daily Planet can fly. Even though she is justified in believing propositions that entail this, she is not justified in believing these propositions via a mode that will support such an inference. So, the body of evidence that is referenced in (UT**) should not be understood as being comprised merely of propositions, but must also make reference to the modes of presentation via which those propositions are grasped.

So, just as an individual can believe a proposition via one mode and fail to believe it via another, one’s evidence may support a proposition grasped via one mode but not via another. Thus, one can be epistemically justified in having one cognitive attitude toward a proposition grasped in one way, yet not when grasped in a different way.
This reformulation of (UT) keeps the spirit of rational uniqueness. Neither Lois nor anyone else with an identical body of evidence is ever justified in adopting differing competitor doxastic attitudes toward the same proposition when grasped in the same way. Lois never has a body of evidence which justifies her in believing that Clark cannot fly under the ‘Clark’-mode and justified in disbelieving that Clark cannot fly under the ‘Clark’-mode. Thus, (UT**) is compatible with (NT), and maintains both the spirit and intuitive appeal of rational uniqueness. If the naïve theory of meaning is correct, there is still room for a version of rational uniqueness.

1.6 Degrees of Belief

Thus far we have been examining the prospects for rational uniqueness given a tripartite picture of one’s doxastic options. These days, many epistemologists have opted instead for a more fine-grained doxastic picture, preferring to talk in terms of degrees of belief rather than all-out-belief or all-or-nothing-belief. It is worth briefly exploring the prospects of the Uniqueness Thesis given this richer doxastic picture.

The Uniqueness Thesis has been claimed to be implausible on such a richer doxastic picture, but the reasons typically given are as those we have considered above (and found wanting). While it might be more plausible to think that there are borderline cases and vagueness issues on this richer doxastic conception, what we have said above will apply equally well on this more fine-grained approach to the doxastic

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54 The same is true for that proposition when grasped in both cases under the ‘Superman’-mode of presentation.

55 See Kelly (forthcoming).
taxonomy. So, I don’t think that these are good reasons to abandon the Uniqueness Thesis on a degreed picture of belief either.

However, above we dismissed the ‘breadth of doxastic attitudes’ objection since a tripartite picture of one’s doxastic option seemed to not let this objection off the ground. We saw that a body of evidence simply could not be such that it supported [belief or suspension of judgment] toward p. Nonetheless, on a degreed doxastic picture, it seems that this same response will not do. It may seem possible that a body of evidence not uniquely prescribe only one doxastic attitude when there are so many more distinct doxastic alternatives. Goldman doesn’t find the tripartite account very convincing, so what about his worry applied to a richer doxastic picture?

In applying his objection to a degreed picture of doxastic attitudes, Goldman (forthcoming) gives the example of an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which made projections it deemed ‘likely’. The panel’s finding of the projections being ‘likely’ was to be interpreted as having a 66 – 90% chance of being correct. Such a claim seems to allow for quite a bit of leeway regarding a degree of confidence in the projections which would seemingly nonetheless be rational. Goldman does not explicitly claim that epistemic principles are similar in the relevant ways to such projections, but claims that if they are, then there is some doxastic permissiveness.

The problem here seemingly has to do with the fact that there may be several distinct ranges which all cover the degree(s) of belief justified by one’s evidence. For
instance, if we suppose that the justified doxastic attitude is a range, we might wonder whether any doxastic attitude which is a proper part of that justified range would itself be justified. For instance, if the evidence justified the range of .66 -- .9 belief that p, would competitor doxastic attitudes of believing to degree .74 and believing to degree .76 each be justified as well?

Similarly, competitor doxastic ranges that each encompassed the justified doxastic attitude might each be thought to be justified. So, if the evidence justified believing p to degree .75, one might think that having the doxastic attitude which ranges from .75 -- .8 and the doxastic attitude which ranges from .7 -- .75 would be equally rational. If so, then there would be more than one competitor doxastic attitude which one would be justified in adopting toward a proposition given a single body of evidence.

Are such competitor doxastic attitudes toward p justified by a single body of evidence? I don’t think so. I am yet to be convinced that the existence of justified doxastic attitudes which are ranges of degrees of belief has such a consequence. If one has adopted a doxastic attitude toward a proposition which is more expansive than what is justified by the evidence (as in the latter case), then that individual has not responded appropriately to the evidence. In such a case, one’s doxastic attitude is too encompassing. There is a doxastic attitude which better fits the evidence. Given our evidentialist assumption, it is this better fitting doxastic attitude which is justified. Similarly, if an individual has adopted a doxastic attitude toward p which is narrower than what the evidence supports (as in the former case), then that individual as well has
not responded correctly to the evidence – a broader range of belief is called for. Here too there is a doxastic attitude which better fits the evidence. In both cases the individual in question could have had a doxastic attitude which better fits the evidence. Given our evidentialist assumption, it is this doxastic attitude (the one which best fits the evidence) which is the justified one to have toward the proposition in question. The narrower or broader doxastic ranges do not fit the evidence, and are thus not justified. So, in Goldman’s example, the doxastic attitude to have is the range of .66 – .9 belief that the panel’s projections are correct. Any narrower or broader doxastic range would fail to appropriately fit the evidence.

In this way, the doxastic case is importantly different than its practical analogue.\footnote{56 Thanks to Richard Feldman for pressing me with this analogy.} In a practical case there might be a range of actions which are ‘rational’, but in fact it is each particular action within such a range which would be rational, not the range itself. For instance, imagine that an employer has a range of salaries which he is justified in giving to new employees. In such a case, it is any particular salary within that range which he is justified in giving the employee, and not the range itself. In the practical cases we cannot even make sense of performing such a range of actions (i.e. giving the employee the range of salaries). However, if we are to adopt the fine-grained doxastic taxonomy, we do have an option to adopt the range. So, in the doxastic case there are additional options. It is this additional option (adopting the appropriate
range) which best fits our evidence. It is this range that is justified, not simply any doxastic attitude within the range.\textsuperscript{57}

Here again, the degree to which individuals whose doxastic attitudes fail to precisely line up with the justified doxastic range are believing irrationally will depend upon how much larger or smaller one’s doxastic attitude is in comparison to the justified range of belief. It may be on this response that what is in fact justified for the individual is to believe the proposition question to the exact probability which his or her evidence supports the proposition in question (supposing there is some such probability). It may be that this is psychologically impossible, but it may nonetheless be what is epistemically required. As mentioned earlier, however, the epistemic ought with which we are concerned does not entail ability, so there is no problem here. Again, more can be said about degrees of irrationality or unjustified doxastic attitudes that may be able to soften this blow. It needn’t be that such individuals are to blame or that they ought to be censured. So, it is by no means clear that such a doxastic picture rules out the Uniqueness Thesis. We have seen no additional complications for rational uniqueness that come from adopting a more fine-grained doxastic picture.

1.7 An Implication for Reasonable Disagreements

As mentioned above, rational uniqueness has been utilized in much of the debates surrounding reasonable disagreements. I want to here just make explicit one important

\textsuperscript{57} For more on why it is the range that should be adopted in such cases and not simply any degree of belief within the range see Kyburg and Teng (2001).
consequence for this debate which comes from the truth of the Uniqueness Thesis coupled with our evidentialist assumption. Together, the Uniqueness Thesis and our evidentialist assumption, entail that there are no reasonable disagreements between individuals with the same evidence. That is, if both the Uniqueness Thesis and the Evidential Thesis are correct, then there are no cases in which two individuals (or even one individual as in the case examined above) have the same total body of evidence and yet are each epistemically justified in adopting competitor doxastic attitudes toward any proposition. According to evidentialism the evidence alone determines which doxastic attitude(s) an individual is justified in adopting toward a proposition, and according to rational uniqueness the evidence determinately justifies at most one such competitor attitude toward a proposition. This will be so regardless of how one cuts up the doxastic options.

1.8 Conclusion

While extreme permissivism is not very plausible, we have seen that the case against moderate epistemic permissiveness that has been made thus far is inconclusive at best. Nonetheless, we have seen some motivation for endorsing rational uniqueness and have fought off several objections to this claim. Rational uniqueness seems to be quite defensible given a tripartite doxastic taxonomy, and we have not seen any complications that arise from adopting a more fine-grained account of our doxastic options. So, the uniqueness thesis appears to be a strong, yet plausible claim regarding the permissiveness of rationality.
Chapter 2: Conciliatory Views of Disagreement

2.1 Introduction

Disagreements abound. They are a common occurrence of our intellectual lives. An important epistemological question concerns the epistemic significance of disagreement. Having motivated the Uniqueness Thesis, our task turns to examining what consequences the Uniqueness Thesis and evidentialism have regarding the epistemic significance of disagreement.

For instance, suppose that you and a friend are evenly dividing up the check after a dinner together. You agree on the amount of the tip and both look at the bill. After making the relevant calculations you come to believe that each of you owes $27. Let’s say you also form the belief that you do not each owe $28. You are fairly good at making mathematical calculations of this sort and are thereby justified in believing that each of you owes $27. Your friend also makes the relevant calculations and you know that your friend is equally good at making such calculations, but comes to the conclusion that each of you owes $28. Once you discover that your equally reliable friend believes that you each owe $28, what rational affect ought this have on your belief that you do not each owe $28?

In this chapter I will explain and motivate one account of what the discovery of a certain type of disagreement rationally demands of us – a conciliatory view of

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58 This example is based off an example given by David Christensen (2007) pp. 187-217. The example has been modified to account for a graduate student’s dinner bill rather than that of a faculty member’s.
disagreement\textsuperscript{59}. In the chapters that follow I will defend this view from objections and supplement it, providing and defending a richer account of the epistemic significance of disagreement.

\subsection*{2.2 Background}

To understand what a conciliatory view of disagreement is, however, some important terminology must first be laid out.

A \textit{disagreement} between S\textsubscript{1} and S\textsubscript{2} occurs when S\textsubscript{1} and S\textsubscript{2} take competitor doxastic attitudes toward the same proposition.\textsuperscript{60}

S\textsubscript{1} and S\textsubscript{2} are \textit{opponents} regarding p if and only if S\textsubscript{1} and S\textsubscript{2} are themselves parties to a disagreement concerning p.

A disagreement is a \textit{reasonable disagreement} if and only if S\textsubscript{1} and S\textsubscript{2} are in a disagreement and each is justified in taking their respective doxastic attitude toward the proposition in question.

S\textsubscript{1} and S\textsubscript{2} are \textit{epistemic peers} if and only if they are equal in reasoning ability, intelligence, intellectual virtues, and in the evidence, background information and concepts they possess.

S\textsubscript{1} and S\textsubscript{2} are \textit{reasonable epistemic peers regarding p} if and only if they are epistemic peers, and they are likely to be right on the matter of p.

So, if I am justified in believing that two individuals are epistemic peers, then my evidence equally supports each one getting it right, and if I am justified in believing that two individuals are reasonable epistemic peers regarding p, my evidence supports that it is also likely that they each get it right. Our analysis of an epistemic peer is open to

\textsuperscript{59} This terminology follow Elga (forthcoming).
\textsuperscript{60} It is worth noting that as we saw in Chapter 1, S\textsubscript{1} and S\textsubscript{2} may in fact be the same individual.
two readings. For example, one might be another’s equal in terms of the evidence possessed by possessing the very same evidence or by possessing distinct but equally good evidence. One might be an equal to another in terms of intellectual virtue by being intellectually virtuous in the same ways and to the same degree, or by being equally intellectually virtuous in a distinct way. In using ‘epistemic peer’ I want to leave open both readings.

In what follows, I will also be assuming (UT) and (ET).

(UT) For any body of evidence E and proposition P, E justifies at most one competitor doxastic attitude toward P.\(^{61}\)

(ET) For any subject S, proposition P, time T, and doxastic attitude D, S is justified in adopting D toward P at T if and only if having D toward P fits the evidence S has at T.

Recall that in the last chapter we saw that a consequence of the (UT) and (ET) is that there are no reasonable disagreements – that there are no cases in which two individuals have the same total body of evidence and yet are each epistemically justified in adopting competitor doxastic attitudes toward any proposition. Our task in this chapter is to examine what epistemic ramifications this fact has for the epistemology of disagreement.

More precisely, we will be concerned with the question of whether becoming justified in believing that one is in a disagreement with a reasonable epistemic peer regarding the disputed proposition diminishes the justification one has for adopting the

\(^{61}\) For simplicity’s sake, I will be setting aside worries for (UT) that came from the Naïve Theory of Meaning. Those sympathetic with the Naïve Theory of Meaning can read (UT) as (UT**).
doxastic attitude one has adopted toward p. Our question is thus a normative question, in contrast to a descriptive question. Our question concerns what affect discovering such a disagreement exists should have on our doxastic attitude, not a question of what affect such a discovery does in fact have.

This question has three apparent answers. In general, becoming aware of such disagreements can either: (i) make one more justified in adopting one’s initial doxastic attitude toward that proposition, (ii) make one less justified in adopting one’s initial doxastic attitude toward that proposition, or (iii) not have an effect on one’s justification for adopting one’s initial doxastic attitude toward that proposition.62

2.3 What is a Conciliatory View of Disagreement?

Call a theory that adopts the second answer to our question a conciliatory view63 of disagreement, and a theory that adopts either the first or third answer a non-conciliatory view of disagreements. So, conciliatory views claim that discovering a disagreement of the relevant kind diminishes the justification one has for adopting the doxastic attitude which one has adopted toward the disputed proposition. More formally conciliatory views adopt the following principle:

62 There is also the possibility of a mixed view. Elga (forthcoming) endorses such a mixed view. I take it that such a feature of a view, which has it that the impact of such a discovery differs from case to case based upon some relevant feature (for Elga the relevant feature is the content of the proposition under debate), is undesirable, and a last resort. As such, so long as one of the three options outlined here can be defended, such a mixed view need not be considered.

63 This is Elga’s terminology, but the account of conciliatory views here is slightly different than that given by Elga. Compare Elga (forthcoming).
(CV): If (i) at t S1 has justifiably adopted doxastic attitude D1 toward proposition p and (ii) at a later time t’ S1 becomes justified in believing that a reasonable epistemic peer regarding p S2 has adopted a competitor doxastic attitude D2 toward p, and (iii) S1 has no undefeated reason to discount S2’s conclusion at t’, and (iv) S1 has gained no other evidence affecting S1’s justification for p since t; then at t’ S1 is less justified in adopting D1 toward p than S1 was at t.

A couple clarifications are in order regarding (CV). (CV) has four antecedent conditions. The first condition describes a time before S1 has discovered the disagreement, and stipulates that at this time S1 has justifiably adopted D1 toward p.

This condition simply describes S1’s doxastic state toward the relevant proposition and that it is the justified doxastic attitude for S1 to have toward p at t – that at t, S1 has correctly responded to his evidence by adopting D1 toward p. The second condition concerns a later time t’. At this later time, S1 becomes justified in believing that a reasonable epistemic peer regarding p has adopted a competitor doxastic attitude toward p. It needn’t actually be true that a reasonable epistemic peer has adopted a competitor doxastic attitude toward p, but S1 must be justified in believing this proposition to meet this condition. This proposition need not actually be believed by S1 either, but S1 must be justified in believing it – he must be such that his evidence supports adopting a believing doxastic attitude toward it. That is, this condition concerns propositional justification, not doxastic justification.64

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64 Contrast Elga (2007) who is concerned with one who counts another as an epistemic peer. Counting another as an epistemic peer may or may not involve occurrent belief, but it at least involves some other attitude which is not required by simply being justified in believing that another is an epistemic peer.
It is worth saying something about the third condition – that S1 has no undefeated reason to discount S2’s conclusion. Conciliatory views do not stipulate that one becomes less justified in adopting the doxastic attitude one has toward the disputed proposition simply in virtue of meeting the first two antecedent conditions. Some disagreements are ‘epistemologically benign’. Given condition (ii), S1 is justified in believing that S2 is a reasonable epistemic peer regarding p – that in general S2 is equally as likely to get p-matters right, and is in general likely to be right about such matters. However, meeting this condition is consistent with S1 having some reason to think that S2 has gotten it wrong regarding the disputed matter on this particular occasion. S1 can have a reason to think that on this particular occasion, S2 is not as likely to have gotten it right or is even not likely to be right about p this time. S2 might not be as likely to get it right on this occasion due to some problem on this occasion with S2 (i.e. that S2 is drunk, that S2 has not slept for days, that S2 forgot his glasses, etc.) or due to the content of the disputed proposition (i.e. that the dispute regards the talents of S2’s child, the attractiveness of S2’s spouse, the morality of S2’s occupation, etc.). Having such a reason is having a reason to think that S2 is not as likely to be right about p, at least on this occasion.

An important additional way in which one might have a reason to discount one’s opponent’s conclusion comes from consensus. If one is aware of more individuals (particularly reasonable epistemic peers and experts regarding p) who all agree about p

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65 This is Elgin’s term. See Elgin (forthcoming).
66 This reason will be an important part of the story in Chapter 5.
(i.e. all believe p), then one has reason to think that it is the outnumbered disagreeing interlocutor (who disbelieves p on that basis) who is mistaken. In such a case, one has more reliable judges of the evidence on his side. The independence of the evaluators will certainly play a role in how much the numbers matter, but when our subject is aware that more independent reasonable evaluators of the evidence who judge that the evidence supports p, then our subject has reason to think that it is the disagreeing interlocutor who believes not-p who has misjudged the evidence. In this way, agreement can mitigate the epistemic effects of disagreement by giving a reason to think that it is one’s opponent who is mistaken.

Having any of these reasons is having a reason to think that it is one’s opponent who is mistaken, and permits one to discount the opponent’s conclusion. One has such a reason to discount the peer’s conclusion if one has an undercutting defeater for the evidence acquired via the discovery of disagreement. We can understand the notion of an undercutting defeater as follows:

For all propositions x, y and z, x is an undercutting defeater of y in its support of z if and only if (i) y supports z, (ii) x does not support z or not-z, and (iii) the conjunction (y and x) supports z less than y alone supports z.

So, if S1 has evidence which undercuts the evidence S1 gets from discovering S2’s conclusion on the matter, then the degree to which S1 is justified in adopting D1 toward p need not change upon discovering the disagreement with S2. For instance, while finding out that reasonable epistemic peer regarding p S2 believes not-p, is evidence for not-p, finding out that S2 is drunk, for instance, diminishes the support of not-p given by
this bit of evidence. Having such an undefeated reason justifies one in believing that it is one’s opponent who is mistaken, and thus can allow for one’s justification for adopting D1 toward p to remain unaltered (in cases where the evidence is entirely undercut) or make more modest justificatory concessions (in cases where the evidence is only partially undercut).\(^\text{67}\)

The fourth antecedent condition is simply there to isolate the epistemic impact of the discovery of the disagreement. Were S1 to gain other evidence regarding p between t and t’, then it would not be clear what epistemic affect the discovery of the disagreement had on S1. Discovering the epistemic impact of the discovered disagreement itself requires including this antecedent condition as well.

It is also worth saying something about the consequent of (CV). (CV) is neutral between accounts of what one’s doxastic options are. As we briefly explored in the previous chapter, some epistemologists adopt a tripartite account of one’s doxastic options (belief/disbelief/suspension of judgment), while other adopt a more fine-grained (degrees of belief) taxonomy. Since the consequent of (CV) concerns only one’s justification for adopting a doxastic attitude, whether a doxastic change is required will often depend upon which doxastic taxonomy on supplements (CV) with. For instance, if a degree of belief taxonomy is adopted, the reduction in S1’s justification for adopting D1 (say 0.8 belief) toward p might have it that at t’ S1 is justified in adopting a distinct,

\(^{67}\) Cases where there is only partial undercutting defeat will be cases where the subject has gained some reason to doubt that there is an evidential support relation between his evidence and the target proposition, but remains justified in believing the target proposition on the basis of his evidence. More on this in Chapter 3.
competitor doxastic attitude toward p (say 0.6 belief). In contrast, on a tripartite account, it may be that at t’ S1 is still justified in adopting the same doxastic attitude D1 (say belief) toward p, although S1 is now less justified in adopting this attitude toward p at this later time. As such, (CV) is neutral as to what the correct doxastic taxonomy is and whether a doxastic change is required by the discovery of a disagreement or if there is merely a change in one’s justification for adopting a particular doxastic attitude.

Finally, it should be also noted that the kind of disagreements under discussion here are highly idealized and artificial, much unlike the kinds of disagreements we typically encounter. The kind of disagreement that (CV) applies to is a disagreement where one is justified in believing that his opponent is an epistemic peer: an individual who is equal in reasoning ability, intelligence, intellectual virtue, and in the evidence, concepts and background information possessed. It would be quite rare indeed to find two individuals who meet this condition, or even a case where an individual is justified in believing that he and another meet this condition. Further still, for the antecedent of (CV) to be satisfied, a party to the disagreement must have no undefeated reason to discount his or her opponent’s conclusion. It seems that often we will have some such reason even if it is quite weak.

Nevertheless, it is worth examining what the epistemic significance of disagreement is even in such an artificial scenario. First, it is intrinsically interesting to examine what impact the discovery of a disagreement would have even in this idealized case. And second, in examining the idealized case we can learn things about non-
idealized cases. In Chapter 6, for instance, we will strip off some of the idealizations and examine implications for the disagreements which are much more like those we typically encounter.

Conciliatory views of disagreement can differ in the details. (CV) represents a family of views. Of particular interest, conciliatory views can differ as to how diminished S1’s justification for adopting D1 toward p becomes upon meeting the antecedent conditions of (CV). Strong conciliatory views will have it that S1 ought to suspend judgment toward p at t’ (on a tripartite doxastic taxonomy) or that S1 ought to ‘split the difference’ between doxastic attitudes D1 and D2 toward p (on a fine-grained doxastic picture). Weaker conciliatory views have it that S1’s justification of adopting D1 toward p diminishes much more modestly. For the next few chapters I will be motivating and defending (CV) as a family of views, before defending my own preferred species of (CV).

2.4 Motivations for Conciliatory Views

Conciliatory views about disagreement are quite appealing. In the case described at the outset of this paper, it seems that discovering that your friend disagrees with you about how much each of you owes, diminishes your justification for believing the proposition that you do not each owe $28. Even if you have correctly responded to your evidence at t by believing that you each do not owe $28, at t’ you become justified in believing that your friend has equally good evidence on the matter, is equally capable of making the calculations, has given an equal amount to care in making the calculations, possesses all
the relevant concepts, and yet has adopted a competitor doxastic attitude toward the proposition that you each owe $28. We also have been given no reason to think that you have some special reason for discounting your friend’s conclusion, and it is reasonable for you to think that your friend will make the correct calculation. Given all of this, for your discovery of disagreement to make no justificatory impact on your belief seems to be to deny (ET) – it would seem to have you ignore some evidence regarding the matter at hand. Recall (ET) states that one’s justification is determined by one’s evidence, and when you discover that your friend disagrees with you, you have acquired some new relevant evidence – evidence that counts against believing that you do not each owe $28.

To see this, imagine in our restaurant check case that you do not perform any of the relevant mathematical calculations (perhaps you do not even see the check), yet you ask your friend what each of you owes. In the situation so described, when your friend tells you that you each owe $28, given that your friend is reliable regarding such matters, you then become justified in believing that you each owe $28. So, your friend’s testimony does give you evidence that you each owe $28 – your friend’s testimony makes a justificatory difference in this case. However, if your friend’s testimony makes an evidential difference in the case where you do not yourself make the mathematical calculations, it seems that it will also make an evidential difference in the case where you do make the mathematical calculations. If your friend’s testimony is evidence, it is evidence regardless of what you do. Further, if your friend’s testimony made a
justificatory difference in the one case, it will also make a justificatory difference in the latter case (supposing the other details of the story remain fixed). As such, it seems that your discovery of disagreement diminishes your justification for believing that you each do not owe $28, at least a little.

Your discovery of this disagreement gives you evidence that you have made a mistake. This is evidence that you did not have before you discovered that your friend believed that you each owed $28. Recall that the evidential equality condition can be met in two ways: by having an identical body of evidence, or by having an equally good body of evidence. We can see why in either case conciliation is called for. In the case of evidential sameness, S1 gets reason to believe that the shared body of evidence supports something other than what S1 believed. In the case where S1 is justified in believing that S2 has a different, yet equally strong, body of evidence regarding p, S1 gets reason to believe that one of the two bodies of evidence is misleading. Either way, it seems that S1 is required to make some doxastic conciliation.

So, since you acquire evidence that you have made a mistake, it is quite plausible to think that this discovery has the result that you become less justified in believing that you do not each owe $28 after you discover the disagreement. It would be irrational of you to completely discount your friend’s testimony without having reason to – a reason

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68 This is not to say that what is evidence will always have justificatory import. It may be that in some situations acquiring certain bits of evidence does not make one any more justified in believing a proposition. However, the case imagined is not such a case since your friend’s testimony is evidence against your belief. In discovering the disagreement you are gaining evidence against the proposition you believe which is unlike any of the evidence you have thus far against this proposition. As such, it seems that discovering the disagreement gives you evidence which does have justificatory import.
which you lack in our story. Non-conciliatory views ignore the evidential impact of your friend’s testimony and thus give the wrong result such cases of disagreement.

Disagreements like that involving the restaurant check, though idealized, can occur in a wide variety of cases. Such disagreements can occur concerning matters of politics, religion, ethics, and philosophy in general. What I have said about the restaurant check case seems to apply equally well to these other cases of disagreement. For another example, consider two epistemic peers Peter and David. Each individual has had substantial philosophical training and is equipped with an acute mind. Each looks over the arguments in the free will debate, and Peter comes to believe that free will is incompatible with determinism, while David disbelieves this. Before Peter becomes aware of the disagreement it seems that he is justified in believing that free will is incompatible with determinism. However, it also seems that once Peter discovers that David disagrees, Peter at least becomes less justified in believing that free will is incompatible with determinism unless he has some reason to discount David’s conclusion on the matter.

In discovering the disagreement Peter gets evidence that he is mistaken on the issue. Had Peter not looked into the matter of free will but had become aware that David had, and that he disbelieved that free will was incompatible with determinism, Peter would have had at least had some evidence that free will is incompatible with determinism, given what he knows about David. So, it seems that despite the fact that Peter has carefully examined the arguments and has come to believe that free will is
incompatible with determinism, his discovery of his disagreement with David diminishes his justification for believing that free will is incompatible with determinism, unless Peter has a reason to discount the fact that David has come to his contrary conclusion (a reason which he plausibly lacks). So, it seems right that Peter is now less justified in believing that free will is incompatible with determinism. Here again, to say otherwise would be to ignore the evidential impact of discovering what his reasonable epistemic peer on the matter, David, has concluded on the basis of equally good evidence.

This appeal of conciliatory views can be further brought out by considering a situation that Kelly (forthcoming) imagines. Suppose that you discover that a great number of your reasonable epistemic peers regarding p disagree with you concerning p and that you know of no reasonable epistemic peer on the matter that agrees with you.69 We can suppose further that your peers have independently arrived at their conclusions as well – that they have reached their conclusions on the matter in isolation from each other. Suppose that you believe p while your numerous, independent reasonable epistemic peers on the matter each disbelieve p. In this scenario, it would seem that in discovering these disagreeing peers your justification for believing p would surely diminish. That is, such a discovery of disagreement would clearly make you less justified in believing p.

Given this, we can then consider why it is that discovering that such a collection of your reasonable epistemic peers regarding p disagree with you has such a

69 As noted above, being an epistemic peer is a quite idealized condition, so discovering many epistemic peers requires a substantially idealized case. Nevertheless, such a scenario is at least possible.
justificatory effect. The best explanation of why discovering that numerous, independent reasonable epistemic peers on the matter disagree with you diminishes your justification for believing $p$ is that discovering that each one of such peers individually disagrees with you diminishes your justification for believing $p$ somewhat.

Although not all properties of a collection are distributed to properties of its parts, it seems that the reason for your diminished justification upon discovering that all of these peers disagree is a cumulative effect from discovering of any one of your reasonable epistemic peers regarding $p$ that he or she disagrees regarding $p$. In addition, we can imagine that you discover the disagreements not at one single time, but at successive times. In making such continual discoveries it seems that you would continually be losing your justification for believing $p$.

So, it seems that conciliatory views of disagreement give the right verdicts in cases of disagreement. Such views seem to correctly account for what justificatory effect disagreement has on your beliefs. Despite its appeal, however, conciliatory views of disagreement are not without their detractors. In the following two chapters I will examine and respond to several objections to such an account of the epistemic significance of disagreement.
Chapter 3: Conciliatory Views of Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence

3.1 Introduction

We have seen that a conciliatory view concerning the epistemic significance of disagreement is quite plausible. Such a view regarding the significance of disagreement, however, is not without its detractors. Thomas Kelly (2005) argues that considerations of higher-order evidence spell problems for conciliatory views of disagreements. In what follows I will explain and evaluate Kelly’s three objections to conciliatory views of disagreement based upon concerns involving higher-order evidence. Kelly’s first two objections are arguments that higher-order evidence is not itself evidence concerning propositions that are not themselves about evidence. Kelly’s third objection grants for the sake of argument that higher-order evidence is evidence concerning such propositions, but gives a ‘canceling out’ argument to show that even on this assumption conciliatory views of disagreement give the wrong verdict. I find each of these objections wanting and find no problem for conciliatory views of disagreement stemming from considerations involving higher-order evidence. Rather, we will see that considerations involving higher-order evidence actually support conciliatory views of disagreement.

3.2 Evidence and Higher-Order Evidence

Kelly argues against conciliatory views of disagreement on the basis of considerations concerning higher-order evidence. As Kelly understands it, higher-order
evidence is evidence about the character of one’s first-order evidence. Kelly understands one’s first-order evidence as one’s evidence directly pertaining to a proposition which is not about one’s evidence. So, one’s perceptual experience as of a red round ball on the table is first-order evidence that there is a red round ball on the table. Higher-order evidence is evidence about such evidence. So, evidence that one’s perceptual experiences are highly reliable would be higher-order evidence that the perceptual experiential evidence as of the red round ball being on the table is good evidence that there is a red round ball on the table.

Since reasonable individuals generally evaluate their evidence correctly, the fact that such an individual has evaluated the evidence a certain way on a given occasion seems to be higher-order evidence that that evidence (the first-order evidence on that occasion) in fact supports the conclusion which he has drawn on the basis of it. Reliable judges of the evidence give evidence that the evidence supports what they have taken it to support.

Although Kelly grants that such higher-order evidence will make a difference regarding what one is justified in believing about one’s evidence (that is, Kelly grants that this higher-order evidence is evidence for something), he doubts that such evidence (at least always) has justificatory impact regarding propositions that are not themselves about one’s evidence (what we might call ‘first-order propositions’). 70

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70 In particular, Kelly doubts that such higher-order evidence will be evidence for the target proposition when one possesses for himself the relevant first-order evidence.
Kelly invites us to consider the following three claims:

(1) Evidence E is good evidence that p is true.

(2) S believes p on the basis of E.

(3) p is true.

Kelly’s gives reason to think that while (2) is evidence for (1), at least when S is a reasonable or reliable individual disposed to respond correctly to the evidence, (2) is not evidence for (3). If so, then it seems that conciliatory views of disagreement will be false. Recall that what motivated these conciliatory views was that becoming aware of the relevant kind of disagreement diminished the degree of justification that one had for adopting the doxastic attitude one had adopted towards p (the disputed proposition). If Kelly is right, then such a discovery only provides one with evidence regarding the character of one’s first-order evidence, and not any evidence regarding p itself – the disputed proposition. So, if Kelly is right about the justificatory power of higher-order evidence, then it seems that conciliatory views of disagreement are false since such a discovery would fail to provide one with any evidence pertaining to the disputed proposition itself. If no evidence is gained regarding the disputed proposition itself, then it might be thought that one’s justification for believing the disputed proposition should not change.71

Kelly thinks that there are several good reasons to think that (2) is not evidence for (3), each of which is worthy of our examination. First, Kelly considers what one

71 We will see below that this is not the case, though it might be a tempting thought.
enumerates as one’s evidence. Consider the restaurant check case described in the previous chapter. If I ask my friend why he believes that we each owe $28 he will likely cite various claims about what was written on the bill and how various mathematical calculations work, but he will likely not cite the fact that he believes that we each owe $28 as part of his evidence for that claim. Rather, as Kelly notes, from my friend’s perspective, that he believes this seems to simply be a result of his evidence, not one more piece of it. Kelly thinks that the fact that my friend would not cite his belief as part of his evidence indicates that his belief is not in fact part of his evidence for the claim that we each owe $28.

However, the fact that one does not cite something as part of one’s evidence does not entail that it is not in fact part of one’s evidence. First, it is quite doubtful that we ever cite all of our evidence for a proposition when asked. Usually, what is cited as our evidence is only a contextually relevant or particularly interesting bit of the evidential story. Just as complete explanatory stories are rarely told, so too the evidential stories given are often abridged.

For instance, in explaining why the forest caught on fire, citing a lighting strike is often as far as the explanation goes. Nevertheless, the lightning strike alone cannot provide the complete explanation of the fire since it was only efficacious due to the presence of oxygen, flammable materials, and so forth. So, the mere fact that one’s belief that p is typically not cited as part of one’s evidence for p is not sufficient to show

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72 Ibid., 25.
that it is not in fact part of one’s evidence for p. Such a bit of evidence may be like the presence of oxygen in that it is a part of the story that often gets ignored.

In addition, there are plausible explanations for why one would typically not cite one’s belief that p as evidence for p. In the imagined restaurant check case, my friend has already declared that we each owe $28. Given that he has told me this, I already justifiably take him to believe that we each owe $28, and as a competent conversationalist he recognizes this. For him to then tell me that he believes this as part of his evidence would at least be odd and might even violate a conversational maxim. I have already taken my friend to have sincerely asserted that we each owe $28, so for him to defend this claim by telling me that he believes this would be to engage in a kind of redundancy and would be uninformative at best (though perhaps accurate nonetheless). 73

While it may not be redundant to claim that his belief is evidence that we each owe $28, there may nevertheless be something inappropriate in citing one’s belief as part of the relevant evidence. For instance, it is like something of an act of hubris for one to cite in favor of p the fact one’s own belief that p. It is as if you hope to settle the matter by showing that you believe p and wonder why that fact would not be enough to convince your interlocutor that p. In a case where p is being disputed and the other parties do not agree, citing this bit of evidence does not seem to be appropriate for

73 For more on conversational maxims and when they are violated see Grice (2000).
these reasons. So, even if your belief that p is evidence for p, citing it as such is plausibly inappropriate.

It is important to note, however, that it does not appear to be inappropriate at all to cite as evidence for p that some other rational or reliable individual believes p. It would be quite natural and appropriate, for instance, to cite that some expert believes p, or that a vast majority of your interlocutor’s peers believe p. So, if it is inappropriate to cite your own belief that p as evidence for p, the inappropriateness seems to lie with whose belief you cite as evidence rather than that a rational individual believes that p was cited as evidence for p. Thus, the fact that you rarely, if ever, cite your belief that p as evidence for p is not a consideration which shows that such higher-order evidence is not evidence for the first-order proposition.

Kelly’s point here seems to be something even stronger, however. His claim is that often individuals will even deny that their belief that p is additional evidence (or even part of some additional evidence) for p. If asked whether his belief that we each owe $28 is part of his evidence that we each owe $28, my friend might easily answer ‘no’. Even so, there is no worry here for conciliatory views. An individual needn’t be able to identify something as evidence in order for it to in fact be part of his evidence. In fact, it is quite plausible that we are rather poor at identifying all of our evidence regarding a given proposition.74 The fact that an individual may deny that his belief that p is any bit of evidence for p may give us reason to believe that his belief that p is not

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74 For more on this see Sosa (forthcoming), Goldman (forthcoming), and van Inwagen (1996, esp. p. 34).
based or grounded on this bit of evidence, but that is not to show that his belief is not in fact evidence for \( p \), nor would it have the result that his belief that \( p \) is not doxastically justified.

In cases where an individual’s belief that \( p \) is propositionally justified he will typically have sufficient first-order evidence supporting \( p \) that could serve as a suitable basis for that belief. So, as long as his belief that \( p \) is based upon that evidence, that belief will be doxastically justified, even though he has additional evidence for the truth of \( p \) which his belief that \( p \) is not based upon – that he is a reasonable or reliable individual who believes \( p \). An individual needn’t base his belief that \( p \) on all of his evidence for \( p \) in order for that belief to be doxastically justified. So, even though individuals do not often take their belief that \( p \) to be evidence for \( p \) (even when the individual is justified in believing that he is disposed to correctly respond to the evidence), that too does not show that that belief is not in fact evidence for \( p \).

A second reason that Kelly thinks that (2) is not evidence for (3) is that to count (2) as a reason for (3) would be to engage in a kind of double-counting. This train of thought traces back to the idea that the fact that one believes \( p \) is simply a result of the force of the first-order evidence regarding \( p \), and not yet another piece of it. The claim is that were we to count the first-order evidence regarding \( p \), as well as S’s belief that \( p \), we would in effect be counting that first-order evidence twice since S’s belief that \( p \) is something like a marker or place-holder for that first-order evidence regarding \( p \).
There is some pull to this worry. After all, S believes p is in virtue of that first-order evidence. It is S’s judgment of that evidence which lead to S’s belief that p. So, S’s belief that p and the first-order evidence S possess regarding p are importantly related.

Given all of this, perhaps Kelly’s point holds if we simply talk about S’s belief that p as it stands alone. S’s mere belief that p does not seem to add any evidential considerations in favor of p. However, part of the story was that S is a reasonable or reliable individual disposed to respond correctly to the evidence. *This fact* about S coupled with the fact that S believes p *does give* S a new and independent reason to believe that p is true. Since we are aware that S usually gets things right or that S’s judgments are a good indicator of what the evidence supports, finding out that S believes p on the basis of E, gives us an independent reason\(^75\) to think that p is true apart from the first-order evidence E. This is so even though S’s belief that p is based upon E and even if S is oneself.

As we saw, when you discover that your friend disagrees with you and believes that you each owe $28, you have acquired some new relevant evidence – evidence that counts against believing that you do not each owe $28. Recall the thought experiment of imagining that you do not perform any of the relevant mathematical calculations (perhaps you do not even see the check), and yet ask your friend what each of you owes. In this situation, when your friend tells you that you each owe $28, given that

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\(^75\) Or better, it is part of an independent reason to believe p which when coupled with these facts about S gives us a reason to believe p.
your friend is reliable regarding such matters, you then become justified in believing that you each owe $28. The evidence you gain is not just evidence about the quality of the first-order evidence regarding the bill. You now have evidence about what each of you owe. So, your friend’s testimony does give you evidence that you each owe $28 – your friend’s testimony makes a justificatory difference.

However, if your friend’s testimony makes an evidential difference in the case where you do not yourself make the mathematical calculations, it seems that it will also make an evidential difference in the case where you do make the mathematical calculations. If your friend’s testimony is evidence, it is evidence regardless of what it is that you do. As such, it seems that such higher-order evidence is evidence for the disputed proposition.

In addition, we can imagine that you ask several other equally competent individuals at the restaurant to divide up the check for you and each of them conclude that you each owe $28. In such a scenario it seems even more clear that you have thereby gained evidence that you each owe $28, but the best explanation of this fact is that discovering what each individual believed gave you some evidence that you each owe $28.

Additionally, we can imagine that you bring in an expert mathematician to look at your check, and he too concludes that you each owe $28. This expert’s belief (coupled with his reliability and expertise) also seems to give you evidence that you
each owe $28. But if that is right, then this kind of evidence about the evidence actually is evidence for propositions that are not themselves about evidence (i.e. evidence for disputed propositions such as that you each owe $28).

One might worry that this does not translate to the first-person case. For instance, suppose that at t S does not believe p on the basis of E (S’s evidence directly pertaining to p at t). We can then ask how much evidence S has for p at t by way of E and how justified S is in believing p at t on the basis of his evidence. We can then compare that answer to S’s justificatory situation regarding p at a later time t’. Suppose that S has not gained any evidence pertaining to p between t and t’, with the possible exception that S has formed the belief that p on the basis of E since t (and is aware that he has done so). Does this fact have the result that S has any more evidence for p at t’ or that S is any more justified in believing p at t’? I think that it does, at least it does in conjunction with S being justified in believing that he is a reasonable individual who typically evaluates the evidence correctly. In forming the belief that p on the basis of E, S has (at least implicitly) judged that E supports p. Given that S is a reasonable judge of such matters, this fact is additional evidence that S’s evidence E actually does support p. Getting more evidence that one’s evidence supports p seems to (at least typically) make one more justified in believing p. So, S’s own belief that p (at least when coupled with S being justified in believing that he is a reasonable judge of the evidence) does seem to have an evidential and justificatory role.
Perhaps this point is more clearly seen by imagining a redescription of the case. Suppose instead that S has come to disbelieve p on the basis of E instead of believing p on the basis of E since t (and is aware of this fact). In our redescribed case, it seems clear that S would become less justified in believing p having discovered that he is a reliable judge of the evidence and has disbelieved p on the basis of his evidence E, then he was before he disbelieved p. The parallel point seems true of S’s believing p on the basis of E.

Given all of this, it seems that counting the higher-order evidence is not simply double-counting the first-order evidence regarding p. The higher-order evidence can provide (at least part of) an independent reason to believe/disbelieve the disputed proposition as well. We have seen that both reasons that Kelly gives for thinking that higher-order evidence is not evidence regarding p are defective, as well as some positive reason to think that higher-order evidence actually is evidence for such disputed propositions. Thus far, there is no problem for conciliatory views of disagreement.

3.3 The ‘Cancelling Out’ Argument

Kelly, however, raises one further worry for conciliatory views in which he concedes for the sake of argument that higher-order evidence is evidence regarding propositions not themselves about evidence (i.e. the disputed propositions). He claims that even if higher-order evidence is evidence for such propositions, discovering a disagreement of the relevant kind does not entail that the degree of justification one has for adopting a given doxastic attitude toward that proposition diminishes. That is,
Kelly claims that even if it is granted that higher-order evidence is evidence for the disputed proposition, a conciliatory view of disagreement does not immediately follow.

Kelly examines a discovery of the relevant type of disagreement diachronically. Let $E$ be the total first-order evidence regarding $p$ that two known reasonable epistemic peers on the matter, $S_1$ and $S_2$, each have at $t$, a time before they discover that they disagree as to the relation that $E$ has toward $p$.

$$E = \text{the original first-order evidence bearing on } p.$$ 

Suppose $S_1$ believes $p$ on the basis of $E$ and $S_2$ disbelieves $p$ on the basis of $E$. We can add that $E$ actually does support $p$, so it is $S_1$ that has correctly responded to the first-order evidence at $t$.

Let $E^*$ be the total evidence that $S_1$ and $S_2$ each have at $t'$, a time after they discover their disagreement regarding $p$. According to Kelly, $E^*$ is composed of the following:

$$E^* = \begin{align*}
&\text{(i) the original first-order evidence } E, \\
&(\text{ii) the fact that } S_1 \text{ is reliable and believes } p \text{ on the basis of } E, \text{ and} \\
&(\text{iii) the fact that } S_2 \text{ is reliable and disbelieves } p \text{ on the basis of } E.
\end{align*}$$

Kelly’s claim is that there is no reason to think that since $S_1$’s total body of evidence has changed from $E$ to $E^*$ that the justification that $S_1$ had for believing $p$ will diminish. Kelly’s claim is that $E$ and $E^*$ can support the same doxastic attitude toward $p$, and to
the same degree. The reason that Kelly thinks that E and E* can equally support p comes from the fact that since S1 and S2 are known epistemic peers (ii) and (iii) are to be given equal weight. As such, (ii) and (iii) will cancel each other out in E*, and thus E* in justificatory effect reduces to E – the original first-order evidence regarding p. So, the doxastic attitude that S1 and S2 are justified in adopting (and to which degree) after they have discovered the disagreement (at t’) seems to be precisely what it was before they discovered their disagreement (at t) since E* really reduces just to E in terms of what it justifies (and to what extent). So, on this construal of the case, S1 does not become any less justified in believing p after discovering the relevant kind of disagreement. Thus, Kelly claims that even if higher-order evidence is allowed into the picture, it can make no difference as to what the evidence supports, at least in the idealized cases examined by (CV). The view of the epistemic significance of disagreement that the canceling out argument supports has become known as ‘the right reasons view’.

Given that S1 and S2 are known epistemic peers it is plausible that (ii) and (iii) ought to be given the same weight, so the defender of a conciliatory view of disagreement seems to have a problem here – this seems to be a case of a

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76 Elga (forthcoming) gives this label to Kelly’s (2005) view. In personal communication, Kelly has claimed that his view expressed in “The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement” was not that E’ and E justify the same doxastic attitude, and to the same degree, but rather the weaker claim that if E supported p, then E’ will typically do so as well. The stronger reading of Kelly’s (2005) claim is there to be had, and it is a way of interpreting his view that has company. See for instance Elga (forthcoming) and Weatherson (manuscript). Given this fact, and having noted that Kelly has claimed to have only meant to argue for a weaker claim, I will continue to refer to this argument as being made in Kelly (2005).

77 I will defend this claim in Chapter 6.
disagreement which does not require any conciliation. Thus, we seem to have a powerful ‘canceling out’ argument against conciliatory views of disagreement.

Kelly (forthcoming) has since explicitly rejected the canceling out argument. Kelly claims that since $E^*$ contains a greater proportion of evidence that supports agnosticism regarding $p$ than $E$, that $E^*$ will thus favor $p$ to a lesser degree than $E$ (though it will still favor it). Although this assessment is consistent with a conciliatory view of disagreement, Kelly’s reasoning here is flawed. By gaining counterbalanced evidence – evidence that supports agnosticism regarding $p$ – one does not thereby become less justified in believing $p$. If one did, one’s justification for believing $p$ would diminish simply adding to one’s total body of evidence propositions that did not pertain to $p$ at all. Since such evidence supports agnosticism toward $p$ (by not supporting $p$ or not-$p$), a greater proportion of one’s evidence would now support agnosticism toward $p$ having acquired this evidence. However, in such a scenario one would become no less justified in believing $p$. The fact that a greater proportion of one’s evidence supports agnosticism does not affect what the total body of evidence supports or to what degree. If nothing else, the nature of undercutting defeaters shows that proportionality is not a guide to rationality. An undercutting defeater may be a small proportion of one’s evidence regarding $p$, yet it justificatory effects can be quite dramatic. For these reasons Kelly’s diagnosis of the canceling out argument is flawed. Nevertheless, I think that there are successful responses to the canceling out argument.
A problem with the example is that Kelly has misrepresented the total bodies of evidence at each time. It is not as though the fact that S1 believes p on the basis of E becomes part of S1’s evidence only after S1 has discovered the disagreement. This higher-order evidence was evidence that p for S1 even before S1 became aware of the disagreement with S2 at t’. Thus, S1’s total body of evidence at t (before the discovery of disagreement) should be construed as follows:

\[ E' = \]

(i) the original first-order evidence E bearing on p, and

(ii) the fact that S1 is reliable and believes p on the basis of E.

So, before the discovery of disagreement, S1 has his own belief coupled with his reliability as part of his evidence for p in addition to the first-order evidence regarding p. After all, it is not as though (ii) entered into his evidence only once the disagreement with S2 was discovered. The fact that one is reliable and has taken on a given doxastic attitude toward p given the first-order evidence is part of an individual’s evidence regarding p even before a disagreement is discovered.78

As such, even if (ii) and (iii) cancel each other out in E*, we can see that the discovery of this disagreement still mandated conciliation for S1. From S1’s perspective, even though the newly acquired (iii) cancels out (ii), S1 becomes less justified in believing p since (ii) existed without cancellation in S1’s original body of evidence E’.

The discovery of the disagreement has given S1 reason to doubt that the shared

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78 At least this can be the case. Below I will discuss how to deal with Kelly’s objection in situations where this is not the case.
evidence $E$ supports $p$, and this results in $S_1$ becoming less justified in believing $p$ at $t'$. Thus, once the bodies of evidence are correctly construed at each time, we can see that conciliatory views of disagreement correctly account for the case.

Although this response is sufficient for some conciliatory views, it is not sufficient to defend strong conciliatory views that claim that suspension of judgment is the justified doxastic attitude to adopt upon the discovery of such a disagreement. From what has been said thus far the doxastic attitude that the original first-order evidence supports (and to which degree) will be what is justified in the end, and this will at least not always be suspension of judgment. Nonetheless, I do think that there is a response to Kelly’s argument that even such strong conciliatory views can make. One response relies upon a certain conception of evidence and what discovering a disagreement of the relevant kind does to one’s body of evidence.

### 3.4 A Linking Conception of Evidence

The conception of evidence that I have in mind configures a body of evidence as being composed of two distinct parts: one part which might be considered the evidence proper (what is usually cited as one’s evidence), and a second part which contains linking information (evidence that links the evidence proper to what it is evidence for). The idea is that propositions are only justified for an individual when that individual has

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79 In what follows my attention will be on strong conciliatory views, though there is application to weak conciliatory views as well. Most weak conciliatory views will deny that (ii) and (iii) are to be given equal weight – and thus will deny that (ii) and (iii) cancel out in $E^*$. ‘Equal weight’ views are strong conciliatory views. In what follows I will be focused on defending conciliatory views that grant that (ii) and (iii) cancel out in $E^*$. 
both evidence proper and linking evidence that links that evidence proper to the pertinent proposition.\textsuperscript{80}

There is a question as to what it takes to possess a bit of evidence. Accounts can differ here based upon what possession conditions they give for evidence. In what follows I will utilize an account which identifies as a necessary and sufficient condition for S possessing a bit of evidence E that S is justified in believing E (whether or not S actually believes p) or that E is an experience.\textsuperscript{81}

Let's summarize this linking account of evidence schematically as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{EP} & = \text{Some evidence proper concerning } q. \\
\text{EL} & = \text{Some linking evidence which claims that EP is appropriately related to the truth or justification of } q \text{ or that claims of EP that it is appropriately related to the truth or justification of } q. \\
q & = \text{The target proposition}
\end{align*}
\]

On this account of evidence, then, S is justified in believing q if and only if S possesses both EP and EL. Given the assumed account of evidence possession then, S must be justified in believing both EP and EL, or they must be delivered to S by experience for S to be justified in believing q. Call this the \textit{linking conception of evidence} or (LEC):

\textsuperscript{80} Such a conception of evidence is endorsed regarding inferential justification by Fumerton (1995), (2005) and given sympathetic treatment by Conee and Feldman (2001) and (2008). Fumerton, for instance defends the following principle of inferential justification:

\begin{align*}
\text{(PIJ)} & \quad \text{In order to be justified in believing } p \text{ on the basis of } E, S \text{ must be (i) justified in believing } p, \text{ and (ii) justified in believing that } E \text{ makes probable (provides evidence for) } p.
\end{align*}

\textsuperscript{81} Feldman (2004) proposes such a condition on evidence possession.

\textsuperscript{82} There are thus both \textit{de dicto} and \textit{de re} incarnations of linking evidence.
(LEC): S is justified in believing q if and only if S is justified in believing EP and EL, or EP and EL are experienced by S.

On this account of evidence a proposition p can justify S in believing q if and only if S possesses as evidence p as well as some other proposition which appropriately links p to q. Thus, S would need to possess something that appropriately links p to q in order for q to be justified for S, at least in a way which essentially depends upon p. Some plausible candidates that could link p to q in such a way include being justified in believing one of the following propositions:

(a) p entails q
(b) p supports q
(c) p makes q likely
(d) q is the best explanation of p

So, according to (LEC), for S to be justified in believing q on the (partial) basis of p, S must be justified in believing p and justified in believing a proposition like one of those given in (a) – (d) above.

Before examining objections to (LEC) or seeing how it can apply to Kelly’s ‘canceling out’ argument, I want to first motivate this account of evidence. To borrow an example from Conee and Feldman (2001), let’s consider a Logic T.A. and one of his undergraduate students. Suppose that both are justified in believing that it is not the case that (p and q). Now, it not being the case that (p and q) entails that it is the case that (p and q).
that (not-p or not-q). Nonetheless, it seems that the beginning Logic student who has not yet come to be justified in believing in DeMorgan’s Law (or any other link between it not being the case that (p and q) and (not-p or not-q)) is not justified in believing this logical consequence of what he is justified in believing. On the other hand, it seems that the qualified Logic TA is justified in believing this logical consequence of what he is justified in believing.

What explains this justificatory difference is that the TA possesses requisite linking information that evidentially connects it’s not being the case that (p and q), to it’s being the case that (not-p or not-q). The TA is justified in believing DeMorgan’s Law and thus possesses requisite linking information that connects his evidence proper to the proposition that not-p or not-q. It is such linking information that the Logic student lacks. The undergraduate student needs to learn more before he can be justified in believing this consequence of what he knows.85

So, it seems plausible that what is ordinarily seen as an individual’s evidence (what I have called one’s evidence proper) is only a part of the evidential story and that there is also a necessary linking component to one’s body of evidence. As we have seen, individuals do not typically cite all of their evidence in giving their reasons for believing propositions. These linking components are often left merely implicit when

85 Similar considerations apply to comparisons between what an expert and a novice bird watcher are justified in believing upon being presented with the same visual field. It seems that the expert who can link this perceptual experience to the existence of a tanager is justified in believing that there is a tanager on the branch, while the novice who lacks this linking information is not justified in believing this.
the evidential story is told. However, given the considerations above, it seems that without possessing such a linking component, one’s evidence proper is inert with respect to providing justification even for propositions that are entailed by it. That is, it seems that what justifies S in believing q is not simply S being justified in believing some bit of evidence proper p, but also S being justified in believing that p is appropriately related to q since even the existence of an entailment relation between p and q does not appear to be sufficient to justify S in believing q on the basis of p.

3.5 Objection 1: Can’t Doxastic Justification do the Job?

Before continuing to examine how this conception of the evidential relation applies to our problem, I will briefly consider some objections to (LEC). First, one might object to the Logic T.A. example given above and claim that the Logic student is justified in believing that it is the case that (not-p or not-q). One might diagnose the epistemic deficiency of the student differently and claim that though the student is propositionally justified in believing this proposition, he simply could not be doxastically justified in believing this logical consequence of his evidence (proper). One might claim that the student is justified in believing this proposition, but were he to form this belief it would not be grounded or based in a way necessary for doxastic justification without the student also possessing such a linking component.

To say that an individual is justified in believing a proposition, or that he is propositionally justified in believing a proposition, is to say that it would be epistemically appropriate for that individual to take on that belief – that belief is the
doxastic attitude that the individual epistemically ought to have toward that proposition at that time, if he is to have any doxastic attitude toward that proposition. Doxastic justification, on the other hand, concerns not only the factors which support adopting a certain doxastic attitude toward a proposition, but also how those factors are ‘used’ in the formation of that doxastic attitude. Thus, doxastic justification concerns the status of a doxastic attitude which is held by an individual and depends in part upon how that individual came to have that doxastic attitude or upon what the individual bases this doxastic attitude.

Although this analysis of the case does give the correct result that the student could not form a justified belief that it is the case that (not-p or not-q), I do not believe that it accurately diagnoses the student’s epistemic deficiency. As we have noted above, the student must learn something before he can be doxastically justified in having this belief. Given that, it seems that the better diagnosis of the case is that the student is not even propositionally justified in believing this proposition even though it is entailed by his evidence. This diagnosis would give us a quite natural distinction between propositional justification and doxastic justification. According to this account one is propositionally justified in believing a proposition if and only if one has sufficient evidence or information to make one’s belief doxastically justified. In other words, if one is propositionally justified in believing p, then one has all the information needed to have a justified belief that p. On this account, all that doxastic justification adds to the picture is that one’s belief is appropriately grounded or based upon this supporting
evidence. This distinction between propositional and doxastic justification is quite plausible, yet one who accepts this objection must reject it. Since I think that the above distinction between propositional and doxastic justification is both intuitive and plausible, I think that the objector is mistaken in his diagnosis of the case of the Logic T.A. and student.

3.6 Objection 2: Doesn’t (LEC) Lead to Skepticism?

Second, one might object to this account of evidence by claiming that a requirement that there always be a linking component in one’s evidence leads to skepticism by way of a vicious regress. There are two related regress worries here for (LEC). First, (LEC) requires that EP and EL each be possessed by S in order for S to be justified in believing q. That is, (LEC) requires that S be justified in believing both EP and EL or that EP and EL be delivered to S via experience in order for S to be justified in believing q (at least on the partial basis of EP). However, given (LEC), for S to be justified in believing EP and EL, it seems that S must have some further evidence proper in favor of both EP and EL and also have some further linking evidence which connects the evidence proper for EP to EP itself, and the evidence proper for EL to EL itself. Although such further evidence could allow S to possess EP and EL, this worry reemerges since now there are further evidential components which themselves must each be possessed. So, it seems that there is an infinite regress of evidence required just for one to possess EP and EL. Since (LEC) maintains that possessing EP and EL is necessary for S to be justified in believing q (at least on the partial basis of EP), it seems that S cannot be
justified in believing q since there are infinitely many hurdles for S to jump to possess both EP and EL. Let’s call this problem for (LEC) ‘the possession regress’.

Second, one might wonder why possessing simply EP and EL should be sufficient to justify S in believing q. If linking evidence is so critical, then it might be thought that the link between (EP and EL) and q, must also be evidentially secured. The worry here is that (LEC) is only one instance of a more general epistemic principle which claims that for every bit of evidence, it can only (help) support a proposition for an individual if that individual possesses some evidence which links it to that proposition. So, even once EP and EL are possessed, won’t yet a further higher-order linking evidential claim be needed – one that links (EP and EL) to q? And won’t this need for a possessed linking component continue, requiring infinitely many evidential connectors? It may seem that at each level of analysis a further evidential link will be required leading to yet another vicious regress and seemingly having the result that no one is justified in believing anything at all. Let’s call this problem for (LEC) ‘the linking regress’.

There is a great deal of pull to these two related worries, but I do not think that either regress is problematic for (LEC) – I do not think that (LEC) leads to skepticism for either reason. In what follows I will briefly sketch a defense of (LEC) that shows that each of these regress can be either stopped or rendered harmless.
To see how this might be so, let us suppose that intellectual seemings are evidence, or more carefully put, are evidence proper, for what seems true. The idea is that seemings can help justify a proposition for an individual so long as his evidence also links the seeming to the relevant proposition. So, let us assume that a proposition’s seeming to be true can be evidence proper for that proposition’s truth.

Seemings, like experiences in general, have the advantage of being capable of playing the role of evidence proper without themselves being in need of further evidence proper which supports their status as such. Experiences are neither justified nor unjustified. So, if experiences can provide evidence proper, without themselves being in need of it, they provide potential stopping points for regresses. Thus, it seeming to you that p, unlike your belief that p, can be evidence proper for q without itself requiring evidence proper to help justify it. Your belief that p must itself be justified in order for it to help in supporting q, but its seeming to you that p, like other experiences, needs no such further evidence proper. So, with seeming states, and experiences in general, one has all of the evidence proper one needs to terminate the possession regress regarding EP.

86 What follows will not rely importantly on the claim that seemings are evidence proper for what seems true. Supposing that seemings are, gives us one way of developing a kind of response to these alleged regresses. However, analogous responses can be made which utilize different experiential states as evidence proper. One such account will be very briefly sketched below in the footnotes.

87 I will not here defend seemings as evidence, but this claim has been ably defended in the literature. See Huemer (2001) and Pryor (2000) for two examples. It should be noted that neither Huemer nor Pryor maintain a linking conception of evidence. On their views, it seeming to S that p can justify S’s belief that p without S having any bit of evidence that links S’s seeming state to p.

88 Indeed, many internalists have appealed to experiences to stop other threatening regresses.
Given (LEC), for S to be justified in believing q, S’s evidence proper regarding q, must be linked to q. Justification for q requires more than simply evidence proper for q. Let’s fill out the labels given above to have a concrete example before our minds:

EP: S’s experience as of there being a red ball in front of S.
q : there is a red ball in front of S

In virtue of being an experience EP does not need to be justified, so there is no possession regress that applies to it. However, according to (LEC), EP must be appropriately linked to q by another bit of evidence possessed by S in order for S to be justified in believing q on the partial basis of EP.

It appears that a certain sort of seeming state could allow for one to possess the requisite link between EP and q. If it seems to S that EP is appropriately related to q, then S could have evidence proper that supports there being an appropriate link between EP and q. If seemings are evidence proper, then they could provide the evidence proper for this link. So, let’s let EL1 be this seeming state of S’s which is evidence proper the link between EP and q.

EL1: Its seeming to S that EP is appropriately linked to q. [i.e. it seeming to S that having an experience as of there being a red ball in front of S is appropriately linked to there being a red ball in front of S]

Let’s let EL1’ be the content of this seeming state. So,

EL1’: EP is appropriately linked to q

Now, the worry continues that according to (LEC), EP and EL1 are jointly insufficient to justify S in believing q. First, for EL1 to justify S in believing EL1’ (which
provides the link between EP and q), S must possess an additional link which connects EL1 to EL1'. Since EL1 is an experience, EL1 does not itself need any evidence proper in favor of it (it is already possessed), but it is not EL1 that provides the link between EP and q, it is EL1’s content – EL1'. So, what is needed is something that links the seeming experience EL1 to its content EL1'.

In addition, parity of reasoning suggests that S must also possess something that links EP and EL1’ to the truth or justification of q. If linking evidence is always required, then something else will be needed to link this linking evidence (EL1’) and evidence proper (EP) to the target proposition q. So, there appear to be regresses headed in both directions: one in terms of possessing the link between EP and q (the possession regress), and the other in terms of the links required between [EP and EL1] and q (the linking regress).

Consider now a further seeming state that S could experience EL2 and its content EL2’:

EL2: Its seeming to S that for any p, its seeming that p provides an appropriate link to p. [i.e. its seeming to S that its seeming that p provides support for p, is best explained by p, is evidence that p, etc.]

EL2’: Its seeming that p (for any p) provides an appropriate link to p.

EL2 is another experience an individual could have in which it seems to that individual that seemings support/make likely/are best explained by/etc. the truth of the
proposition that seems true – that there is an epistemically appropriate link between a proposition’s seeming true and that proposition itself.

What I want to suggest is that a state like EL2 is capable of stopping the possession regress and rendering the linking regress harmless. Let’s consider these alleged regresses in order. First, EL2 provides the requisite link between EL1 and EL1’ (EL1’s content). Since it seems to S that seemings provide such a link, S now has evidence proper that EL1 is linked to what seems true in EL1, namely EL1’. Further, this evidence proper that EL1 is linked to EL1’ is itself also linked to EL1. In virtue of EL2 being a seeming state, S needs no evidence proper for EL2 (in virtue of EL2 being an experience), and in virtue of what seems true in EL2, this very evidence proper, EL2, is also linked to what it is evidence for – it being the case that EP is appropriately linked to q. So, in EL2, S has both evidence proper for EL2’ (in virtue of what seems true in EL2), as well as the requisite linking evidence which connects the experience EL2 to EL2’ (also in virtue of what seems true in EL2).

The following graphic can help make this clear:
Each box is justified by the boxes below it which are connected to it. Boxes EP, EL1, and EL2 do not require evidence proper for them to be possessed since they are experiences and thus come as possessed. The boxes on the left provide the evidence proper for the box they are connected to above, which when couple with the boxes on the right (the linking evidence), justify the box they are connected to above.

According to (LEC), S must be justified in believing or experience EP and EL1’ in order for S to be justified in believing q. This graphic shows that EP and EL1’ are so required. EP is possessed in virtue of being an experience of S’s. S is justified in believing EL1’ in virtue to S’s experience EL1 and S being justified in believing EL2’. EL1 is possessed by S simply in virtue of being an experience. S is justified in believing EL2’ in virtue of S’s experience EL2. EL2 gives evidence proper for EL2’ since by assumption seeming states do that. EL2’ can also link EL2 to EL2’ since EL2’ claims that seemings provide the appropriate link to what seems true. However, we have seen that EL2’ can be possessed simply in virtue of EL2 and EL2’s content, EL2’. EL2 needs nothing else to itself be possessed, since it is simply an experience and experiences can provide justification, though they cannot themselves be justified, and EL2’ is possessed in virtue of itself and EL2. EL2’ is capable of performing all of the requisite linking tasks since it is general – it is about seemings in general, and not any particular seeming. What seems true in EL2 is a universal proposition. This allows for EL2’ to serve as linking evidence for every seeming, including EL2 itself. As such, the possession regress is stopped with EL2.
Second, EL2 can also render the linking regress harmless. EL2’ can link (EL1’ and EP) to q for S. EL2’ indicates that EP is appropriately linked to q by claiming that seemings are appropriately linked to what seems true. EP and EL1’ jointly claim that it S has an experience as of there is a red ball in front of S and that it also seems to S that this is appropriately linked to there being a red ball in front of S. Since EL2’ claims that a seeming is appropriately linked to what seems true, EL2’ appropriately links (EP and EL1’) to q. EL2’ is possessed since S experiences EL2, and EL2 provides both the evidence proper and linking evidence which connects it to EL2’ as we have seen above. So, since S is justified in believing EL2’, (EP and EL1’) is now appropriately linked to q.

However, the epistemic power of EL2’ extends beyond linking (EP and EL1’) to q. EL2’ also provides an appropriate link between [EP and EL1’ and EL2’] and q, since it claims that seemings are appropriately linked to what seems true. So, if we are asked why we should think that this even higher-order linking task is accomplished, EL2’ provides the answer “because it seems so”. Its seeming that seemings are appropriately related to what seems true provides the requisite link between [EP and EL1’ and EL2’] and q as well.

In addition, EL2’ can play this role of justifying the requisite links for every further linking stage. Each additional stage will add the (then redundant) conjunct EL2’ to the bits of evidence which must be linked to q. But if EL2’ can link [EP and EL1’ and EL2’] to q, EL2’ can also provide this link between [EP and EL1’ and EL2’ and EL2’] and q. The propositions that EL2’ is linking to q will become increasingly complex, but here
again the \textit{de re} incarnation of linking evidence is relevant. The propositions that EL2’ must link to q quickly become such that finite minds cannot consider them \textit{de dicto}. Nonetheless, these complex propositions have an obvious structure to them – they contain EP, EL1’ and some number of EL2’ conjuncts. As such, even if one cannot hold this proposition before one’s mind \textit{de dicto}, one can still be justified in believing of it, that it is appropriately linked to q.\footnote{The case is similar to one where S is justified in believing p and justified in believing the replacement rule p \equiv (p\&p). In this case S is justified in believing p, (p\&p), (p&(p\&p)), and so forth, through repeated application of this rule S is justified in believing. Although this rule can be applied infinitely many times, so long as S sees what is going on, S will be justified in believing the resulting proposition.} Since nothing substantive is being added to one’s evidential base, the requisite linking task will be no harder to accomplish. EL2’ justifies all of the requisite links to q. Since EL2 has it that S possesses EL2’, the linking regress is also rendered harmless and (LEC) avoids any skeptical entailments.

Thus, it does not appear that this account of evidence leads to skepticism even if it requires infinitely many links to the target proposition. We have seen that some evidential bases are sufficient to justify each and every of these links. Further, though this account here relied on intellectual seemings as being evidence proper, that was not essential to the response. Analogous responses to each regress could be crafted utilizing alternative accounts of what can be evidence proper for a proposition.\footnote{For instance, a similar response could incorporate direct acquaintance. Consider the following account:}

\begin{itemize}
  \item EP: the evidence proper regarding q
  \item EL1*: S’s direct acquaintance with the fact that q and the correspondence between that fact and S’s thought that q.
\end{itemize}
3.7 Linking Evidence and the ‘Canceling Out’ Argument

Having given a defense of this linking conception of evidence, let’s apply this understanding of evidence to Kelly’s ‘canceling out’ argument. At t’, when you have discovered the disagreement, Kelly claims that the evidence that you have gained that your peer disbelieves p on the basis of the shared first-order evidence merely cancels out the evidence that you have that you believe p on the basis of the first-order evidence, leaving the first-order evidence E to determine which of you (if either) is justified in adopting the doxastic attitude that has been adopted toward p. Now, it seems plausible that your discovery of such a disagreement has much more of an evidential impact than this if (LEC) is correct. It seems that discovering that your peer disagrees with you would defeat the linking component of your evidence which connects your evidence proper to p (the disputed proposition). When you find out that your known peer disbelieves p on the basis of the shared first-order evidence E, you

We could then add the following state of direct acquaintance:

EL2*: S’s having the thought that direct acquaintance justifies while being directly acquainted with the fact that direct acquaintance justifies and the correspondence between this thought and this fact.

EL2* can do the requisite linking work in the same way that EL2 could. EL2* will justify infinitely many links between S’s evidence proper and q. Similar stories could be told utilizing other accounts of evidence proper.

91 There may nonetheless be worries that (LEC) leads to skepticism since at least on the second defense given above, S secures justification for believing q by way of a somewhat complicated seeming state EL2. While it may be doubtful that many individuals have experienced EL2, it doesn’t strike me as absurd to think that many have had a comparable seeming state. As long as this is so, widespread skepticism will be avoided. Nevertheless, even if it is quite rare for individuals to have state’s which can stop the regresses, it is worth noting that skepticism would still be avoidable on this account – universal skepticism is avoided and there is no in principle skeptical outcome. For a further defense of this line of thought see Rogers and Matheson (forthcoming).

92 Nevertheless, even if the problems here are insurmountable and my defense has failed, I will examine a distinct but parallel response to Kelly’s objection to conciliatory views below.
now have reason to doubt that the linking component of your evidence is correct – you now have reason to think that your evidence proper regarding p is not in fact appropriately linked to p, contrary to what your linking evidence claimed. You have discovered that someone who is equally as likely to get it right and shares all of your evidence has come to a different conclusion regarding what the shared evidence E is evidence proper for, and quite plausibly, this defeats this requisite linking component of your evidence. So, it seems that this linking component of your evidence gets defeated when you discover that you are in the relevant sort of disagreement. But then, once we eliminate the parts of your evidence that are defeated or cancelled out, we are left only with the evidence proper which according to (LEC) is incapable of justifying on its own (even that which it entails).

The kind of defeater that would be acquired here regarding your linking evidence is a rebutting defeater. We can understand a rebutting defeater as follows:

For all propositions x, y and z, x is a rebutting defeater of y in its support of z if and only if (i) y supports z, (ii) x supports not-z, and (iii) the conjunction (y and x) supports z less than y alone supports z.

When you discover that your known peer has judged the evidence proper to not support p, you gain reason to believe that the evidence proper is not in fact appropriately linked to p. Although you also have reason to believe that it is appropriately linked to p (since you are reasonable and have judged it to support p), the fact that the two of you are known reasonable evidential peers regarding p has it that the evidence on both sides of this issue is equally strong. The evidence that you have
for believing that the evidence proper E is appropriately linked to p has been rebutted and seemingly even entirely neutralized by your discovery of a disagreement with a known peer. You have discovered that someone who is equally likely to get it right has judged that E does not support what you thought. This seems to neutralize every reason you had for thinking that E does support p.

As we have seen above, it is plausible that this linking evidence is critical to one’s justification. Thus, when I lose my linking evidence (i.e. I am no longer justified in believing it) connecting the evidence proper to p, I move from something like the evidential position of the Logic TA to something like the evidential position of the undergraduate student, and I am no longer justified in believing even what my evidence proper may entail. So, the evidential impact of the discovery of such a disagreement seems to be quite drastic indeed if (LEC) is correct, and this evidential picture seems to be quite plausible indeed. Not only would your higher-order evidence be cancelled out by the discovery of a peer who disagrees, but such a discovery would seemingly render your linking evidence entirely defeated. In such cases suspension of judgment would be the epistemically proper doxastic attitude for you to adopt. If you should suspend judgment regarding the liking evidence, then you no longer possess it, since by assumption you possess that proposition only if you are justified in believing it. As we have seen, it is plausible that without the linking evidence, the evidence proper is unable to justify on in believing even propositions that are entailed by it.
Although what we have said here as focused on quite strong conciliatory views of disagreement, weaker conciliatory views could also embrace (LEC). Such views would have it that suspension of judgment is not always the justified doxastic attitude to adopt towards the disputed proposition in such cases of disagreement. Such conciliatory views could embrace (LEC), yet maintain that one’s linking evidence is not entirely defeated by the discovery of disagreement. Rather, one becomes less justified in believing this linking proposition (though remains justified in believing it), and thus becomes less justified in adopting the corresponding doxastic attitude. In Bergmann’s (2005) terminology, the defeater acquired would only be a partial defeater. Conciliatory views could differ as to the amount of justification for one’s linking proposition that would diminish upon such a discovery, and correspondingly differ as to how much conciliation must be made.

### 3.8 A Further Response

Further, even if this requirement for a linking component in one’s evidence is too strong, it still seems that Kelly’s considerations are insufficient to raise trouble for conciliatory views. This is because it seems that a defeater for one’s first-order evidence is acquired when one discovers a disagreement of the relevant kind, even if there needn’t be a linking component in one’s evidence. That is, even if (LEC) is incorrect, it still seems like the discovery of a disagreement of the relevant kind defeats the support that one’s first-order evidence gives to one’s doxastic attitude toward the disputed proposition. For reasons considered above, after discovering the disagreement one may
become justified in suspending judgment as to which doxastic attitude one’s first-order evidence supports (the higher-order proposition). One has found out that a reasonable epistemic peer regarding \( p \) disagrees regarding what the first-order evidence supports, and as we have seen, plausibly this defeats whatever support one had for believing the proposition about the character of one’s first-order evidence – that the first-order evidence supports what one believed.

Conciliatory views of disagreement can differ as to what kind of a defeater is gained here. Weaker conciliatory views will have it that only a partial defeater is gained, and one still has some justification for believing the disputed proposition. However, I think that even strong conciliatory views which claim that suspension of judgment toward the disputed proposition is typically called for also have a viable response here apart from endorsing (LEC). Such conciliatory views will have it that the justificatory power of one’s first-order evidence is entirely undercut by the discovery of the relevant type of disagreement. In what follows I will explore whether such strong conciliatory views also have this weaker escape from Kelly’s canceling out argument.

It seems that if one consciously considers what one’s evidence supports and justifiably concludes that suspension of judgment is the proper doxastic attitude to take toward that proposition, then the first-order evidence would not justify belief for that individual even if a linking component is not required.\(^93\) In other words, it seems that

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\(^93\) For a further defense of this claim see Feldman (2005), (forthcoming) and Sosa (forthcoming). Feldman (2005) motivates this claim by imagining an undergraduate student in an epistemology class. It seems that prior to taking the class she knew that she had hands and various other propositions about the
such a discovery provides one with an undercutting defeater for one’s first-order evidence.

Once one reflects and concludes that withholding is the justified attitude toward the claim that one’s evidence supports p one acquires a defeater and is at least no longer justified in believing p. Although being justified in suspending judgment regarding whether the evidence proper supports p does not itself support not-p, it does neutralize the justification for believing p that would have been supplied by one’s first-order evidence in favor of p. In such a case, the support generated by one’s first-order evidence regarding p has been undercut by S’s being justified in suspending judgment regarding whether that evidence in fact supports p. As Feldman (2007) points out, there is at least something very strange about someone being justified in both believing p and suspending judgment as to whether one’s evidence supports p.

One might question if this response to Kelly is any weaker than the one explored above utilizing (LEC). If being justified in suspending judgment as to what one’s evidence supports is sufficient to undercut one’s justification, being justified in

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external world. However, supposing that her skeptical professor gives her convincing arguments that the evidence she had for these claims is no good, it seems that she no longer knows them or is even justified in believing them. Thus, it seems that if one’s higher-order evidence indicates that one’s first-order evidence does not support belief, then one’s total body of evidence does not support belief. Bergmann (2005) defends the claim that actually withholding regarding such a proposition would be a defeater even if that doxastic attitude was not justified for that individual.

94 For this reason we can also see that it was a mistake on Kelly’s part to think that showing that higher-order evidence is not evidence for the disputed proposition would show that conciliatory views are false. Undercutting defeaters diminish one’s justification for believing a proposition without themselves being evidence for or against that proposition. If higher-order evidence can act like an undercutting defeater, then conciliatory views can be correct even if higher-order evidence is not evidence for the disputed proposition. Thanks to Richard Greene for helpful conversations on this point.
disbelieving that one’s evidence supports what one thinks it does will *a fortiori* defeat one’s justification. But, if being justified in suspending judgment and being justified in disbelieving this proposition about evidential support are each sufficient to undermine one’s justification, then doesn’t one need to be justified in believing that one’s evidence supports p in order for one’s evidence to actually justify p?\(^95\) Our defense of (LEC) had this consequence, but it was claimed that the response here was weaker. How can this be?

I think that it is plausible that this response to Kelly *is* weaker. What is relevant here is that there may be different *kinds* of justified withholding or suspension judgment, some which act as an undercutting defeater and some which do not.\(^96\) If so, then showing that justified disbelief and some kinds of justified suspension of judgment towards the proposition that one’s evidence supports p act as defeaters for one’s justification for believing p is not tantamount to showing that being justified in believing that one’s evidence supports p is necessary for being justified in believing p.

\(^95\) Fumerton (2006) points this out as motivation for not letting justified suspension of judgment regarding what one’s evidence supports act as a defeater.

\(^96\) Bergmann (2005) maintains that there is a difference between withholding regarding p and simply failing to take on a doxastic attitude toward p. According to Bergmann, withholding requires that one at least consider the proposition, whereas one can take no attitude whatsoever toward p when one has not even considered p. Bergman claims that withholding regarding a proposition about what one’s evidence supports defeats that support, whereas simply taking no attitude whatsoever toward such a proposition does not.

Things are slightly different here since we are concerned with what doxastic attitude is justified for an individual apart from whether that individual actually has that doxastic attitude. Nonetheless, similar considerations may help motivate the claim that different ways of being justified in withholding regarding what one’s evidence supports can make a difference as to whether one’s justification is undercut.
Further, there is some plausibility to the claim that some kinds of justified withholding towards what one’s evidence supports have a greater justificatory effect than others. For instance, there seems to be an important difference between a case where an individual has no evidence at all regarding a proposition and a case where an individual has some evidence on either side of the matter that ends up being balanced. Here we can compare a typical individual’s evidence regarding the outcome of a fair coin flip with that of an individual who has no evidence whatsoever regarding the nature of coins or the results of coin flips. Both individuals are justified in suspending judgment as to the outcome of the coin flip, but we might nonetheless think that there is an important epistemic difference between the two cases. Such a difference between kinds of justified withholdings regarding higher-order propositions may make an important justificatory difference regarding the disputed propositions.

In addition, there seems to be an important difference between a case where an individual has never considered the matter of what his evidence supports, and a case where an individual is consciously examining the matter and justifiably finds the evidence to be balanced. It seems that in the latter case, the justified suspension of judgment may have at least a greater defeating effect.

It is important to note that these considerations are not tantamount to a rejection of evidentialism. Which doxastic attitudes are justified for individuals would still be entirely determined by the evidence. What these considerations bring out is the

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97 Thanks to John Shoemaker for providing me with this example.
possibility that what is relevant to justification is not simply the degree to which the evidence supports the proposition at hand, but also what that evidential body is composed of. Is there evidence on both sides of the matter? Does the evidence include conscious reflection on the matter? Answers to these questions may make an important justificatory difference, but only because there is also an evidential difference—a difference in the nature of the evidence, though not in the degree of support provided by the evidence.

If this is right, then it may be that only some forms of justified suspension of judgment toward what one’s evidence support has this defeating effect. The scenario relevant to conciliatory views of disagreement has it that the individual in question both has evidence that the first-order evidence supports p (namely, his belief), and evidence that the first-order evidence does not support p (namely, his peer’s disbelief). The individual in the relevant scenario is also consciously considering whether the first-order evidence supports p. These features are all features that make this type of justified suspension of judgment regarding what the evidence supports more likely to have a defeating effect upon the disputed proposition. As a result, one can consistently claim that justified suspension of judgment regarding what one’s evidence supports in these cases has a defeating effect (even a full defeating effect), whereas other cases of justified suspension do not have such an effect.

So, even if a linking component is not required for one’s evidence to support a proposition, the discovery of the relevant sort of disagreement can still have epistemic
significance far greater than that envisioned by Kelly. It seems that even very strong conciliatory views that claim that suspension of judgment is often called for upon such a discovery do not face a problem here.\textsuperscript{98}

3.9 Conclusion

It seems that Kelly’s considerations regarding higher-order evidence can have more evidential impact than Kelly acknowledges. We have seen good reason to think that higher-order evidence is evidence for first-order propositions (propositions not themselves about evidence), and we have seen no good reason to think otherwise. We have also seen good reason to think that this fact supports a conciliatory view of the epistemic significance of disagreement. It seems that the discovery of a disagreement either provides one with a rebutting defeater for one’s requisite linking information or an undercutting defeater for one’s first-order evidence. In either case, conciliation will be called for in response to a discovery of the relevant type of disagreement. We have also seen that that the conciliation called for might even be quite drastic (such a suspension of judgment regarding the disputed proposition). There does not appear to be any successful objection to conciliatory views from these considerations regarding higher-order evidence. Even if higher-order evidence is not evidence which directly

\textsuperscript{98}Kelly (forthcoming) explicitly rejects the canceling-out argument. Kelly claims that since $E^\ast$ contains a greater proportion of evidence that supports agnosticism regarding $p$, that $E^\ast$ will favor $H$ to a lesser degree than $E$ (though it will still favor it). Although this assessment is consistent with a conciliatory view of disagreement, Kelly’s reasoning is flawed. By adding counterbalanced evidence – evidence that supports agnosticism regarding $p$ – one does not thereby become less justified in believing $p$. If so, one’s justification for believing $p$ would continually diminish simply from being given counterbalanced pairs of evidence composed a bit of evidence for $p$ and a counterbalancing bit of evidence for not-$p$. If given such a counterbalanced pair of bits of evidence, one would be justified in believing precisely what one was previously justified in believing. The fact that a greater proportion of one’s evidence supports suspension does not affect what the total body of evidence supports or to what degree.
pertains to \( p \), it can have an effect on one’s justification for believing \( p \). Higher-order evidence can strengthen or weaken the connection between one’s evidence and the target proposition, and this can in turn affect how justified one is in believing the target proposition.
Chapter 4: Are Conciliatory Views of Disagreement Self-Defeating?

4.1 Introduction

Several philosophers have objected to conciliatory views of disagreement by claiming that such views are self-defeating. Alvin Plantinga, for instance, claims that at least some conciliatory views are, “self-referentially inconsistent” and that any such principle, “fall[s] victim to itself”.\(^9^9\) Adam Elga echoes this sentiment in claiming that conciliatory views are “incoherent” and “self-undermining.”\(^1^0^0\) Brian Weatherson raises this worry as well, claiming that such views offer “incoherent advice”\(^1^0^1\) when turned upon themselves. In what follows I will examine each of these charges and defend conciliatory views from such objections.

Recall that a conciliatory view of disagreement endorsed the following principle:

(CV): If (i) at t S1 has justifiably adopted doxastic attitude D1 toward proposition p and (ii) at a later time t’ S1 becomes justified in believing that a reasonable epistemic peer regarding p S2 has adopted a competitor doxastic attitude D2 toward p, and (iii) S1 has no undefeated reason to discount S2’s conclusion at t’, and (iv) S1 has gained no other evidence affecting S1’s justification for p since t; then at t’ S1 is less justified in adopting D1 toward p than S1 was at t.

Roughly, the general idea is that discovering that someone disagrees with you can give you evidence that you are mistaken. The problem here for conciliatory views is thought

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\(^1^0^0\) Elga (forthcoming).
\(^1^0^1\) Weatherson (forthcoming).
to come from the fact that there are (or even that there can be) disagreements of the relevant sort regarding the epistemic significance of disagreement itself. In particular, there are disagreements of the relevant sort regarding the correctness of conciliatory views of disagreements. As such, conciliatory views mandate that those who believe conciliatory views become less justified in so believing, upon the discovery of such disagreements. That is, according to (CV) the degree of justification which a defender of (CV) has for believing (CV) will diminish once one has become justified in believing that there exists of a certain kind of individual who disbelieves (CV). Since (CV) can be applied to itself, conciliatory views of disagreement can call for one to make conciliations regarding conciliatory views of disagreement, and this is claimed to cause problems for such views.

4.2 Self-Referentially Incoherent?

Alvin Plantinga makes the charge that conciliatory views of disagreement at least can be self-referentially incoherent. Plantinga’s target in making his charge is one particularly strong conciliatory view which he terms ‘abstemious pluralism’. According to Plantinga, the abstemious pluralist claims something like the following:

*Abstemious Pluralism (AP)*: If (i) S has some good reasons to believe p, but (ii) also knows that other people have equally good reasons for believing things incompatible with p, and (iii) S has no reason to discount their reasons and favor her own, then S is not justified in believing p.

Abstemious pluralism is a rather strong conciliatory view. It claims that the discovery of a disagreement of the relevant sort diminishes the justification one has in believing a
proposition to the point of justified suspension of judgment at best. If this strong conciliatory view can be defended from Plantinga’s self-referential objection, then other more moderate conciliatory views, and conciliatory views as a whole, face no problem from this line of objection either.

This first thing to consider is the interpretation of Plantinga’s claim that (AP) is self-referentially inconsistent. There can be several self-referential problems that a proposition might have, so it is worth sorting through these to see which, if any, apply to (AP).

First, there are self-referential paradoxes such as (1):

(1) This sentence is false.

Sentences like (1) create a paradox since if they are true then they are false, and vice versa. However, (AP) does not have this problem. There is nothing paradoxical or problematic in this way about (AP) since (AP) does not refer to (AP).

Another self-referential problem can be seen in sentences like the following:

(2) Jon has never asserted anything.

(3) Jon has no beliefs.

Either of these sentences can be true, but their truth depends in part upon how Jon is related to the propositions that they express. Suppose (2) is true, then Jon cannot assert (2) without thereby making it the case that (2) is false. As such, Jon cannot successfully advocate for the truth of (2) by asserting it. Similarly, suppose that (3) is
true. Jon cannot believe (3) in response to its truth since in forming this belief he would thereby makes (3) false. So, Jon should not respond to the truth of (3) by believing it, since undertaking that doxastic relation to (3) would make (3) false.

(AP) does not have either of these problems. Any self-referential problem with (AP) does not concern the truth-value of (AP) – it does not involve considerations that would make (AP) false. Discovering the relevant sort of disagreement regarding (AP) only has ramifications for the epistemic status of (AP) for some individuals. So, any self-referential problem with (AP) must lie elsewhere.

(AP) is more like the following:

(4) It is morally wrong for an individual to make moral claims.

(5) A belief is epistemically justified if and only if it is formed by a reliable belief forming process.

Suppose that (4) is true. One might even be justified in believing (4) or know (4). Nonetheless, given the truth of (4), it would be morally wrong to assert (4). The truth of (4) would put someone who knew (4) in an odd position. The person would be morally at fault for claiming that (4) was true even though (4) is true. It is important to note, however, that this oddity does not count against the truth of (4). This oddity concerns only what individuals can appropriately ‘do’ with this proposition – what relations individuals can appropriately take on towards this proposition.
Alternatively, suppose (5) is true. It may nonetheless be that a belief that (5) is never reliably formed in or by an individual. Thus, given certain circumstances that may obtain in the world and the truth of (5), no one would be justified in believing (5). There is some sort of oddity here as well, since (5) is itself about epistemic justification and no one would be justified in believing that it is true. But this oddity does not tell against the truth of (5), nor does it tell against the justificatory status of other beliefs that are formed by reliable belief forming processes (supposing the truth of reliabilism). The sole oddity is that in such circumstances, reliabilism is true and no one is justified in believing that reliabilism is true, and that this is due in part to the truth of reliabilism itself.102

Now consider (AP) once again. Suppose that S has good reasons to believe (AP) and knows that others have equally good reasons for disbelieving (AP) and S has no reason to favor her own reasons. Given (AP) and such circumstances, S is not justified in believing (AP). In such circumstances the truth of (AP) has it that S epistemically ought not to believe (AP). Notice that this does not count against the truth of (AP). Rather, it

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102 Similar considerations apply to evidentialism – the thesis that epistemic justification is determined entirely by one’s evidence. It could be that although evidentialism is true, someone’s evidence supports some competitor theory of epistemic justification instead. Given these contingent circumstances, that person would not be justified in believing evidentialism, even though evidentialism was the truth of the matter regarding epistemic justification. In fact, that individual would not be justified in believing evidentialism due in part to the truth of evidentialism. Further still, these considerations apply to Plantinga’s own proper functionalist account of warrant. Plantinga claims that a belief has warrant roughly when it was formed by a proper functioning belief forming process aimed at truth and operating in an environment for which it was designed. However, it is possible that a belief in that proposition is never itself formed by a proper functioning belief forming process aimed at truth and operating in an environment for which it was designed. Fortunately for Plantinga, this feature of his account of warrant does not indicate that it is false, but by parity of reasoning neither does such a consideration point to the falsity of conciliatory views of disagreement.
is something that is *entailed by* the truth of (AP) and the world as it has been described to be. So, the fact that one may not be justified in believing (AP) is simply an odd consequence that may result from the truth of (AP) coupled with other contingent factors.

This oddity does not show that (AP) is false, nor does it show that (AP) cannot be defended and argued for. To present reasons in favor of a view is not to believe it or assert it. (AP) does not make any claim about what propositions can be defended or critically explored. Given our supposition, if (AP) is believed by a defender of (AP), that individual is ‘acting’ hypocritically – her ‘actions’ are not in line with her beliefs. She lacks integrity in this way. If one ought to know or justifiably believe what one asserts, then an individual in such a situation ought not to assert (AP). However, unlike (2), an assertion of (AP) by a defender of (AP) would not make (AP) false, it would only show that the defender of (AP) had flouted some norm regarding assertion. So, the fact that in certain circumstances one would not be justified in believing (AP) does not cast doubt on the truth (AP).

In fact, even the *impossibility* of rationally holding a view does not itself count against the truth of a view. For instance, a radical skeptic might claim that it is impossible to be justified in believing anything. This claim, if true, would have it that the skeptic is not justified in believing her own assertion. The truth of this claim would have it that no one should ever believe it (though it is true), and perhaps no one should even

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103 The application of this word depends on how much believing is a class of action.
104 For more on norms of assertion see Williamson (2000) and Weiner (2005).
ever assert it (given a justification or knowledge norm of assertion). Nonetheless, the fact that one could not justifiably hold this view is not itself a reason for thinking that this radical skeptical claim is false. This radical skeptical claim must still be assessed even if it is impossible for one to justifiably believe it or appropriately assert it.\textsuperscript{105}

If (AP) is true, then in some circumstances one cannot be epistemically justified in believing some truth about epistemic justification. It is hard to see why this should be thought to be a problem for (AP). It seems that there are plenty of truths such that given the way the world is no one will be epistemically justified in believing them. This fact does not count against these truths. They are still truths, after all. It is hard to see why some such truths could not be about epistemic justification. It is difficult to see how some truths being about epistemic justification would somehow have the consequence that individuals must be able to be justified in believing them.

So, it seems that (AP), and like principles, cannot be refuted by the charge of being ‘self-referentially inconsistent’. Nonetheless, it may be that defenders of (AP), and like principles, may be properly reproached for the relations which they take on towards these principles – for example belief and perhaps assertion. Such individuals may be inconsistent in their beliefs and actions, or they may flout some other norm. However, the normative status that (AP)’s defenders may take on does not tell against the truth of (AP) or of conciliatory views in general. Rather, it is the truth of (AP), or conciliatory views in general, which would make it the case that their defenders would

\textsuperscript{105} Conee (2004) makes a similar attack against the claim that some skeptical views are self-refuting.
have such a status (given certain circumstances). Like skepticism, conciliatory views of
disagreement are not refuted by their defenders inability to justifiably believe or
appropriately assert their views. It may be unfortunate that we are unable to justifiably
believe a true proposition about epistemic justification, but we have seen no problem
for the truth of (AP) or conciliatory views in general here.

4.3 Incoherent Advice

Brian Weatherson (forthcoming) and Adam Elga (forthcoming) each maintain
that conciliatory views of disagreements are incoherent.106 While we have seen that
there is no problem from the fact that one might not be justified in believing that a
conciliatory view of disagreement is correct, Elga and Weatherson each maintain that
such views can even call for their own rejection and that this is trouble for conciliatory
views.

Elga claims, "in many situations involving disagreement about disagreement,
conciliatory views call for their own rejection" and that problems arise because "your
view on disagreement requires you to give up . . . your view on disagreement"107. For
any conciliatory view, there will be a state of affairs such that encountering a given
number of independent peers who disbelieve p to a certain extent would have it that
one’s justification for believing p would become so diminished that one would become

106 Although Elga rejects conciliatory views as I have described them, Elga does opt for a hybrid view
which claims that the response dictated by conciliatory views is correct in every case that does not pertain
to conciliatory views themselves. See Elga (forthcoming). More on this later.
107 Ibid., p. 5.
justified in disbelieving p. To whatever degree a conciliatory view claims that conciliation is epistemically required and with whatever degree of justification one initially has for believing p, one can then discover enough of the relevant kind of disagreements regarding p such that the degree of justification which one has for believing p changes to such an extent that one becomes justified in disbelieving p.

Elga sees this as a problem since the relevant proposition could be (CV) itself (or any of its species). The defender of (CV) could discover enough peers who disbelieve (CV), and to such an extent, that (CV) would call for its defender to then disbelieve (CV) – this would be the justified doxastic attitude for the defender of (CV) to adopt. So, (CV) can sometimes even call for its own rejection.

Elga claims that a fundamental view regarding how evidence is to be taken into account, such as (CV), that can call for its own rejection is incoherent. The incoherence of such a view is seen to follow from what this kind of view could prescribe. Elga argues for this claim through an analogy with the magazine Consumer Reports. Elga imagines that Consumer Reports began to review magazines that rated consumer ratings magazines in addition to the products it regularly reviews. He claims that if Consumer Reports concluded that a competitor review magazine was more reliable in its own ratings of products, Consumer Reports could not give coherent advice. For instance, we can imagine the following scenario:

*Consumer Reports:* Buy only toaster X

*Smart Shopper:* Buy only toaster Y
In such a scenario, *Consumer Reports* gives incoherent advice since it tells one to both only buy toaster X and at the same time to only buy toaster Y. Since one cannot buy only toaster X and at the same time buy only toaster Y following *Consumer Reports* requires doing inconsistent things. This seems problematic.

Elga then compares *Consumer Reports* with an inductive method. As he understands it, an inductive method, “puts forward a rule for responding to possible courses of experience.” For example, ‘If one has experience E, one should believe p’ would be an inductive method. Thus, (CV) can be seen as an inductive method; it dictates that conciliation is epistemically required upon the discovery of a disagreement. The problem for (CV) then is analogous to the case of *Consumer Reports*. (CV) can in certain circumstances dictate that one should adopt a different inductive method. There can be circumstances such that according to (CV) one should not believe (CV) but rather disbelieve it, and even believe in its place some competitor hypothesis regarding the epistemic significance of disagreement. Having justifiably adopted a different view regarding disagreements, one will then be justified in adhering to the prescriptions of this new inductive method while (CV) is still making its own (possibly incompatible)

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108 Ibid., 7.
109 Ibid.
110 Elga describes and gives examples of inductive methods which are prescriptions rather than propositions. However, the application to (CV) is better made understanding an inductive method as a proposition dictating some normative claim, and as such the bearer of a truth-value.
prescriptions. Thus, the inductive method (CV) can call for incompatible responses to a single course of experience. Elga claims that this problem is a fatal flaw for (CV).  

The case regarding (CV) does seem to be analogous to the *Consumer Reports* case, but the problem is not without a solution. The problem here is that one cannot do everything that *Consumer Reports* or (CV) prescribes. Without some meta-rule or meta-inductive method which tells one how to resolve the inconsistency, we are stuck. If there were no such rule, then perhaps there would be a problem for (CV). Fortunately for the defender of (CV), such a meta-rule does exist. It is plausible that evidentialism provides the resources for deciding between these possible incompatible prescriptions of (CV). After all, (CV) is simply a statement of how the evidence works in a particular type of circumstance – in cases where one has discovered a certain sort of disagreement exists. So, (CV) only purports to be a precisification of what one’s evidence supports (and how much it supports it) in one particular kind of case. As such, one might expect that evidentialism can help in determining what to do when (CV) gives incompatible prescriptions. After all, (CV) is only an application of evidentialism to a particular situation.

In the described case regarding (CV) it seems that the evidence demands adopting the competitor view of the significance of disagreements and ceasing to follow the prescriptions or recommendations of (CV). In recommending a competitor (CV) has undercut its earlier prescriptions which were incompatible with the recommendations

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111 Ibid.
of its (now recommended) competitor. In leading away from (CV), the evidence has also lead one away from the prescriptions of (CV).

Consider another analogous case. Suppose that a student of mine needs to fill one more requirement before she can graduate and she can only afford to take one more course. Suppose that she asks me if my course will fill this requirement since she would like to take it. I think that it will fulfill this requirement and proceed to tell her to take the course. However, I am not as familiar with this particular degree requirement as her advisor, so I also tell her to ask her advisor and do what her advisor says. Suppose that her advisor instructs her that my course will not fulfill the desired requirement and thus tells her not to take my course. As things play out, she is unable to do *everything* that I have told her to do, yet in telling her to follow her advisor, I leave open the possibility that my advice to take the course will be undercut by what her advisor tells her. Although she cannot do *everything* that I have told her to do, if she follows her evidence, her course is clear – she should not take my class. The evidence has decided between my two incompatible prescriptions.

Similarly, the evidence decides between the incompatible prescriptions of (CV). When my evidence tells me to disbelieve (CV), it seems that my evidence no longer supports following the prescriptions of (CV). In such a scenario, the path for me to take is to adopt and follow this competitor view that has been recommended by my evidence. So, evidentialism provides a meta-rule or meta-inductive method which allows for the inconsistent advice of (CV) to be coherently handled. Evidentialism
dictates what one should do in such circumstances, so ultimately there is no incoherent advice. Evidentialism is the meta-rule that Elga was looking for to resolve the inconsistencies in the inductive methods.

4.4 Conciliatory Views and Evidentialism

However, this type of response can be used to highlight a tension between (CV) and evidentialism (or the evidential thesis\textsuperscript{112}), at least given a plausible understanding of what one’s evidence is and how it interacts.\textsuperscript{113} Once (CV) has called for its own rejection, there appears to be a conflict between what it claims and what one’s total evidence supports. Let’s fill out Elga’s story by considering two competitor answers to our question about the epistemic significance of disagreement:

\textit{Conciliatory Views (CV):} If (i) at \( t \) \( S_1 \) has justifiably adopted doxastic attitude \( D_1 \) toward proposition \( p \) and (ii) at a later time \( t' \) \( S_1 \) becomes justified in believing that a reasonable epistemic peer regarding \( p \) \( S_2 \) has adopted a competitor doxastic attitude \( D_2 \) toward \( p \), and (iii) \( S_1 \) has no undefeated reason to discount \( S_2 \)’s conclusion at \( t' \), and (iv) \( S_1 \) has gained no other evidence affecting \( S_1 \)’s justification for \( p \) since \( t \); then at \( t' \) \( S_1 \) is less justified in adopting \( D_1 \) toward \( p \) than \( S_1 \) was at \( t \).

\textit{Staying Put View (SPV):} If (i) at \( t \) \( S_1 \) has justifiably adopted doxastic attitude \( D_1 \) toward proposition \( p \) and (ii) at a later time \( t' \) \( S_1 \) becomes justified in believing that a reasonable epistemic peer regarding \( p \) \( S_2 \) has adopted a competitor doxastic attitude \( D_2 \) toward \( p \), and (iii) \( S_1 \) has no undefeated reason to discount \( S_2 \)’s conclusion at \( t' \), and (iv) \( S_1 \) has gained no other evidence affecting \( S_1 \)’s justification for \( p \) since \( t \); then at \( t' \) \( S_1 \) is less justified in adopting \( D_1 \) toward \( p \) than \( S_1 \) was at \( t \).

\textsuperscript{112} The evidential thesis states the following: For any subject \( S \), proposition \( P \), time \( T \), and doxastic attitude \( D \), \( S \) is justified in adopting \( D \) toward \( P \) at \( T \) if and only if having \( D \) toward \( P \) fits the evidence \( S \) has at \( T \).

\textsuperscript{113} In particular, what is relevant here are considerations concerning higher-order evidence. More on this below and in Chapter 3.
evidence affecting S1’s justification for p since t; then at t’ S1 remains just as justified in adopting D1 toward p as S1 was at t.

Suppose that Smith believes that (CV) is true. He then encounters numerous disagreements of the relevant kind regarding (CV) and in the end becomes justified in disbelieving (CV). As we have outlined above, such a scenario is possible. By the same lights, Smith can become justified in believing that a competitor view of disagreements is correct. Suppose that through encountering enough defenders of (SPV) Smith even becomes justified in believing (SPV). So, the truth of (CV) has it that Smith is justified in believing (SPV) and disbelieving (CV). We can construct a case so that the degree to which Smith is justified in believing (SPV) is quite high and the degree to which Smith is justified in disbelieving (CV) is quite high as well.

Suppose further that Smith becomes highly justified in believing that we have libertarian free will. When Smith then discovers that someone he is justified in believing is his epistemic peer, Jones, disbelieves that we have libertarian free will, (CV) has it that Smith is then less justified in believing this proposition (perhaps even to the point of justifying Smith in suspending judgment on the matter). However, it seems that evidentialism has it that Smith is still highly justified in believing that we have libertarian free will. After all, Smith has good reason to think that doxastic conciliation is not rationally required of him. He is justified in believing that according to (SPV) he is justified in believing that we have libertarian free will and he is justified in believing that (SPV) is correct. He is also justified in believing that conciliatory views are false. Evidentialism gives this verdict when higher-order evidence is given significant
evidential import. Such a view of how one’s evidence interacts is both plausible and has been endorsed in the literature.114

So, it seems that a plausible application of the evidential thesis and (CV) can give conflicting verdicts as to how justified Smith is in believing that we have libertarian free will and perhaps even which doxastic attitude is justified for Smith regarding that proposition. When a conciliatory view calls for the adoption of a competitor, what a plausible view of what one’s evidence supports will come apart from what any conciliatory view dictates is the epistemically required response to the discovery of disagreement. Put differently, one’s evidence can require that one abandon (CV) and in such cases it seems that what one’s evidence supports and what (CV) prescribes will come apart.

This general worry points to a problem in our formulation of conciliatory views. The antecedent of (CV) made no mention of what one’s higher-order evidence was, in particular what one’s evidence was concerning (CV) itself. Yet as we have seen, (CV) can call for its own rejection and even the adoption of a competitor view regarding the epistemic significance of disagreement. In such cases the verdict given by (CV) will be in tension with the verdict given by a plausible understanding of evidentialism. This tension can result since (CV) describes the justificatory impact of one item of evidence – the discovery of a certain kind of disagreement. However, it may be that the

114 For more on the interaction between higher-order evidence and lower-order evidence in cases such as these see Feldman (2005), (forthcoming), Sosa (forthcoming), and Bergmann (2005). I also defend such a conception of evidence in Chapter 2 and 3. In what follows I will be assuming such a conception of evidentialism.
justificatory effect of this item of evidence is diminished by other items in one’s total body of evidence. There is nothing unique to evidence regarding disagreement in this respect. Any acquired piece of evidence may have a diminished (or enhanced) justificatory effect for an individual depending upon what other items of evidence are in that individual’s total body of evidence. As such, (CV) must be altered to account for the fact that there may be items of evidence in one’s total body of evidence that mitigate the justificatory impact of the discovery of disagreement although they are not themselves reasons to discount one’s opponent’s conclusion (and thus not already accounted for by the antecedent of (CV)).

These considerations point toward the following reformulation of conciliatory views of disagreement:

(CV*): If (i) at t S1 has justifiably adopted doxastic attitude D1 toward proposition p and (ii) at a later time t’ S1 becomes justified in believing that a reasonable epistemic peer regarding p S2 has adopted a competitor doxastic attitude D2 toward p; then at t’ S1 gains a defeater for S1’s justification for adopting D1 toward p. 115

This reformulation of (CV) weakens the consequent to accommodate the kinds of cases outlined above. Since one can have higher-order evidence which outweighs the verdict of (CV), discovering a disagreement of the relevant kind can only provide one with a

115 Conditions (iii) and (iv) of (CV) are no longer needed. Condition (iii) of (CV) was the condition that S1 have no undefeated reason to discount S2’s conclusion. If S1 has such an undefeated reason, then it is still true that at t’ S1 has gained a defeater for S1’s justification for adopting D1 toward p, it is just that S1 has a defeater-defeater for this newly acquired defeater. Condition (iv) of (CV) was the condition that S1 has gained no other evidence affecting S1’s justification for p since t. Here too, even if S1 has gained such evidence since t, S1 will still gain a defeater for S1’s justification for adopting D1 toward p at t’. Since the consequent of (CV*) does not give a summary epistemic evaluation these conditions are not needed.
defeater for one’s justification – all that is acquired is a reason which counts against adopting the doxastic attitude one has toward the proposition in question. A defeater is evidence which diminishes the justification one has for adopting a doxastic attitude toward a proposition. A defeater could entirely eliminate the justification one has for that doxastic attitude, or it could merely diminish it. So, according to (CV*) in discovering a disagreement of the relevant sort, S1’s justification for adopting D1 toward p may be diminished – S1 has acquired a defeater, and if this defeater is itself undefeated, then S1’s justification for adopting D1 toward p will diminish.

As we have seen, however, this defeater can itself be defeated – whether it be slightly weakened, or entirely neutralized, by other evidence that the individual possesses. The defeater gained by the discovery of disagreement will itself be defeated when one is justified in believing that conciliatory views are incorrect. When the defeater acquired by discovering the disagreement is not itself defeated, conciliation will be required; but (CV*) unlike (CV) allows for the possibility of such further defeat which might negate or mitigate any epistemic affect of discovering the disagreement of the relevant kind.

Since the consequent of (CV*) has it that S1 only acquires a defeater for S1’s justification for adopting D1 toward p, (CV*) eliminates the third and fourth antecedent conditions of (CV). Even if S1 has an undefeated reason to discount S2’s conclusion regarding p, it can still be that S1’s discovery of the disagreement provides S1 with a

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116 This latter kind of defeater is what Bergmann (2005) calls a ‘partial defeater’. 

defeater for S1’s justification for adopting D1 toward p. If S1 has an undefeated reason to discount S2’s conclusion, then the defeater acquired via the discovery of the disagreement will itself be defeated and can result in no justificatory difference for S1’s having D1 toward p. So, since the consequent of \((CV)\) has been weakened, condition (iii) from the antecedent of \((CV)\) is no longer required. Since \((CV*)\) does not give a summary epistemic evaluation, it doesn’t matter whether S1’s justificatory position toward p has changed in other ways since t. \((CV*)\) claims that at t’, S1 gains a defeater for S1’s justification for adopting D1 toward p. It may be that S1 is no longer justified in adopting D1 toward p even before t’ if S has gained other defeaters for adopting D1 toward p since t. Nevertheless, S1 still gains a new defeater for S1’s justification for adopting D1 toward p in meeting condition (ii). \((CV*)\) makes this explicit.

This modification of \((CV)\) gives the same verdict as \((CV)\) in typical cases, but avoids the problem cases outlined above (cases where one was justified in disbelieving conciliatory views of disagreement). In typical cases, the reason to make conciliation will be undefeated, so \((CV*)\) will give the same result as \((CV)\). In typical cases this higher-order defeating evidence is not possessed. So, \((CV*)\) gives the plausible verdicts given by \((CV)\) while avoiding the types of problem cases examined above. Further, this modification keeps the spirit of conciliatory views of disagreement. It allows for conciliation to be coherently made regarding first-order as well as higher-order claims at the same time. The resulting picture is much more complicated, but such issues often are quite complicated.
This alteration to (CV), however, is still quite significant. Defenses of conciliatory views typically take the discovery of a certain sort of disagreement to be a sufficient condition for making doxastic movement and thus fail to consider the impact that one’s higher-order evidence might have. For example, Feldman (2003b) defends the following principle:

[B] If (i) S has some good reasons (“internal markers”) to believe P, but (ii) also knows that other people have equally good reasons (“internal markers”) for believing things incompatible with P, and (iii) S has no reason to discount their reasons in favor of her own, then S is not justified in believing P.\textsuperscript{117}

According to this principle satisfying (i) – (iii) is sufficient for S to become no longer justified in believing p. However, as we have seen, S may possess higher-order evidence (in particular concerning the epistemic significance of disagreement) which when coupled with S’s satisfying (i) – (iii) does not have this justificatory result.

Elga (2007) also characterizes his conciliatory principle with the discovery of a certain disagreement acting as a sufficient condition for conciliation:

[Equal Weight View] Upon finding out that an advisor disagrees, your probability that you are right should equal your prior conditional probability that you would be right. Prior to what? Prior to your thinking through the disputed issue, and finding out what the advisor thinks of it. Conditional on what? On whatever you have learned about the circumstances of disagreement.\textsuperscript{118}

Here too the discovery of a certain sort of disagreement is given as a sufficient condition for altering your probability that you are correct. As a result, such a principle fails to

\textsuperscript{117} Feldman (2003b).
\textsuperscript{118} Elga (2007), 490.
account for cases where one has higher-order evidence which diminishes the epistemic impact of a discovery of a disagreement.

So, similar formulations of conciliatory views are susceptible to these kinds of higher-order considerations and thus are in tension with evidentialism. As we have seen, there are cases where one’s higher-order evidence can defeat the evidential impact of discovering a disagreement. Given this, conciliatory views which have it that the discovery of a certain kind of disagreement is a *sufficient* condition for conciliation are flawed (or are at least in conflict with our evidentialist assumption) – they fail to take into account the possibility of higher-order defeating evidence which is not itself evidence to discount one’s opponent.¹¹⁹

Elga responds to this problem by adopting a hybrid view, or a ‘partially conciliatory view’. On this view, the conciliatory principle simply does not apply to itself. He claims that views about the epistemic significance of disagreement must be dogmatic concerning their own correctness.¹²⁰ Thus, there are (at least) two *independent* epistemic principles in play: one for cases about disagreements, and one for all the other cases. While this move might help in dealing with our problem, it seems to be *ad hoc.*¹²¹ It also abandons parsimony unnecessarily. Turning to (CV*) allows for one to keep a consistent and universal theory of conciliation – it gives us a

¹¹⁹ Both principles above do allow for evidence to discount one’s opponent to affect the epistemic impact of the discovery of a disagreement.
¹²⁰ Elga (forthcoming), 8.
¹²¹ Weatherson (manuscript) also has this worry, as does Elga (forthcoming). Elga, however, concludes that such a move is necessary. Elga maintains that the seeming arbitrariness can be independently motivated since consistency demands it, however, as we have seen this is not correct.
principle whose application is independent of the content to which it is being applied which is desirable.

In addition, making Elga’s move does not seem to be sufficient for dealing with the problem at hand. There can be other higher-level evidence not directly pertaining to a view on disagreements which would seemingly have the same defeating effects. In particular, there are cases where one is justified in believing that the Uniqueness Thesis is false and that an extreme permissivism is correct in the case at hand.

Recall that the Uniqueness Thesis is the claim that any body of evidence justifies (or makes reasonable) at most one competitor doxastic attitude toward any given proposition. One way of denying the Uniqueness Thesis is to endorse what White (2005) has termed ‘extreme permissivism’. Recall that extreme permissivism is the claim that there are possible bodies of evidence that are such that they justify all competitor doxastic attitudes toward a proposition. According to extreme permissivism a body of evidence might be such that any doxastic attitude toward a proposition is as justified as any another.

If one were justified in believing that any doxastic attitude is as rational as any other for one to adopt toward p, given the evidence, then it seems that discovering that an epistemic peer disagrees regarding p would not epistemically require a concessive response with regard to p. In such a case the reason to make concessions has been defeated by one’s higher-order evidence – one’s higher-order evidence supports that, at

\[122\] The wording here is slightly different than White’s. See White (2005): 4
least in this case, there are no reasons to concede since no doxastic attitude toward \( p \) is any more rational than another given the evidence. If I am justified believing that I meet all of the antecedent conditions of (CV) and am also justified in believing that there is no doxastic attitude toward \( p \) which is more epistemically correct than any other, then here too it seems as though conciliation need not be made.\(^{123}\)

So, since there can be considerations which do not directly involve a view of the epistemic significance of disagreement which would also mitigate the epistemic impact of the discovery of a certain sort of disagreement, Elga’s move is simply not sufficient for salvaging conciliatory views. To solve these additional problems, Elga would have to extend the list of principle immune from the effects of disagreement or alter his account in some other way. Neither solution looks promising. In contrast, defending conciliatory views that do not give summary justificatory evaluations (i.e. as (CV*) does) handles these sorts of cases in addition to providing a unified account of conciliation. (CV*) is advantageous on both fronts. So, there are several reasons to prefer (CV*) to a hybrid account such as Elga’s in response to this problem.

4.5 Conciliatory Views and Certainty

Weatherson, however, has another worry concerning conciliatory views. Weatherson is concerned with cases where one is simply less than certain that a

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\(^{123}\) Assuming that in this case no doxastic attitude is more rational to adopt toward \( p \) than any other, it seems that one would be justified in making conciliation. After all, the evidence does not favor any one doxastic attitude. Nonetheless, in such a case one would also be justified in making no conciliation at all. So long as the latter is true, there is a more extensive problem for conciliatory views that Elga’s solution cannot solve.
conciliatory view of disagreement is correct. Thus, Weatherson attempts to extend Elga’s worry to cases where one is simply less than certain that (CV), or even (CV*), is correct though one is still justified in believing it. Whereas we have seen that being justified in disbelieving a conciliatory view can act as a defeater for a conciliatory view, Weatherson’s claim is that even just being justified in believing yet less than certain that a conciliatory view is correct can have this same kind of justificatory effect – that it would at least diminish how closely we ought to follow the prescriptions of the conciliatory view. Since it is safe to say that no one is (justifiably) certain that a conciliatory view is correct, if Weatherson is right then the prescriptions of any particular conciliatory view ought not to be followed precisely. This is a significant consequence.

What Weatherson claims is that one ought to hedge one’s bets and have modified concessive responses at best in the face of uncertainty. Thus, Weatherson claims to have found an inconsistency in conciliatory views since, according to Weatherson, to consistently apply such views one must be maximally confident that they are correct, but given the truth of such views, in realistic circumstances one cannot be maximally confident that they are correct. If nothing else, we are aware of disagreements regarding conciliatory views themselves. So, Weatherson claims that conciliatory views of disagreement inconsistently require both that one is maximally confident and that one is not maximally confident that such a view is correct.¹²⁴ In

¹²⁴ Weatherson (manuscript), 1.
requiring these inconsistent things, conciliatory views of disagreement are seen by Weatherson to be mistaken.

Let us try to make this objection clearer. Suppose that S is .8 justified in believing p and also .8 justified in believing that a particular conciliatory view of disagreement is correct. All that matters here is that S is less than certain that a conciliatory view of disagreement is correct (while still being justified in believing that it is correct), and this is quite plausible. S then discovers a disagreement of the relevant sort regarding p, and knows that the conciliatory view of disagreement that S is justified in believing has it that S’s justification for believing p is now only at .5. Even if this conciliatory view of disagreement is in fact correct, Weatherson claims that since S is only .8 justified in believing this conciliatory view, S’s justification for believing p will not diminish as much as the conciliatory view prescribes. Weatherson asserts that one’s resulting justification should be exactly what the conciliatory view prescribes only if one is certain that the conciliatory view is correct, which by hypothesis S is not. Since S is less than certain that the conciliatory view is correct S would be incoherent in following the conciliatory view’s prescriptions precisely, or so claims Weatherson.

Before evaluating Weatherson’s argument it is worth noting that (CV*) is immune from this alleged problem. Even if it is true that one ought to hedge one’s bets to deal with uncertainty, (CV*) allows for a lack of certainty to act as a partial
defeater\textsuperscript{125} for (CV*). If Weatherson is correct, then in a case where one is less than
certain that (CV*) is correct, one would have acquired a partial defeater for (CV*) and
the justificatory effect of the reason one gains by discovering the relevant disagreement
would be diminished by one’s uncertainty regarding (CV*). Thus, (CV*) does not require
one to be certain of (CV*) in order for it to have consistent application. So, whereas
Weatherson’s worry may have application to (CV), when conciliatory views of
disagreement are characterized by (CV*) such a problem cannot arise. (CV*) allows for
uncertainty to have a defeating effect.

However, it is still a worthwhile project to examine whether Weatherson is
correct regarding the effects of uncertainty. Although the correctness of Weatherson’s
reasoning does not address the truth of (CV*) it does have ramifications regarding the
application of (CV*). Weatherson is correct that we are not (justifiably) certain that
(CV*) is correct, so if this lack of certainty affects the justificatory effect of the discovery
of a disagreement then the verdicts given by (CV*) will not be what we thought them to
be. If Weatherson is correct, then the discovery of disagreement has a much more
modified justificatory impact on our doxastic attitudes than conciliatory views of
disagreement have claimed.

Is Weatherson correct here? I think that the best way to determine whether he
is correct is simply to evaluate Weatherson’s objection based upon the verdict his

\textsuperscript{125} I borrow this term from Bergmann (2005). As Bergmann uses the term (and as I am using the term
here), a partial defeater does not entirely eliminate the justificatory impact of a bit of evidence, but it
does diminish the justificatory effect.
reasoning would give in several cases. In what follows, I will examine applications of Weatherson’s objection to a practical case, as well as an epistemic case to show that it does not give the correct verdicts. Although Weatherson does not apply the considerations he puts forward to cases outside of the epistemic significance of disagreement, it is worthwhile to see what a parity of reasoning would suggest in other such cases.

First, it is worth noting that many prescriptive principles simply cannot be followed in the modified way which Weatherson’s objection would require. For instance, if I am a trolley driver and am only .8 justified in believing that I should take the left track of the upcoming fork, I am unable to take a course of action which follows this prescription to only 80%. In some cases, my options do not allow for a modified response to uncertainty. Nonetheless, it may be that such prescriptions should only be followed in this modified way when it is possible for one to do so.

Let us first examine a particular non-epistemic case. Suppose that I am .9 justified in believing\(^\text{126}\) that if I have $1000 and you have none, then I morally ought to give you $500. Suppose further that I know that I am in a situation that meets this antecedent condition and I want to do the moral thing. If Weatherson’s reasoning applies here, then the thing for me to do is to give you less than $500, since giving you $500 would only be appropriate if I were certain that this money sharing principle were

\(^{126}\) Again, the numbers here don’t matter. Weatherson’s claim is that any degree of justification short of certainty is sufficient to create problems. However, higher numbers do bring out more forcibly the error in Weatherson’s principle.
correct, which by hypothesis I am not. Nevertheless, it seems like the thing for me to do in this situation is to give you $500.

If it is .9 likely that I should give $500, then the disjunction of giving something or other, other than $500, is only .1 likely. That means that deciding to give any amount of money not equal to $500 is at most .1 likely to be correct. If I am aiming to give the morally correct amount, then it could not be rational for me to give an amount that I am justified in believing is at most .1 likely to be correct when I have an option that I am justified in believing is .9 likely to be correct. So, Weatherson’s reasoning gives the wrong verdict here – I should give $500.

The same is true for every case where one is justified in believing that a single option is greater than .5 likely to be correct. So long as one option is greater than .5 likely to be correct, it will be more likely to be correct than any disjunction of the competitor options. This carries over nicely to the epistemic point. Being greater than .5 likely, or having reasons which on balance support a proposition’s truth, is when I think a person is justified in believing a proposition. So, as long as you are justified in believing that a given doxastic attitude is greater than .5 likely to be the epistemically correct one, the likelihood that any other doxastic attitude is correct will be less than .5. But then if you have ‘choices’ and you are justified in believing that one is greater than .5 likely to be correct and that the others are not, how could going for a choice that is less than .5 likely to be correct be the rational/justified thing to do? It simply cannot. Uncertainty simply does not have this alleged consequence.
Consider now an epistemic case involving disagreement. Let us consider Feldman’s Dean on the Quad case.\textsuperscript{127, 128} Suppose you and I are standing by a window looking out onto the University’s quad. I am justified in believing that we are equally adept perceptually and that you are honest. I seem to see the Dean on the quad and believe that the Dean is on the quad, while you fail to have such a visual experience and disbelieve that the Dean is on the quad. Having revealed to me that you disbelieve this proposition, what happens to my justification for believing that the Dean is on the quad? Quite plausibly my justification for believing this proposition dwindles to .5 (or only slightly higher).\textsuperscript{129} Now, what if we add to the story that I am less than certain that such conciliation is required, though I am still justified in believing that such a view is correct? Adding this information does not seem to change the verdict that my justification for believing that the Dean is on the quad is .5 (or only slightly higher). According to Weatherson, this added information does have such an effect, so again Weatherson’s principle gives the wrong verdict.

The problem with Weatherson’s objection is that while it seems that one does get a defeater for the evidence acquired by the discovery of the relevant sort of disagreement when one is justified in disbelieving or suspending judgment regarding (CV) or (CV*), it does not seem that being less than certain of (CV) or (CV*), while still

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{127} See Feldman (2006b).
  \item \textsuperscript{128} Similar considerations would apply to any of the other paradigm cases that are used to motivate conciliatory views of disagreement.
  \item \textsuperscript{129} I think that it is plausible that my justification for this proposition is slightly higher since I think that I have better evidence of my evidence (seeming to see the Dean), than I do of you evidence (you having told me that you did not seem to see the Dean). However, I do not think that this detail matters here. Such an issue will be taken up in Chapter 6.
\end{itemize}
justified in believing it, has this same type of justificatory effect. So, the concern raised by Elga does not extend to cases where one is justified in believing (CV) or (CV*), but is less than certain of (CV) or (CV*). This is important since it affects what verdicts (CV*) will give in various cases. We have seen that so long as one is justified in believing (CV*), one does not even gain a partial defeater from being less than certain that (CV*) is correct.

4.6 Conclusion

So, none of the examined objections that claim that conciliatory views are self-defeating or generate inconsistencies when turned upon themselves have been found to be insurmountable for conciliatory views. We have seen that a modification was needed to our formulation of conciliatory views to keep it consistent with the verdicts of a plausible evidentialist account, but with this modification in hand, conciliatory views of disagreement escape these self-defeating charges unscathed.

Having defended (CV*) from some prominent objections, our attention will now be turned to supplementing (CV*). As mentioned earlier (CV) and (CV*) represent families of views regarding the epistemic significance of disagreement. (CV*) can be supplemented in various ways resulting in substantially different fuller accounts of the epistemic significance of disagreement. Species of (CV*) can differ as to when the defeater gained from the discovery of the relevant kind of disagreement is itself defeated, and in how strong the defeater gained from the discovery of such
disagreements is. In the next chapter we will examine several accounts of when the
defeater gained from the discovery of disagreement is itself defeated. In chapter 6 we
will then look at how much conciliation ought to be made in cases where the
antecedent of \((CV^*)\) is met. This will answer our question of how strong the defeater
gained from the discovery of disagreement is.
5.1 Introduction

Thus far we have seen some motivation for conciliatory views of disagreement and have found the (CV*) formulation of such views to be resilient to several prominent objections. Conciliatory views of disagreement, however, are diverse. (CV*) represents a family of views and can be supplemented in numerous ways resulting in conciliatory views that give drastically distinct verdicts when applied to particular cases of disagreement. Of particular significance, conciliatory views of disagreement can differ as to when the defeater gained via the discovery of disagreement is itself defeated, as well as, regarding how much conciliation is demanded in various cases of discovered disagreement.

In what follows I will be defending a conciliatory view which claims that the defeater acquired through the discovery of disagreement is itself defeated far less often than it is typically thought to be. In the following chapter I will defend a particular conciliatory view which makes a claim as to how much conciliation the discovery of disagreements of various varieties requires.

In this chapter I will examine two ways of supplementing (CV*) having to do with when conciliation is called for. First I will examine the charge that (CV*) is vacuously true – that it is true only because the defeater acquired via the discovery of a
disagreement is always itself defeated. The claim I will be concerned with here is whether considerations involving self-trust have it that the discovery of a disagreement never actually makes a justificatory difference. Roughly, the idea is that discovering that a peer disagrees with you regarding p, itself gives you a defeater-defeater for the defeater you acquire by becoming aware of the relevant kind of disagreement. So, on this view, whenever the antecedent of (CV*) is satisfied, one has acquired the relevant defeater-defeater which defeats the defeater gained from the discovery of a disagreement. As a result, such views have it that the discovery of a disagreement never in fact mandates conciliation. Second, I will examine the claim that sometimes the content, or some other feature of the disputed proposition itself (i.e. that it is obviously true or obviously false), has it that since the disagreement is about it you thereby have a defeater-defeater. On this view, some feature(s) of the disputed proposition affect whether the discovery of a disagreement regarding a proposition like that calls for any conciliation. I will argue against both of these ways of supplementing of (CV*). I will argue that (CV*) is not vacuously true in virtue of one always having a defeater-defeater for the defeater gained through the discovery of a disagreement, and

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130 As such, I am using the term ‘vacuously true’ in a nuanced way. On this view (CV*) is not vacuously true because it has a false antecedent, it is vacuously true because satisfying the antecedent conditions has the result that no conciliation is called for. I would use a different derogative term for this alleged feature of (CV*) if I could think of one that better described the alleged flaw with the principle. There is another sense in which (CV*) might be thought to be vacuously true. The antecedent conditions of (CV*) are hard to fulfill and one may doubt whether they are in fact ever fulfilled. In particular one may doubt that whether an individual is ever justified in believing that another individual is his epistemic peer. Admittedly, (CV*) concerns highly idealized cases – cases importantly unlike the cases of disagreement we typically encounter. However, it is of interest what is true regarding these idealized cases. This chapter is concerned with this question. Nevertheless, one desiderata of a theory of the epistemic significance of disagreement is to give verdicts in the cases of disagreement we actually encounter. In the following chapter I will attempt to extrapolate from what we have found regarding the idealized cases so that more can be said about the cases of disagreement that we typically encounter.
that the content of the disputed proposition, or other properties of that proposition (like its being obviously true or obviously false) do not give a party of a disagreement a defeater-defeater for the defeater gained through the discovery of a disagreement. Thus, our concern here is not with \((CV^*)\) itself, but with two ways of supplementing \((CV^*)\) that claim that conciliation needn’t be made in certain cases where the antecedent of \((CV^*)\) is met.

Recall that the defeater gained via the discovery of a disagreement can itself be defeated.\(^{131}\) \((CV^*)\) does not itself mandate conciliation even in cases where its antecedent conditions are satisfied. Some disagreements are epistemologically benign and do not make a justificatory difference. In Chapter 4 we saw that when an individual possesses certain higher-order evidence about the epistemic significance of disagreement or about the permissiveness of rationality, it is quite plausible that the acquired defeater is itself defeated. In addition, a party to a disagreement may have reasons to discount his opponent’s conclusion. That is, one may have undefeated reason to believe that his opponent has gotten it wrong on this particular occasion, even though in general his opponent is equally likely to get it right.

\(^{131}\) Defeaters can differ in their strength. See Bergmann (2005). Thus, it is possible that one get a defeater-defeater for the defeater gained from the discovery of the disagreement and yet conciliation is nonetheless called for. That is, it is possible that the defeater-defeater is not complete in its defeating effects. For the purposes of this chapter I will be using ‘defeater-defeater’ as short for a complete defeater-defeater (what Bergmann calls ‘full’ defeaters). As such, defeater-defeaters have the result that the disagreement does not make a justificatory difference for the parties of the disagreement. In the following chapter I will examine defeater-defeaters that are not complete in their defeating effect (what Bergmann calls ‘partial’ defeaters) since such defeaters concern the extent to which conciliation is called for rather than whether conciliation is called for.
Given condition (ii), S1 is justified in believing that S2 is a reasonable epistemic peer regarding p – that *in general* S2 is equally as likely to get it right, and that S2 is also likely to get it right. However, this is consistent with S1 having some reason to think that S2 has gotten it wrong regarding the disputed matter on this particular occasion. S1 can have a reason to think that *on this particular occasion*, S2 is not as likely to have gotten it right. S2 might not be as likely to get it right on this occasion due to some problem on this occasion with S2 (i.e. S2 is drunk, hasn’t slept for days, forgot his glasses, etc.), or due to the content of the disputed proposition (i.e. the dispute regards the talents of S2’s child, the attractiveness of S2’s spouse, the morality of S2’s occupation, etc.). Having such a reason is having a reason to think that it is one’s opponent who is mistaken, and thus gives one a defeater-defeater for the defeater gained via the discovery of the disagreement. Having such a reason breaks the symmetry that S1 was at least justified in believing existed between himself and S2. This break in symmetry can allow for S1’s justification for adopting D1 toward p to remain undiminished even after discovering a disagreement which meets the antecedent conditions of (CV*) with S2.

So, (CV*) does not *itself* mandate conciliation. However, in the absence of a plausible reason to think that the defeater gained by the discovery of the disagreement has itself been defeated, we should think that conciliation ought to be made. In what follows we will look at two candidates for when one has such a defeater-defeater, and I
will argue that both fail. If I am right, then it seems that conciliation will be called for in more cases than is typically thought.

5.2 Self-Trust

Although the examples given above allow for breaks in symmetry in uncontroversial ways, it has been claimed that such symmetry-breakers are much easier to come by. In particular, it has been argued that you gain a reason to discount your opponent simply in virtue of discovering that he disagrees with you. That is, even though you might be justified in believing that an epistemic peer of yours disagrees with you regarding p, the fact that you are justified in believing that your peer disagrees with you has been argued to be a sufficient condition for providing you with a defeater-defeater for the defeater acquired from the discovery of disagreement. According to this view, (CV*) is in a sense vacuously true and uninteresting, since in discovering a disagreement one always acquires a defeater-defeater for the defeater gained from the discovery of disagreement and conciliation is never actually called for. On this view, the satisfaction of antecedent condition (ii) provides one with a defeater-defeater such that the discovery of disagreement will never actually make a justificatory difference. Though such views accept (CV*), the way in which they supplement (CV*) makes them conciliatory views in name only.

Why think that the discovery of the relevant sort of disagreement itself would provide one with the relevant defeater-defeater? Such an argument can be made by
emphasizing the essential and ineliminable role that the first-person perspective plays in reasoning. The notion of self-trust has been utilized in arguments against the skeptic, and perhaps similar considerations can apply here regarding cases of disagreement.

For instance, Foley (2001) gives an account of self-trust in dealing with intellectual conflict. He maintains that while others have prima facie credibility, discovering that another individual disagrees with you regarding the truth of a proposition gives you a reason to discount their opinion (gives you a defeater for this credibility) in cases where you do not have any background information regarding the individual in question. Foley argues that in such a scenario you have reason to think that the other individual is unreliable. For Foley, it is trust in oneself that creates a presumption in favor of trusting others, so, discovering an individual disagrees with you defeats the presumption of trust in others when one has no information regarding the reliability of the other individual. Although nothing yet supports the supplementation of (CV*) under consideration, it might be thought that Foley’s account can be made stronger – that it can be strengthened to claim that one gets a reason to discount an opponent simply in virtue of the fact that he disagrees, even when he is justifiably believed to be an epistemic peer.\(^\text{132}\) Foley himself makes claims sympathetic to this. For instance, he claims, “I am entitled to make what I can of the conflict using the faculties,

\(^{132}\) Kelly (2005) seems at least sympathetic to such a view, and Enoch (manuscript) explicitly endorses and argues for it. Foley (2001) takes it that in such a case suspension of judgment is called for when discussing a tripartite taxonomy of doxastic attitudes (which Foley favors), so it seems that Foley is not sympathetic to the supplementation of (CV*) under consideration. However, in discussing disagreement in with a degree notion of belief, Foley seems to suggest that no doxastic movement is required unless one has a reason to think that one’s opponent is in an “especially good position”. See Foley (2001, 114). This later claim is friendly to the account under consideration.
procedures, and opinions I have confidence in, even if these faculties, procedures, and opinions are the very ones being challenged by others.”

The central idea here seems to be that the first-person perspective is ineliminable when it comes to forming and modifying one’s beliefs. After all, it is your belief that your opponent is an epistemic peer or your evidence which justifies you in so believing. So, you have no choice but to rely upon your own beliefs or evidence even in determining whether you ought to revise one of those beliefs. The need for such self-reliance might be thought to create a symmetry-breaker which would provide one with a defeater-defeater for the defeater acquired via the discovery of disagreement. After all, there is no similar reliance which you have upon your opponent’s beliefs or your opponent’s evidence.

Enoch (manuscript) worries that these considerations lead a conciliatory view (at least views that do not so supplement (CV*)) to violate an instantiation of the popular ‘ought-implies-can’ principle. He argues we simply cannot treat ourselves (i.e. are not able to treat ourselves) as such conciliatory views mandate, at least not ‘across the board’. He claims, for instance, that we can never subject all of our beliefs to

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134 Since the current supplementation of (CV*) is a conciliatory view in name only (since conciliation is never actually called for), I will not consider such a supplementation of (CV*) a conciliatory view of disagreement. I will reserve that terminology to refer to views which claim that the discovery of a disagreement actually does sometimes call for conciliation.
conciliatory considerations since in doing so we must at the same time be relying on our beliefs, nor can we ever eliminate ourselves or our own reflections from the process.\textsuperscript{135}

The first thing to point out here is that although ought-implies-can principles are compelling in ethical matters, the relevant ‘ought’ employed in epistemology does not seem to be subject to such a principle. For instance, suppose there is an individual who for some reason cannot believe p (perhaps believing p would cause him too much anguish and his psychology will not allow it). Nevertheless, if that individual has sufficient evidence for p, then that the individual epistemically ought to believe p – he is justified in believing p. The ‘ought’ with which we are concerned is perhaps better interpreted as a conditional ought. So, to say that an individual is justified in believing a proposition is to say that it would be epistemically appropriate for that individual to take on that belief – that belief is the doxastic attitude that the individual ought to have toward that proposition at that time, \textit{if (as a matter of fact) he is going to have any doxastic attitude toward that proposition at that time}. That is, if the subject is justified in believing p and cannot believe p, then he better not take on any other doxastic attitude toward p. So, while being justified in believing p means that one ought to believe p in some sense, this obligation is merely conditional – if one is going to have any doxastic attitude at all regarding p, then one ought to believe p, given that one is justified in believing p. So, if one is justified in believing p, then that individual has two

\textsuperscript{135} Enoch (manuscript, 13).
options: adopt belief toward \( p \) or adopt no doxastic attitude toward \( p \).\(^{136}\) So, the fact that one is unable to make the concessions that might be prescribed by \((CV^*)\) when not so supplemented does not give that individual a defeater-defeater for the defeater gained via the discovery of disagreement. Even if considerations involving self-trust have it that individuals cannot make the prescribed conciliation, this does not entail that that conciliation is thereby defeated.

Second, conciliatory views do not require that one has actually *formed* the kind of beliefs which Enoch references. What is important is that one is *justified in believing* these propositions (i.e. that \( S_2 \) is a reasonable epistemic peer regarding \( p \), that \( S_2 \) has adopted a competitor doxastic attitude toward \( p \), etc.), but as we have noted, our understanding of justification (i.e. propositional justification) does not require that the justified doxastic attitude actually be adopted by the individual in question. So, the beliefs which Enoch references need not actually be held by the individuals in question to meet the antecedent conditions of \((CV^*)\). Thus, we needn’t rely on our *beliefs* to follow a conciliatory view, we must simply rely upon what we are *justified in believing*. In following \((CV^*)\) we are relying on our *evidence*, not on our beliefs.\(^{137}\)

Nevertheless, one might maintain that a similar worry would apply to one’s evidence, and given \((ET)\), it *is* always a matter of your evidence when it comes to

\(^{136}\) This understanding of the normative implications of epistemic justification avoids potential problems involving being justified in believing an infinite number of propositions or simply avoiding doxastic clutter, as well as any concerns about the epistemic ought implying can. See Harman (1986) for doxastic clutter considerations, and Feldman (2000) for a similar understanding of the ought involved in epistemic justification.

\(^{137}\) There is the notable exception of the belief that is requisite for there to be a case of disagreement.
determining which doxastic attitude you are justified in adopting toward a proposition.

So, perhaps Enoch’s concern is best expressed as concerning reliance upon one’s own evidence – a reliance demanded by our assumption (ET).¹³⁸

The problem with applying these ideas to our discussion is that it is hard to see how an asymmetry develops from such considerations.¹³⁹ Although discovering the sort of disagreement under discussion does give you a reason to think that your opponent is mistaken, it also symmetrically gives you a reason to think that you are mistaken. After all, in being justified in believing that your opponent is an epistemic peer, your evidence equally supports that he got it right and you got it wrong as it does that you got it right and he got it wrong. In such cases it is your evidence (in particular your evidence about your peer and what he believes) that calls for conciliation.

Enoch disputes this claim that symmetry is preserved in such cases. He argues that your mere belief that p does not give you an asymmetrical reason to discount your opponent who disbelieves p, but the fact that you opponent disbelieves p, while it is the case that p (as you believe), does give you such a reason.¹⁴⁰ The idea seems to be that before discovering the disagreement you are justified in believing p and so you are then permitted to treat p as a fact and to consider the reliability of others with respect to their beliefs regarding p.¹⁴¹ Since you are permitted to treat p as a fact, discovering that your friend disbelieves p gives you a reason to think that it is he that has got it wrong.

¹³⁸ So, if there is any problem here, it is also a problem for evidentialism.
¹³⁹ Feldman (forthcoming) and Christensen (2007) each make a similar point.
¹⁴⁰ Enoch (manuscript, 33).
¹⁴¹ Enoch credits Raz (1998) for this line of thought.
To maintain otherwise, Enoch claims, is to ignore the ineliminable role of the first-person perspective.

It is hard to see how this could be the right way of thinking about things. Enoch agrees that your belief that p and your epistemic peer’s disbelief that p are symmetrically balanced. But if so, then what reason do you have to continue to treat p as a fact to assess your opponent’s reliability when your discovery of this disagreement defeats the reason you have to believe p in the first place? Enoch insists that the fact that p should not be discounted as evidence simply because you believe it, since doing so would ignore the ineliminability of your beliefs and lead to skepticism. However, I am not claiming that it is the fact that you believe p which makes the fact that p no longer evidence for you, rather it is the fact that you now have a defeater for your belief that p and are no longer justified in believing that p is the case which has the result that you ought not treat p as a fact. As discussed in Chapter 3, if you are justified in believing that you are a reasonable individual and believe p, then you have evidence that p is true. Plausibly this can permit you in treating p as a fact. However, in discovering the relevant sort of disagreement you have acquired a defeater for treating p as a fact. You have gained symmetrical evidence that p is not a fact. As such, you cannot use as a reason to discount your opponent that he disbelieves p while p is a fact. Since you are no longer justified in believing p, you ought not treat p as a fact.

But if self-trust provides a successful response to the skeptic, can’t it also provide such a response to the challenge of peer disagreement? I don’t think so. Even if self-
trust provides a successful response to the skeptic, it does not provide a successful response to cases of peer disagreement. Both the skeptic and the disagreeing peer challenge your beliefs. However, the disagreeing peer, but not the skeptic, provides you with evidence that your beliefs actually are mistaken. The skeptic raises the possibility that you are mistaken by bringing up skeptical hypotheses. Such skeptical hypotheses are such that the world is radically different than we believe, though things seem to be the way we believe them to be. However, in bringing up these skeptical hypotheses the skeptic does not give you any reason to think that you are actually mistaken about the external world. The skeptic gives you no reason to believe that you in fact are a radically deceived brain-in-a-vat or that you are dreaming. The skeptic merely raises these possibilities.

In contrast, when you discover that a reasonable epistemic peer regarding p disagrees with you regarding p, you do gain evidence that you have actually made a mistake about p. As we have seen, such a discovery gives you higher-order evidence which affects the extent to which you are justified in believing the disputed proposition. Self-trust may be a legitimate response to challenges that do not provide evidence that you are actually mistaken, but it cannot be a successful response to challenges that provide evidence that you are in fact mistaken – particularly in cases where the evidence that you are mistaken is as strong as the evidence that you are not mistaken\textsuperscript{142}. As such, there is an important difference between the challenges provided

\textsuperscript{142} In Chapter 3 we saw why it is plausible that this is the case.
by the skeptic and the disagreeing peer – a difference that prevents self-trust from providing the requisite defeater-defeater even if self-trust provides a legitimate response to the skeptic.¹⁴³

Finally, let us consider a thought experiment which adds plausibility to the claim that self-trust does not provide the relevant defeater-defeater. Suppose there are two known reasonable epistemic peers regarding p, Smith and Jones, who both agree that p is false. They are then each given a pill to ingest and are told beforehand that after ingesting the pill one will be given irresistible evidence that supports p (and thus will believe p) and one will be given irresistible evidence against p (and thus will disbelieve p). Both will adopt these doxastic attitudes toward p with equal confidence and both will forget what they did believe regarding p before ingesting the pill. Though they will forget what they did believe regarding p, they will believe that they ingested the pill as well as what they were told about the effects of the pill beforehand. Although it would plausibly be irrational to ingest the pill, we can suppose that neither Smith nor Jones has a choice in the matter – they are simply informed as to what will happen to them.

¹⁴³ This explanation of when one is entitled to self-trust also explains why it is that some skeptical challenges result in it being inappropriate to trust one’s own opinions. The skeptic sometimes succeeds in rendering our external world beliefs unjustified, and higher-order evidence can explain this. Even if the skeptic actually fails to provide one with any evidence that they have actually misevaluated the evidence, if the skeptical challenge manages to convince our subject that she has misevaluated the evidence, she then would get higher-order evidence that she has misjudged the evidence. As a reasonable judge of the evidence, she has then judged that her evidence does not support the relevant external world propositions. As such, she now has higher-order evidence that her experiences, etc. do not in fact support those external world propositions. This is misleading higher-order evidence, but it is higher-order evidence nonetheless, and it can have the result that our subject is no longer justified in believing these external world propositions.
Having ingested the pill, Smith comes to believe \( p \) and Jones continues to disbelieve \( p \).

They then discover their disagreement. What doxastic attitude should Smith adopt toward \( p \)? It seems clear that Smith should suspend judgment regarding \( p \), even though he currently believes it. It is very difficult to see how any considerations involving self-trust give the result that Smith should ‘stick to his guns’ and continue believing \( p \). Smith knows that he has a fifty percent chance of having it right regarding \( p \), and that calls for suspension of judgment toward \( p \). This is true even if Smith is not able to suspend judgment regarding \( p \) and even if he must rely on his own evidence. The higher-order evidence that Smith and Jones have regarding the nature of the irresistible bodies of evidence that they each now possess (that each body of evidence is as likely to be misleading as not), has the justificatory effect that their total bodies of evidence do not support the doxastic attitudes supported by their individual irresistible bodies of evidence – each should suspend regarding \( p \).

Although such a case is convoluted, it parallels what happens in the idealized cases of peer disagreement under consideration. In discovering such a disagreement, one gains higher-order evidence about what the shared evidence supports. In both cases one has a body of (first-order) evidence and a belief based on that evidence, and in both cases one has higher-order evidence about the quality and character of that first-order evidence. If self-trust is insufficient to allow one to stick to one’s guns in the pill case, it seems that it is also insufficient to do so in cases of peer disagreement. So, it seems that considerations involving self-trust do not provide one with a reason to
discount a disagreeing party and thus they do not provide one with the relevant
defeater-defeaters which would render \((CV^*)\) vacuously true.

5.3 Conciliation and the Obvious

Another way in which it has been claimed that one gains a defeater-defeater for
the defeater gained via the discovery of the disagreement concerns the very substance
of the disagreement. For instance, some find it implausible that discovering a
disagreement of the relevant kind regarding obviously true or obviously false
propositions would diminish the justification one had for believing these propositions,
even in the slightest (even apart from how much conciliation is called for, which we will
consider in the following chapter). It seems to some that the epistemic status of such
doxastic attitudes is unaffected by the discovery of disagreement concerning such
propositions. Thus, some have claimed that one acquires a defeater-defeater for the
defeater gained via the discovery of a disagreement simply in virtue of the content of
that disagreement or some feature of that content. Thus, some claim that discovering
that a peer disbelieves an obvious truth or believes an obvious falsehood provides one
with a relevant defeater-defeater and has the result that no justificatory conciliation is
to be made in such cases.

A consistent supplementation of \((CV^*)\) has it that discovering a disagreement
regarding such propositions gives one a defeater-defeater and thus one’s justification
for adopting the doxastic attitude one has toward the disputed proposition need not
diminish. Defending this line, Sosa claims, “[it] seems to me conclusive on the general issue of whether you can demote an opponent based essentially on the substance of your disagreement, even when you have no independent reason for doing so” [italics his].

Fumerton echoes this sentiment in claiming the following regarding such disagreements,

“[t]o convince myself that he is really disagreeing with me [concerning such propositions] I’d have to convince myself that he is crazy. And as soon as I become convinced that he is crazy I won’t and shouldn’t pay any attention to what he believes. My justification for believing that he has lost his mind neutralizes whatever epistemic significance his disagreement might otherwise have had.”

Both Sosa and Fumerton maintain that some property of the very proposition under dispute can at least sometimes allow one to be epistemically unmoved.

The claim being made here is that the very fact that one’s opponent believes or disbelieves a certain type of proposition can provide one with a desired defeater-defeater.

Although such an account is a consistent supplementation of (CV*), I think that it is misguided, and that a better supplementation of (CV*) is available. I think that the defender of (CV*) should simply maintain that the justification S1 had in adopting D1 toward p can diminish upon the discovery of a disagreement even when S1 is justified in believing a reasonable epistemic peer regarding p disbelieves a proposition like that 2 +

144 Sosa (forthcoming) p. 12.
145 Fumerton (forthcoming) p. 4.
146 Christensen (2007), Elga (2007), and Lackey (forthcoming a) and (forthcoming b) are several other examples.
2 = 4, that triangles have three sides, that it is raining (while both parties are standing outside in a downpour), or when S1 is justified in believing that such a peer believes a proposition like that circles have four sides, that 1 is greater than 2, or that S1 has 17 arms (where S1 is a normal human adult). It seems that no such property of the disputed proposition itself ever provides one with a reason to discount one’s opponent. If so, then one does not acquire a relevant defeater-defeater simply in virtue of which proposition is under dispute and without another defeater-defeater, conciliation will be called for in such cases of disagreement.

In what follows I will argue that such features of the disputed proposition never provide one with a relevant defeater-defeater, even when the proposition under dispute is an obvious proposition\(^{147}\). I will examine several ways in which one might think that discovering a disagreement regarding an obvious proposition would provide one with a reason to discount one’s opponent, and argue that none of them are satisfactory. I will then argue that this is not a problematic result for (CV*). I will argue that even if this is the best way to fill out a conciliatory view of disagreement (a view of disagreement incorporating (CV*)), that such a view is still plausible – that cases of disagreement concerning obvious propositions do not present counterexamples to such an account.

Let’s first see why it might seem that some property of the disputed proposition provides one with a defeater-defeater. For simplicity sake, let’s focus in particular on

\(^{147}\) By an ‘obvious proposition’ I mean either a proposition that is obviously true or a proposition that is obviously false.
the proposition that \(2 + 2 = 4\). Why might it be that discovering that an individual whom you are justified in believing is your epistemic peer disbelieves that \(2 + 2 = 4\) would give you a defeater-defeater, rendering your belief that \(2 + 2 = 4\) no less justified than it was before you discovered the disagreement?

One possibility is that \(2 + 2 = 4\) is a necessary truth. It couldn’t possibly be false that \(2 + 2 = 4\). So, might not this fact provide you with a defeater-defeater and allow for the justification of your belief that \(2 + 2 = 4\) to be undiminished? No. A negative answer to this question can be seen to be correct by considering disagreements concerning other necessary truths. Disagreements concerning a great number of propositions in philosophy regard necessary truths, yet this property of the disputed proposition does not on its own provide one with a defeater-defeater and allow for the discovery of the disagreement to make no justificatory difference. Philosophical claims about the nature of epistemic justification, material composition, and the relation between free will and responsibility, to name just a few, are if true, plausibly necessarily true. However, it does not seem that the fact that such propositions are necessary truths provides their proponents with a relevant defeater-defeater in the face of disagreement. On the contrary, disagreements concerning such propositions are some of the paradigm cases for when conciliation is called for. So, the modal security of the disputed proposition does not suffice to provide one with a relevant defeater-defeater.

Another possibility is that \(2 + 2 = 4\) is not only a necessary truth but is also believed by its proponents to be a necessary truth. It is not just that \(2 + 2 = 4\) is a
necessary truth, but you also take it to be a necessary truth. Perhaps if one takes the disputed proposition to be a necessary truth (or necessary falsehood) one thereby gets a defeater-defeater and needn’t be epistemically affected by the discovery of the disagreement. However, the considerations explored above apply here as well.

Propositions concerning the philosophical topics mentioned above are also taken to be necessary truths (or necessary falsehoods) by their proponents (or opponents), yet as we have seen, such cases seem to be the paradigm cases of where conciliation is called for. Parties from various sides of the above debates maintain that their analysis is not just true, but necessarily true and that their opponents’ view is not just false, but necessarily false. So, adding that one believes the disputed proposition in question to be a necessary truth or necessary falsehood also seems to fail to provide one with such a defeater-defeater.

In addition, some of the disagreements which are claimed to provide one with a defeater-defeater due to their obviousness concern propositions that are neither necessary truths (or necessary falsehoods) nor believed to be necessary truths (or believed to be necessary falsehoods). For instance, disagreements concerning whether it is raining outside (while both parties are standing outside in a downpour) or disagreements regarding how many people are seated at the small dinner table one is
currently seated at all concern contingent propositions, yet those who resist conciliation in the cases examined above also resist it in such cases.\textsuperscript{148}

This fact points to a different answer to our question. Another reason why discovering a peer who disagrees regarding the truth of $2 + 2 = 4$ can provide you with a defeater-defeater concerns the \textit{epistemic standing} you are in with respect to this proposition. Unlike other necessary truths (i.e. the philosophical necessary truths mentioned above), that $2 + 2 = 4$ seems to be about as close to being beyond debate as possible. The evidence in favor of $2 + 2 = 4$ seems to be much greater than the evidence for any theory of material constitution for example. Further, the contingent propositions mentioned above are such that the typical individual is in a \textit{very strong} epistemic position regarding them as well. If you are a reliable individual standing in a downpour, then your evidence very strongly supports that it is raining – it is something that you strongly doubt that you are mistaken about.

However, it is hard to see how the \textit{amount} of evidence that one has in favor of a proposition or the \textit{degree} to which that evidence supports that proposition itself affects whether one acquires a defeater-defeater in discovering a disagreement of the relevant kind regarding that proposition. According to (CV*), in discovering the disagreement with S2, S1 has acquired a defeater – S1 has acquired a reason to think that the shared evidence regarding p does not in fact support what S1 thought. Depending upon which evidential story one accepted from Chapter 3, the defeater in question will either be an

\textsuperscript{148} Lackey (forthcoming a) and (forthcoming b) in particular utilizes cases concerning contingent propositions to make her case.
undercutting defeater (of one’s first-order evidence) or a rebutting defeater (for one’s requisite linking evidence).

Either way, what gets defeated for S1 in discovering the disagreement regarding p is the *connection* between the shared evidence E and the disputed proposition p. However, the effectiveness of such a defeater is not dependent on the size or strength of E – it is not dependent on how well E actually supports p. We have seen that in discovering the disagreement one can become justified in suspending judgment as to what E supports (and to what degree) – that the support that E gave to p can be neutralized. Further, we have seen that this is so *regardless of how much support E gives to p*. So, it seems that the strength of one’s justification for believing a proposition cannot make it immune from defeaters since the defeater gained from discovering the disagreement attacks the *connection* between one’s evidence and the disputed proposition. Given this, having a very strong epistemic position toward the disputed proposition does not provide one with a relevant defeater-defeater. So, there does not appear to be any epistemically relevant feature of obvious propositions which would make it such that discovering a disagreement regarding one of them would provide one with a defeater-defeater and allow one justification for believing the disputed proposition to remain unchanged.

An additional way in which the substance of a disagreement may remove the need to make conciliation claims that (CV*)’s antecedent conditions are not met in cases

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149 Here we can recall Conee and Feldman’s Logic TA example. In this case the Logic student was justified in suspending judgment regarding what his evidence (or evidence proper) *entailed*. 
of disagreement involving obvious propositions. On this account, one does not gain a
defeater-defeater in becoming aware of a disagreement regarding an obvious
proposition, but (CV*) is vacuously true in such cases since its antecedent is false. In
particular, it can be thought that an individual is no longer justified in believing that his
opponent is a reasonable epistemic peer regarding p, when the opponent disagrees
regarding an obvious proposition – that one cannot simultaneously be justified in
believing that an individual is both a reasonable epistemic peer regarding p and that he
disagrees regarding p when p is an obvious proposition. This seems to be what
Fumerton has in mind in the quoted passage above.

The problem with this take is that epistemic peerhood is to be assessed
independently of one's take on the disputed issue. Roughly, two individuals are
epistemic peers when they are equally likely to get a matter right\(^{150}\) – whether an
individual is likely to be right about the matter is antecedent to the discovery of the
disagreement. But if so, then the very matter at hand should not be used to evaluate
whether each is as likely to be right on the matter. How likely you are to be correct on a
matter is independent of what you think about the matter. So, the epistemic position
that one is in regarding whether another is an epistemic peer is 'locked in' before the
discovery of the disagreement. Peerhood is granted according to how likely the other
individual is to be right about p, and that individual's conclusion regarding p does not

\(^{150}\) Being 'equally likely to get it right' was our informal characterization of epistemic peers. Recall that
epistemic peers are equal in reasoning ability, intelligence, intellectual virtues, and in the evidence,
background information and concepts they possess. These particular conditions will be considered below.
factor into that assessment. As such, discovering the disagreement, even if it is regarding an obvious proposition, does not affect whether one is justified in believing that the other is his epistemic peer.

This point is perhaps easier to see if we consider one’s evidence for one’s interlocutor’s peerhood credentials: being equal in evidence, intellectual ability, and intellectual virtue. The fact of disagreement itself does not give one any evidence that one’s interlocutor’s evidence regarding the disputed proposition is different or not as good as one’s own, that one’s interlocutor is less intelligent or that he or she has been less intellectually virtuous. So, it does not seem plausible to deny that it is possible for the antecedent conditions of \((CV^*)\) are met in cases of disagreements involving obvious propositions.

Alternatively, one might maintain that though discovering that another disbelieves that \(2+2=4\) does not give you evidence that he is not your peer, it might provide you with another defeater-defeater which would take away the need to make conciliation. For instance, we have already seen that being justified in believing that your opponent is drunk or hasn’t slept for days is a defeater-defeater that at least weakens the effect of the reason gained from discovering the disagreement. It might be

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151 For more on the independent assessment of peerhood see Christensen (2007) and (forthcoming).
152 Although my characterization of an epistemic peer differs slightly from Elga’s, this point mirrors Elga’s claim that it is the prior probabilities that are relevant here. Discovering a disagreement, even a disagreement regarding an obvious proposition, will not affect one’s prior probabilities regarding how likely that individual is to get it right.
that discovering that your peer disbelieves that 2+2=4 justifies you in believing that he is drunk, hasn’t slept for days, or something along those lines.

Although this line of response does seem initially plausible, there are several worries which render this response untenable. First, there is a question as to why one would gain this reason in these cases of disagreement and not the cases of disagreement where conciliation is uncontroversially thought to be called for. It does not seem that the degree to which one is surprised by his opponent’s doxastic attitude toward the proposition in question justifies him in believing that his opponent is drunk or malfunctioning in some way. So, there doesn’t appear to be sufficient motivation for thinking that one gets such a reason in these cases of disagreement.

Second, it is important to examine these extreme disagreements from both of the relevant vantage points: from both the vantage point of the correct peer and the vantage point of the severely malfunctioning incorrect peer. It does not seem plausible that the malfunctioning peer also becomes justified in believing that his opponent is drunk or malfunctioning in some way on such an occasion so as to be justified in making no conciliation. After all, it is quite intuitive that the malfunctioning peer is required to make significant conciliation upon discovering the disagreeing party. But, if this is so, then considerations of symmetry make it hard to see why the non-malfunctioning peer would get such a reason while the malfunctioning peer would fail to get such a reason (or as strong a reason). So, it does not seem that one gets a defeater-defeater of this sort either when one discovers a disagreement regarding an obvious proposition.
Nevertheless, it may be that quite often when one does discover that an individual that one was justified in believing to be a reasonable epistemic peer on the matter disagrees regarding an obvious proposition one also gains evidence independent from the mere fact of disagreement that the interlocutor is malfunctioning. In fact, the easiest cases to imagine where an individual whom you are justified in believing is equally likely to get it right disbelieves that 2+2=4 are also cases where he is slurring his speech, stumbling around, has his eyes crossed, has a sarcastic tone, or something similar. In such cases you would have a reason to discount his conclusion, but it is important to note that this reason would not come simply from the mere fact of disagreement (the fact that the interlocutor disbelieves p), it would come from other information that was gained about the interlocutor in the process of discovering the disagreement. Since one could have gained this information without discovering his opinion on the disputed issue, and one could have discovered his opinion on the disputed issue without gaining this additional information, this information about the interlocutor is distinct from the mere fact of disagreement. Perhaps the resistance to making conciliation in extreme disagreements comes from thinking about such cases, but in such cases we have independent reasons to avoid making conciliation.

Given all of this, it seems that the mere fact of disagreement cannot provide one with a defeater-defeater eliminating the need to make conciliation in cases regarding ‘obvious’ propositions. Without a plausible alternative account as to how one gains a
defeater-defeater in such cases, it seems that for theoretical reasons conciliation is called for even in these extreme cases of disagreement.

5.4 Counterexample or Confirmation?

As we have seen, however, many find the view that one’s justification for believing obvious propositions can diminish upon discovering a certain sort of disagreement quite implausible. In what follows I will argue that such a consequence is in fact not a liability. In fact, I will argue that such a consequence is actually an asset to a conciliatory view of disagreement.

To see this, let us imagine a situation where there are two individuals who have always been isolated from any other rational beings. Suppose that these two individuals are justified in believing that they are epistemic peers and both consider the proposition that $2 + 2 = 4$. Suppose that one, S1, believes it, and the other, S2, disbelieves it. Once S1 discovers that S2 disagrees, it seems that his justification for believing that $2 + 2 = 4$ has diminished. That is, it seems that he has acquired an undefeated defeater for his justification for believing that $2 + 2 = 4$. This does not seem to be an implausible result at all. Such a case is not that unlike Christensen’s restaurant check case explored in earlier chapters (a paradigm example used to motivate conciliatory views), save that the math is simpler. In such cases we can be sure that someone is cognitively malfunctioning, but given the set up of the disagreement, neither individual has more reason to think that it is the other who is the malfunctioning one.
Considering such a case also makes it apparent why if a typical individual discovered an epistemic peer who disbelieved that $2 + 2 = 4$ the degree to which he is justified in believing this proposition would not diminish much, or perhaps even at all. Apart from the isolated case examined above, we have discovered numerous other peers and even experts who do believe that $2 + 2 = 4$. Such an overwhelming consensus gives us reason to think that a solitary epistemic peer who disbelieves this proposition has made a mistake – it gives us a defeater-defeater *independent of the obviousness of the disputed proposition. It is of course open to the defender of (CV*) to claim that the degree to which he is justified in believing the proposition that $2 + 2 = 4$ still diminishes a little when one discovers such a disagreement, but we have seen resources available which make it possible to avoid making even this concession. Consensus seems to be able to diminish if not entirely defeat the epistemic effects of disagreement. When one is aware that the vast majority of reasonable evaluators of evidence have evaluated the evidence in the same way, one has good reason to think that it is his or her opponent which is mistaken on this issue. So agreement can provide a reason to discount one’s opponent’s conclusion. In many cases of extreme disagreements we do have consensus to appeal to, so (CV*) needn’t call for conciliation.

However, what has been said above does not straightforwardly apply to obvious contingent propositions. If I am standing in a downpour with my friend and discover that he disbelieves that it is raining, I may not have a consensus to appeal to – we may be the only two individuals outdoors. Does the supplementation of (CV*) which I am
advocating mandate that I become less justified in believing that it is raining upon
discovering our disagreement?

Yes, it does. However, it is hard to see why this is a problematic consequence.
In such a situation, one of us is drastically misinterpreting the shared evidence. It might
be tempting to think that it is my friend, but nothing from my perspective allows me to
conclude this. I do not have any evidence which points to it being my friend who is
malfunctioning rather than me. Recall that in being justified in believing that my friend
is an epistemic peer I am justified in believing that he is as likely to get it right as I am
and that we share the same evidence.

To see this, consider a case of disagreement examined from the third-person
point of view. Suppose that I am told that there are two individuals that are epistemic
peers in the same location, one of whom believes it is raining and the other of whom
disbelieves this.¹⁵³ What epistemic affect does learning of these facts have on me with
respect to which doxastic attitude I should have regarding the proposition that it is
raining where the peers are located?

It seems clear that I ought to suspend judgment on this issue. My evidence
supports that each peer is equally likely to get it right, and that they share the same
evidence. I have nothing in my evidence that distinguishes between the reports in an
epistemically relevant way. This is so, even though the evidence that they share in fact

¹⁵³ This parallels a thought experiment given by Conee (forthcomingb).
*strongly favors* one of their positions. Given all of this information, my evidential position is such that I cannot tell what the first-order evidence supports.

Described from the third-person perspective this result is uncontroversial. However, we should find the same epistemic result if the story is supplemented with my finding out that I am one of the disputing parties. As we have seen above, the fact that I have adopted a certain doxastic attitude toward the disputed proposition does not give me a reason to stay put. We have found no reason to privilege my own conclusion simply because it is my own. But if my point of view does not make an epistemic difference, then what I am justified in believing in this case will be the same whether I am a party of the dispute or not. As we have seen, it is clear that if I am the individual at home then I should suspend judgment, so if what I have said above is also correct, I should also be suspending judgment when I am one of the disputing parties.\(^{154}\) Even in a case where I am one of the disputing parties, my evidence supports suspending judgment regarding what the first-order evidence supports. As such, my evidential position regarding that it is raining is the same regardless of which role I occupy in the story above.

\(^{154}\) This is actually not quite right, or at least it typically is not the case. Typically one’s evidence will not be symmetrical in the way imagined in the third-person case. Typically one will possess ‘personal information’ (this is Lackey’s [forthcominga, and forthcomingb] terminology) about oneself that one does not have about one’s opponent. That is, typically one will be more justified in believing that one is being sincere, that one is not drunk, etc. than one is justified in believing these things about one’s opponent. This asymmetry can allow for more modest concessions to be made. More on this in the following chapter, where the amount of conciliation required is our focus.
Similar considerations can apply to propositions that are about one’s own mental states, such as that I am now in pain. Such propositions too, have been thought to be immune from epistemic worries concerning disagreement.\textsuperscript{155} It seems that such propositions about one’s own mental states one is (at least often) ‘automatically’ provided with a reason to discount the disagreeing peer’s conclusion. That is, it seems that often, if not always, one will have good reason to prefer one’s own assessment of such propositions due to the important privileged perspective one has regarding them. I justifiably find myself in a better epistemic position to judge the truth of these propositions. However, if this is so, then the antecedent of (CV*) is not satisfied and no precisification of (CV*) will call for conciliation – one is not justified in believing that the disagreeing party is an epistemic peer on such matters.

Nonetheless, this need not be so. It is at least possible that I become justified in believing that another individual’s epistemic position regarding such a matter is just as good as my own. In such a case, discovering a disagreement with such an individual concerning such a proposition would have epistemic significance – it would make a justificatory difference – so, it seems that even these propositions about one’s own mental states are not guaranteed to be in the clear. Even if no other individual is ever actually in as good of an epistemic position regarding my mental states as I am, it seems that I could nonetheless be justified in believing that another individual was in such a position. If so, the above argument will go through here as well. So, even a discovery of

\textsuperscript{155} See Sosa (forthcoming).
a disagreement concerning one’s own mental states can be such that it diminishes the justification one has for adopting the doxastic attitude one has towards such propositions.

This intuition can be further built up by considering a case where one has encountered numerous peers who disbelieve a seemingly obviously true proposition or believe a seemingly obviously false proposition. Even if one is hesitant to agree that conciliation should be made when one encounters a solitary peer who disagrees regarding an obvious proposition, it seems clear that at least some conciliation should be made in cases were one has encountered numerous independent peers who so disagreed. Suppose that it seems to me that I am standing in a downpour (which as a matter of fact I am), but I discover that 100 of my epistemic peers all in my near vicinity have independently concluded that it is not raining outside. In this situation it seems clear that I should become much less confident that it is raining. In such a situation it is much more likely that I am mistaken than that all of my peers are mistaken. However, the best explanation of this fact is that the discovery of each independent peer’s conclusion itself made some difference to what I ought to believe.\textsuperscript{156} This gives us further reason to think that conciliation ought to be made in cases of disagreement even when the disputed proposition is (or was) obvious.

One final reason why one should think that conciliation should be made regarding obvious propositions regards examining again the disagreement from the

\textsuperscript{156} Kelly (forthcoming) makes this point several times though not in connection to cases of extreme disagreement.
perspective of the malfunctioning party. In the cases of disagreement regarding an obvious proposition, one of the disputants is grossly malfunctioning or misinterpreting the evidence. Presumably, we think that the malfunctioning individual becomes less justified in adopting the doxastic attitude he has adopted toward the obvious proposition once he discovers the disagreement. That is, it seems that the individual who believes that it is sunny outside while standing in a downpour seemingly becomes less justified in so believing once he discovers that his peer believes that it is raining and not sunny. However, if this is granted, then it becomes very hard to see how the non-malfunctioning party can remain unaffected in terms of his justification. From each party’s point of view, the cases are symmetrical. To have it that one becomes less justified while the other does not is to reject a strong internalist intuition – the intuition that justification is determined by what one has some sort of access to. So, internalists at least have further reason to think that conciliation is to be made even when the disagreement concerns an obvious proposition.

5.5 Conclusion

We have seen several ways in which a conciliatory view might supplement (CV*). We have found that considerations concerning self-trust do not render (CV*) vacuously true by making it the case that one always has a defeater-defeater which neutralizes any justificatory impact that the discovery of a disagreement might have. We have also seen that there are any plausible properties of the disputed proposition that provide

157 It may be that things do not seem relevantly similar to the two parties, but so long as our subject is justified in believing that they do, then the antecedent conditions of (CV*) will be met.
one with such a defeater-defeater either. As a result, the correct conciliatory view has it that S1’s justification for adopting D1 toward p will diminish upon the discovery of disagreement much more frequently than might have been thought. Nonetheless, I have argued that this is not a liability, and that it is in fact an asset of such a view. To the matter of how much conciliation is to be made we now turn.
Chapter 6: How Much Conciliation?

6.1 Introduction

Having motivated and defended a conciliatory view of disagreement, it is time to say more about which conciliatory view of disagreement is correct. In the last chapter we saw that several ways of filling out a conciliatory view were mistaken and that conciliation can be called for in more cases of disagreement than is typically thought. With this understanding of when conciliation is called for in hand, our attention now turns to how much conciliation is epistemically required in the cases of disagreement currently under discussion. After discussing how much conciliation is epistemically required in idealized conditions, our attention will turn to examining cases of disagreement that do not meet these idealized antecedent conditions. Although I doubt that there are any interesting true and universal principles concerning such cases of disagreement, I do think that what we will see regarding the idealized cases of disagreement allows us to say something about how much conciliation is to be made in the everyday disagreement as well.

6.2 Idealized Symmetrical Disagreement

Thus far, we have been concerned with \((CV^*)\) and ways in which a conciliatory view may supplement \((CV^*)\). \((CV^*)\) does not give a summary epistemic evaluation – it doesn’t make a claim as to how much the discovery of the disagreement affects S1’s justification
for believing p. In this section we will examine how much conciliation such a discovery epistemically requires of S1. However, before we can give such a summary epistemic evaluation, we must further idealize and supplement its antecedent conditions.

The antecedent conditions that must be met for (CV*) to apply are already quite idealized:

(i) S1 must have justifiably adopted a doxastic attitude D1 toward p at t,

and

(ii) S1 must become justified in believing at a later time t’ that an individual S2 is a reasonable epistemic peer regarding p and has adopted a competitor doxastic attitude D2 toward p.

In particular, condition (ii) is a very difficult condition to meet. Recall that epistemic peers are equal in reasoning ability, intelligence, intellectual virtues, and in the evidence, background information and concepts they possess. So, to meet condition (ii), S1 must be justified in believing that S2 is his evidential equal, his equal in terms of epistemic agency, and his equal in terms of concept possession.

Even though these conditions constitute a highly idealized scenario, the scenario must become a little more idealized before we can give a summary epistemic evaluation with universal application – before we can say precisely how S1’s justification for believing p has changed due to the discovery of the disagreement. Two antecedent
conditions were extant in (CV) but were dropped out of (CV*) since (CV*), unlike (CV),
does not give a summary epistemic evaluation:

(iii) S1 has no undefeated reason to discount S2’s conclusion at t’, and

(iv) S1 must have gained no other evidence affecting his justification for
believing p since t.

Condition (iii) makes sure that S1 does not possess a defeater-defeater for the defeater
(CV*) tells us is gained from the discovery of the disagreement. Condition (iv) isolates
the epistemic effect of the discovery of the disagreement and makes sure that S1 has
not acquired any other evidence pertaining to p since t that would affect his justification
for believing p at t’. In order to say how much S1’s justification for believing p is
affected by the discovery of the disagreement, we will need to consider cases in which
(iii) and (iv) are satisfied.

It is worth briefly pausing to note what it would take for conditions (iii) to be
met. Condition (iii) is met when there is complete epistemic symmetry between S1 and
S2, or at least S1’s evidence supports there being such symmetry. For there to be a case
of complete symmetry more must be said about S1’s evidential situation. First, not only
must S1’s evidence justify S1 in believing that S2 has adopted a competitor doxastic
attitude toward p, it must justify S1 in believing that S2 has adopted D2 toward p to the
same degree that it justifies S1 in believing that S1 has adopted D1 toward p. In other
words, S1’s evidence must equally support that S2 has adopted D2 toward p as it does
that S1 has adopted D1 toward p, and it also must support that D1 and D2 are competitor doxastic attitudes. If S1 is more justified in believing that S1 believes p than that S2 disbelieves p, S1 will have some epistemic reason (however weak) to favor S1’s own conclusion regarding p.158

Second, S1’s evidence must equally support S1 and S2’s epistemic peerhood credentials. In other words, S1 must be just as justified in believing that S2 is intellectually virtuous to degree X, possesses a total body of evidence of quality X’, concepts C, etc. as S1 is justified in believing that S1 is intellectually virtuous to degree X, possesses a total body of evidence of quality X’, concepts C, etc.159 If S1 is justified in believing that S2 is intellectually virtuous to degree X, possesses total body of evidence of quality X’, concepts C, etc. but is more justified in believing that S1 is intellectually virtuous to degree X, possesses a total body of evidence of quality X’, concepts C, etc. and is not justified in believing that S2 is more intellectually virtuous than that, possesses more or better evidence or concepts than that, etc., then S1 will have some epistemic reason to favor S1’s own conclusion regarding p. In such a case S1’s evidence more strongly supports S1’s epistemic credentials and thus more strongly supports favoring S1’s conclusion. In such a scenario, S1’s evidence supports that S1 is more likely to get it right, and this prevents there from being the relevant symmetry between S1 and S2.

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158 Typically we are surer of our own doxastic attitudes than we are of the doxastic attitudes of others, so this condition is typically not met. Nevertheless, it is possible to meet such a condition.

159 Since S1 must be justified in believing that he and S2 are reasonable epistemic peers, S1 must be justified in believing that this level of intellectual virtue is significantly great.
These clarifications also point to a way in which (iii) must be reformulated. As stated, condition (iii) is only concerned with whether S1 had any reason to discount S2’s conclusion. To create a symmetrical case, (iii) must be replaced with (iii’):

(iii’) S1 has no undefeated reason to discount S1 or S2’s conclusion at t’.

Replacing condition (iii) with (iii’) makes sure that S1’s evidential position regarding his own conclusion regarding p is equally strong as it is toward S2’s conclusion regarding p. If S1 had a reason to discount his own conclusion, and no reason to discount S2’s, then S1 would have an epistemic reason to favor S2’s conclusion regarding p. Evidence about S1’s own defects will be relevant to what doxastic attitude S1 ought to adopt toward the disputed proposition after discovering the disagreement.\(^{160}\)

By supplementing (i) and (ii) with (iii’) and (v), we now have before our minds extremely idealized conditions – conditions which describe a case of optimal symmetry. In such a case S1 has no evidence that allows him to privilege his own conclusion over S2’s, and no reason to privilege S2’s conclusion over his. In such a case the epistemic impact of the disagreement is isolated and in such cases S1 should give S2’s conclusion equal weight.

6.3 Equal Weight and Splitting the Difference

\(^{160}\) Condition (iii’) amounts to making sure that S1’s evidence regarding what Lackey (forthcominga, forthcomingb) terms ‘personal information’ for S1 and S2 is on a par – that S1 has not personal information that permits him to favor either his own conclusion, or S2’s conclusion, on the disputed matter.
In the literature many take it that giving your opponent’s conclusion equal weight amounts to splitting the difference regarding the doxastic attitudes which have been adopted. What it means to split the difference is perhaps most clearly seen on a fine-grained doxastic taxonomy which utilizes degrees of belief (0-1 inclusive).

Suppose that S1 believes p to degree 0.8 at t and becomes justified in believing at t’ that S2 believes p to degree 0.2. If S1 is to adopt the attitude which splits the difference at t’, then S1’s is believe p to degree 0.5.

Although giving one’s opponent’s conclusion equal weight does not entail that one ought to split the difference, if the story given in chapter 3 is correct regarding higher-order evidence and defeat, then giving one’s opponent’s conclusion equal weight will lead to splitting the difference. Recall that in chapter 3 we saw that higher-order evidence (such as that a reasonable individual believes p on the basis of some bit of evidence) can have a defeating effect, either by rebutting essential linking evidence or by undercutting one’s first-order evidence. When one discovers that a reasonable individual believes p to degree 0.8 on the basis of some shared evidence E, he gains evidence that E justifies one in believing p to degree 0.8. Suppose that our subject has believed p to degree 0.2 on the basis of E. This fact about our reasonable subject gives him evidence that E supports believing p to degree 0.2. If these two individuals are reasonably believed to be epistemic peers, then each bit of higher-order evidence is equal in strength – each individual is equally likely to get it right, and both are likely to get it right. In chapter 3 we saw that such a discovery would defeat the justification
each individual had for adopting the doxastic attitude they had toward p. Since each bit of higher-order evidence is equally strong, this defeating effect will only be neutralized for a doxastic attitude which splits the difference between the two doxastic attitudes which had been adopted toward p. So on the conciliatory view of disagreement defended here, the epistemically justified doxastic response to the discovery of a disagreement in our idealized conditions is to adopt the doxastic attitude which splits the difference.

6.4 Higher-Order Evidence Again

Before examining cases of disagreement that do not meet our idealized conditions, I will pause to consider an objection to this account of how much conciliation is epistemically required in these idealized cases. Thomas Kelly (forthcoming) has recently criticized views of disagreement which mandate that one should give one’s opponent’s conclusion equal weight and thus split the difference. In particular, Kelly is concerned with how such views treat higher-order evidence. According to Kelly, an Equal Weight View claims the following:

( EWV): In cases of peer disagreement one should give equal weight to the opinion of a peer and to one’s own opinion.  

Kelly attributes (EWV) to Feldman (2003, 2006), Christensen (2007), and Elga (2007). Although the cases of peer disagreement that I am concerned with differ from those

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161 Kelly (forthcoming).
with which Feldman, Christensen, and Elga are concerned\textsuperscript{162}, the conciliatory view of disagreement that I do endorse does share an important similarity with (EWV) – it calls for one to give one’s opponent’s conclusion equal weight in a certain situation and to thus split the difference. As a result, which doxastic attitude each party of the disagreement becomes justified in believing is entirely a matter of the higher-order evidence. Given this similarity it will be important to examine here the merits of Kelly’s objections to (EWV). Since Kelly finds this consequence of (EWV), and the view endorsed here, as problematic evaluating Kelly’s claims will be worth our attention. So, in what follows I will be examining whether this consequence concerning the justificatory effects of higher-order evidence is indeed problematic. In doing so, I will be defending (EWV) as well as my preferred view of the epistemic significance of disagreement.

6.5 (EWV) and First-Order Evidence

Recall that Kelly (2005) distinguished between two kinds of evidence: first-order evidence and higher-order evidence. First-order evidence is the evidence that bore directly on the matter at hand – it is evidence for or against the target proposition. In contrast, higher-order evidence was characterized as evidence about the nature of one’s first-order evidence – it is evidence regarding the character or quality of the evidence.

\textsuperscript{162} In particular, the view I am defending calls for one’s opponent’s conclusion to be given equal weight in stricter conditions than (EWV). On the view I am defending, S1 must be justified in believing that he has encountered a case of disagreement between reasonable epistemic peers, and also be as justified in believing that S2 has adopted D2 toward p as he is justified in believing that he (S1) has adopted D1 toward p, and must be as justified in believing that S2 has epistemic peerhood credentials X as he (S1) is justified in believing that S1 has epistemic peerhood credentials X.
that bears directly upon the target proposition. So, there appearing to be a red ball on the table is first-order evidence that there is a red ball on the table, whereas the fact that a reasonable individual S believes that there is a red ball on the table on the basis of such an appearance is higher-order evidence. Since reasonable individuals generally evaluate the evidence correctly, the fact that such an individual has evaluated the evidence a certain way on a given occasion is higher-order evidence that that evidence (the first-order evidence of the appearance) in fact supports the conclusion which he has drawn on the basis of it (that there is a red ball on the table).

According to (EWV), what we should believe in cases of peer disagreement is entirely a matter of the higher-order evidence. Similarly, the conciliatory view of disagreement defended here maintains that when conditions (i), (ii), (iii’), and (iv) are met, which doxastic attitude S1 is justified in believing is entirely a matter of the higher-order evidence – one ought to simply split the difference. Kelly finds this consequence implausible and rejects (EWV) on this basis. If Kelly is correct, then the conciliatory view of disagreement currently under discussion should also be rejected. Consider the following case given by Kelly:

Case 4: Despite having access to the same substantial body of evidence E, you and I arrive at very different opinions about some hypothesis H: while I am quite confident that H is true, you are quite confident that it is false. Indeed, at time t0, immediately before encountering one another, my credence for H stands at .8 while your credence stands at .2. At time t1, you and I meet and compare notes. How, if at all should we revise our respective beliefs?\[163\]

\[163\] Kelly (forthcoming).
Kelly notes that according to (EWV), you and I should split the difference and assign a credence of .5 to H. However, Kelly calls the reader’s attention to the fact that “nothing whatsoever has been said about the relationship between E and H, and in particular, about the extent to which E supports or fails to support H.” Given this, Kelly concludes that “it is implausible that how confident you and I should be that H is true at time t1 is wholly independent of this fact.”

In defense of this conclusion, Kelly asks us to add the following details to the story above. Let us suppose that E in fact supports having a credence of .2 toward H, and that you have a credence of .2 toward H because you have correctly responded to E. Given these additions to our story, it seems that at t0, you should believe as you do regarding H, whereas I should become significantly less confident. However, Kelly notes that according to (EWV), this asymmetry “completely washes out” upon the discovery of the disagreement. After the discovery of the disagreement, (EWV) has it that you should become more confident in H – you should no longer disbelieve it, but suspend judgment regarding it.

It is this consequence of (EWV) that Kelly finds implausible. Kelly finds this consequence implausible since it has the result that what we should believe is entirely a matter of the higher-order evidence. According to (EWV), what the first-order evidence

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164 Kelly (forthcoming).
165 Kelly (forthcoming).
166 Kelly (forthcoming).
167 It is not implausible that I should become less confident in H at t1, since I should have been less confident in H at t0 as well.
E supports is entirely swamped by the higher-order evidence regarding what the peers believe (and to what extent). Kelly sees no reason to think that the normative significance of the first-order evidence will vanish once the higher-order evidence is acquired, particularly when the first-order evidence is possessed by both parties.

Kelly attempts to pump this intuition with four arguments against this consequence of (EWV). It what follows I will explain and evaluate each of Kelly’s arguments to see if this consequence of (EWV), one shared by the conciliatory view defended here, is indeed problematic.

6.5.1 Interpersonal Conflicts and Intrapersonal Conflicts

Kelly compares the rational responses between interpersonal conflicts and intrapersonal conflicts. He asks us to imagine an individual who discovers that he has two inconsistent beliefs within one domain and asks how such an individual should respond to this discovery. One answer to the latter question claims that the individual should abandon both of the inconsistent beliefs. Kelly sees this answer as the closest analogue to the answer given by (EWV) in the case of interpersonal conflict. Since one is an epistemic peer of oneself and the two beliefs are inconsistent, we seem to have a case that at least closely parallels a case of peer disagreement.\(^{168}\)

Kelly also finds this answer to intrapersonal conflicts with little to recommend it. Where one of the conflicting beliefs is well supported by one’s evidence and the other is

\(^{168}\) Since there is not a disagreement over one particular proposition in this case, there is a difference between cases of peer disagreement.
not, Kelly believes that the rational thing to do would be to drop the unsupported belief. He claims, “[a] normative view about how it is reasonable to resolve inconsistencies among one’s beliefs which completely abstracts away from the facts about which beliefs are better supported by one’s evidence, and which would have one treat one’s prior beliefs on a par regardless of how well- or ill-supported they are by one’s total evidence, would not be an attractive one.” Kelly also claims that the features which make this view unattractive are also shared by (EWV).

Kelly here raises a significant worry for (EWV), but his case is under described in important ways. Kelly claims that one of the inconsistent beliefs is not well supported by one’s evidence. This belief may not be well supported by the first-order evidence, but if it is not as supported by the higher-order evidence as the other inconsistent belief, then we do not have a case that parallels peer disagreement in an important way. It seems that Kelly has focused solely on the first order-evidence here. Our subject does have the higher-order evidence that he is reasonable and has evaluated the first-order evidence to support each of the inconsistent beliefs – and since he is a peer of himself, this higher-order evidence is equally strong in both cases. So, let’s take the case to be one where each of the inconsistent beliefs is equally supported by the higher-order evidence, but one of them is much more strongly supported by the first-order evidence. So described, this intrapersonal case most closely resembles the relevant interpersonal case of peer disagreement. Further, it is plausible that the higher-order evidence would

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169 Kelly (forthcoming).
support each belief equally since an individual with the same reliability has formed each of the inconsistent beliefs. However, if the higher-order evidence is on a par for both beliefs, then the fact that the first-order evidence better supports one of them will wash out from the justificatory picture. From our subject’s perspective, he is a reliable individual who has judged each body of evidence to support each of the inconsistent beliefs to the same degree. This gives him higher-order evidence that the first-order bodies of evidence in fact support those beliefs to the same degree. So, regarding the one belief, he is justified in believing that the first-order evidence supports it much more strongly than it actually does. This higher-order evidence is misleading evidence, since in fact one of the beliefs is better supported by the first-order evidence, but it is evidence nonetheless. Further, this evidence is evidence that either rebuts an essential linking component of the subject’s evidence or undercuts the additional justification given by the first-order evidence to the belief better supported by the first-order evidence. This evidence affects the connection between that first-order evidence and the relevant belief. Either of these defeating effects leaves both beliefs on a par in terms of justification. Since they cannot both be true, it seems that both should be abandoned since the subject has no justification for keeping one over the other – from his perspective there is nothing to favor the one over the other. So, it looks like Kelly’s example either does not apply to (EWV) since it involves a case where one has no higher-order evidence regarding one of the relevant beliefs, or it is a case in which abandoning both beliefs is not an unattractive consequence after all. Either way, there is no problem here for (EWV) or like views of the epistemic significance of disagreement.
6.5.2  Easy Bootstrapping?

Kelly also maintains that (EWV) makes a rational doxastic attitude too easy to come by.

Kelly offers the following case as evidence for this:

Case 5: You and I both accept (EWV) as a matter of theory. Moreover, we scrupulously follow it as a matter of practice. At time t0, each of us has access to a substantial, fairly complicated body of evidence. On the whole this evidence tells against hypothesis H: given our evidence, the uniquely rational credence for us to have in H is .3. However, as it happens, both of us badly mistake the import of this evidence: you give credence .7 to H while I give it .9. At time t1, we meet and compare notes. Because we both accept (EWV), we converge on credence .8.\textsuperscript{170}

In this case, (EWV) has the consequence that both parties are justified in adopting a doxastic attitude which is significantly different than the doxastic attitude justified by the first-order evidence. In this case, (EWV) lets us bootstrap our way to a rational doxastic attitude by way of discovering a peer who has also managed to severely misjudge the evidence. The consequence may be particularly troubling if we imagine (as Kelly does) another pair of epistemic peers who each evaluate that body of evidence for H and give H a credence of .3. After this second pair of peers discovers each other’s credences, (EWV) has it that they are justified in having a credence of .3 in H. What Kelly finds implausible is that the first pair of peers is as justified in having a .8 credence in H as the second pair of peers is in having a .3 credence in H. The fact that (EWV) has

\textsuperscript{170} Kelly (forthcoming).
this consequence shows that (EWV) allows for rational belief to be too easy to come by.\textsuperscript{171}

I agree that (EWV) has this consequence, but I depart from Kelly over whether this consequence is a liability for (EWV) and like views. While the first pair of peers both badly misjudged the first-order evidence, they correctly responded to the total body of evidence (the body of evidence including their higher-order evidence) at time t1. Some evidence is misleading evidence, and in this case, the first pair of peers have each acquired some misleading evidence (the higher-order evidence each has involving their own reliability and what they have judged the first-order evidence to support, and to what degree) and has even had this misleading evidence somewhat confirmed (by gaining more higher-order evidence by encountering an independent peer with a similar response to the evidence). The fact that the second pair of peers has been fortunate enough to avoid such misleading evidence does not result in them being any more justified in adopting the doxastic attitude they do toward H at t1. To claim the latter would be to fail to appreciate all of the individual’s evidence. The second pair of peers has been fortunate to avoid some misleading evidence, but that doesn’t mean that they have responded any better to the evidence \textit{that they in fact have} than the peers who gained the misleading evidence. Although both sets of peers share some evidence, the non-overlapping evidence is quite significant and can have the result that dramatically different doxastic attitudes are justified for each pair.

\textsuperscript{171} Kelly (forthcoming).
6.5.3 Even Easier Bootstrapping?

Kelly’s third argument against this consequence of (EWV) involves a single person case of bootstrapping. Here Kelly divides the evidence into two groups: psychological (or doxastic) evidence and non-psychological (or non-doxastic) evidence. According to Kelly, psychological evidence consists in facts about the distribution of opinion among epistemic peers (it is a kind of higher-order evidence), whereas non-psychological evidence is original evidence on which the peers base their opinions.

Suppose at time $t_0$ that one has a body of non-psychological evidence $E$ regarding hypothesis $H$, and no relevant psychological evidence, and gives $H$ a credence of $0.7$. Suppose further that at $t_1$ one adopts a third-person perspective upon oneself and gains the psychological evidence regarding one’s own opinion regarding $H$. At $t_1$, one’s total body of evidence then includes both psychological and non-psychological evidence regarding $H$. Kelly claims that since (EWV) would have it that the psychological evidence would swamp the non-psychological evidence and solely determine which credence is rational to adopt toward $H$ were the psychological evidence to be about what an epistemic peer believes, parity of reasoning suggests that the psychological evidence will also determine the rational credence even when the psychological evidence consists solely of what one believes. Given that, it seems that what one rationally believes collapses to what one believes on (EWV) when one is unaware of the opinions of others – an allegedly absurd result.
There are a couple of things worthy of note here. First, it is not as though (EWV) cannot distinguish belief and rational belief. Recall that the relevant psychological (or higher-order) evidence was not an individual’s belief simpliciter, but that belief coupled with one’s justification for believing that individual was reasonable (a reliable judge of the evidence). So, the psychological evidence should not be construed as simply the opinions of others. Only when the opinions of others are coupled with their reasonability is there evidential import.

In addition, cases which involve awareness of the opinions of disagreeing epistemic peers can accomplish this task. In encountering a disagreement of the relevant sort, one gains evidence, which alters which doxastic attitude is now justified. This individual may fail to respond correctly to his evidence at this time. In such a scenario, what he believes (or to what degree) and what is rational for him to believe (or to what degree) diverge. Further, even if our subject responds appropriately to the evidence, he can imagine not having made the requisite conciliation and can compare the doxastic attitude he now has with the one he would have had were he to not have made conciliation. In such a case, what the subject believes and what he is justified in believing would come apart. So, (EWV) can distinguish belief from rational belief.

For similar reasons, (EWV) does not have the result that many beliefs are justified simply in virtue of being believed. After encountering a disagreement of the relevant kind, an individual may remain steadfast in what he believes – he may ‘stick to
his guns’. In such a scenario, what he believes is not what he is justified in believing.\textsuperscript{172}

Also, an individual may be an unreliable judge of the evidence regarding some matter, and may even be justified in believing this about himself. In such a case, he could identify his beliefs on this matter with which he is unreliable and rightly identify them as unjustified. Since an individual’s opinions are only evidence for S when S is justified in believing that individual is reasonable, \((\text{EWV})\) can easily distinguish belief from justified belief. Beliefs about matters with which one is justified in believing oneself to be unreliable are beliefs, but not justified beliefs.

\subsection*{6.5.4 Disagreeing Peers and Litmus Paper}

Kelly’s fourth argument compares the way psychological evidence and non-psychological evidence works. Kelly compares the evidence one gets that it will rain tomorrow based upon a meteorologist’s forecast to the evidence one gets that a liquid is an acid given that litmus paper turns red when immersed in the liquid. He claims that in both cases one has acquired evidence for the relevant proposition because (and to the degree that) the relevant state of affairs is positively correlated with the relevant proposition. The meteorologist’s predictions are positively correlated with tomorrow’s weather (let us suppose) and thus they support the proposition that tomorrow’s weather will be as the meteorologist has predicted (at least to the extent that the meteorologist has a good track record). Similarly, a red litmus paper result is positively correlated with the liquid being an acid, so seeing the litmus paper turn red in a certain

\textsuperscript{172} Save for type of cases examined in Chapter 4 where the individual is justified in believing that he ought to stick to his guns (i.e. justified in believing that a conciliatory view of disagreement is false).
liquid is evidence that that liquid is an acid (and justifies this proposition proportionately to how strong this correlation is known to be). So, whether you are concerned with psychological evidence or non-psychological evidence, both are evidence for p in so far as they would be unlikely to be the case were p false. Kelly maintains that this observation casts significant doubt upon (EWV). Since both psychological evidence and non-psychological evidence qualify as evidence in the same way, there seems to be no suitable rationale for claiming that the psychological evidence swamps the non-psychological evidence (as claimed by (EWV)).

To bring this problem out, Kelly attempts to make the non-psychological evidence even closer to the psychological evidence. Kelly asks us to imagine that the meteorologist designs a machine to predict the weather. In fact, we can imagine that the machine turns out to be just as reliable in its prediction of the weather as the meteorologist himself. Despite these similarities, Kelly claims that (EWV) seems to give more evidential power to the psychological evidence – to the meteorologist’s beliefs. Kelly maintains that it is implausible to think that the evidence gained from the machine is psychological evidence, since the evidence gained from the litmus paper is surely not psychological evidence (the paper has nothing like beliefs) yet there is no clear difference between the machine and the litmus paper.

As (EWV) has been formulated by Kelly, it describes the epistemological effect of psychological evidence – it prescribes giving another’s opinion equal weight. Evidence gained from the discovery of a disagreement is typically psychological, but that it is
psychological is not what is doing the work here. Rather, as we have seen, it is the effect of higher-order evidence that is important to recognize, and higher-order evidence often is, but need not be, psychological or doxastic evidence. In characterizing (EWV) as being concerned with psychological or doxastic evidence (i.e., giving equal weight to an opinion) Kelly has at best characterized the evidence that plays a central role in such views by an accidental characteristic of it.

Higher-order evidence need not be evidence regarding the psychological or doxastic states of another being. In the cases of peer disagreement typically discussed, the relevant higher-order evidence is psychological, but its being psychological evidence is not what is doing the work. Higher-order evidence is simply evidence about the character or quality of the evidence one has that directly pertains to the target proposition. If the meteorological machine worked by taking input evidence and outputting a forecast and it was reliable in compiling and reading the input evidence, then the fact that the machine made a particular forecast would be higher-order evidence that the input evidence indeed supported the given forecast. This would be so even though (or even if) the machine does not have any psychological or doxastic states. In the cases of disagreement which are of interest to views that mandate giving equal weight, the higher-order evidence that one gains is evidence about the doxastic state of another cognizer ((EWV) is thus stated in terms of opinions), but this is not an essential feature of higher-order evidence. The underlying motivation for such views is that higher-order evidence has a certain justificatory impact, not that psychological or
doxastic evidence (save accidentally) has such an impact. What is important about higher-order evidence is that it supports or weakens the connection between the first-order evidence and the target proposition. This needn’t be a feature of psychological or doxastic evidence and non-psychological or non-doxastic evidence may share this feature.

So, we can see why higher-order evidence is importantly different that first-order evidence. Higher-order evidence in some way supports or weakens the connection between the first-order evidence and the target proposition. Litmus paper tests in no way accomplish this task. The meteorological machine, at least described a certain way, can accomplish this task. This also explains why higher-order evidence can have such a powerful justificatory effect, and why it might entirely swamp (or undercut) the first-order evidence. Even in cases where the first-order evidence in fact supports the target proposition (and even supports it strongly), if one gains evidence which attacks the connection between that first-order evidence and the target proposition, such evidence can have quite significant justificatory effects – perhaps even resulting in one becoming justified in suspending judgment regarding the target proposition.

Although as formulated, (EWV) does not make any claims regarding higher-order evidence apart from the psychological evidence of peers, (EWV) can be supplemented in a consistent and plausible way with another principle which claims that gaining higher-order evidence which is not psychological can have similar justificatory effects. It is consistent with (EWV) that one must give the output of a meteorological machine equal
weight. As formulated (EWV) does not cover such a case of ‘disagreement’, but the motivation for (EWV) seems to mandate such a response.

To sum up, the consequences of equal weight views that Kelly finds troubling are either not consequences of such views or not troubling consequences after all. Either way, we have seen no reason to disbelieve conciliatory views of disagreement which claim that in certain circumstances the discovery of the disagreement requires one to give one’s opponent’s conclusion equal weight. However, everything that has been said thus far about how much conciliation is epistemically required applies only to our extremely idealized cases of disagreement. It would be nice to also have something to say about the cases of disagreement which we typically encounter. To this issue we now turn.

6.6 Everyday Disagreements

We have seen that in cases of disagreement where (i), (ii), (iii’), and (iv) are met, considerations of symmetry have it that S1 should give S2’s conclusion regarding p equal weight. These conditions, however, are rarely met. These antecedent conditions are highly idealized. Although it is intrinsically interesting to examine the epistemic significance of disagreement in these cases, an account of the epistemology of disagreement that stopped there would be lacking. Fortunately, I do think that what we have seen regarding the epistemic significance of disagreement in these idealized cases
allows us to say something about the epistemic significance of disagreement in cases
that fail to meet these idealized conditions.

Recall that we found that giving one’s opponent’s conclusion equal weight was
epistemically required when the following conditions were met:

(i)  S1 must have adopted a doxastic attitude D1 toward p at t,
(ii) S1 must become justified in believing at a later time t’ that an individual
    S2 is a reasonable epistemic peer regarding p and has adopted a
    competitor doxastic attitude D2 toward p,
(iii’) S1 has no undefeated reason to discount S1 or S2’s conclusion at t’, and
(iv) S1 must have gained no other evidence affecting his justification for
    believing p since t.

I want to briefly consider what justificatory effect would result from stripping away each
of the idealized conditions.

Condition (i) is not idealized. It is met in our everyday disagreements, so we
needn’t consider what would happen if it were not met. If it were not met, we would
not have a case of disagreement. Condition (ii) is quite idealized. In order for S2 to be
S1’s epistemic peer S2 must be equal to S1 in reasoning ability, intelligence, intellectual
virtues, and in the evidence, background information and concepts they possess. Let’s
first consider equality in reasoning ability and intelligence. If S1 is justified in believing
that he is superior to S2 in terms of reasoning and intelligence, then this will give S1
some reason to favor S1’s conclusion regarding the disputed proposition – this will give
S1 a reason to make more modest concessions. The degree to which S1 is justified in believing that he is superior to S2 in terms of reasoning and intelligence will typically affect how much conciliation is to be made. If S1 is justified in believing that he is only slightly superior to S2 in this way, then everything else being equal, S1 will not have to give S2’s conclusion equal weight, but he will still have to make significant conciliation. Everything else being equal, the more superior in terms of reasoning and intelligence that S1 is justified in believing that he is, the less conciliation will be required of him from the discovery of the disagreement. So, being justified in believing oneself superior to one’s opponent in terms of reasoning and intelligence is a reason to make less conciliation.

One might worry here that if one has some epistemic reason to prefer one’s own conclusion he should not make any conciliation. After all, given the Uniqueness Thesis at most one competitor attitude is justified and he has a little more reason to favor his own conclusion. While there is some pull to this theoretical worry, when it is applied to cases it can be seen to give the wrong verdicts. In our restaurant check case, supposing that you are a little more intelligent than your disagreeing friend doesn’t have the result that you should not make any conciliation when you discover that your friend disagrees regarding how much each of you owes.

Similarly, we can examine an analogous case with thermometers. Suppose that you have two thermometers in the same room, and that the room has only one temperature at a time. Suppose further that one of the thermometers is slightly more
reliable than the other. Let’s say that you find out that the slightly more reliable thermometer reads ‘80’ and then later discover that the slightly less reliable one reads ‘74’. In such a case it seems that you shouldn’t simply stick with believing that the temperature in the room is 80 with the same level of confidence even if that is what the more reliable thermometer says. You have acquired some powerful evidence that the temperature in the room is not 80 which, though not as strong as the evidence that it is 80 in the room, is evidence that makes a difference as to how justified you are in believing that it is 80 in the room.

This is not to say that S1 might not still be epistemically required to split the difference with S2, however, or to make quite significant conciliation. This bit of evidence (concerning one’s intellectual superiority) is only one piece of the evidential puzzle, and this bit of evidence may be supplemented with other bits of evidence which create inequalities between S1 and S2 in the other direction and which in turn require more conciliation of S1.

In addition, some disagreements may make the impact of inequality along these lines insubstantial. If the disagreement pertains to the color of ordinary sized objects in good light, the day of the week, the location of the nearest gas station, etc., then one party of the disagreement being in general more intelligent or having superior reasoning abilities may not factor in (at least not significantly). Such an asymmetry may not make that party any more likely to be right on the disputed matter, and so long as that is the case, then there is no reason to privilege that individual’s conclusion.
Next, condition (ii) requires evidential equality and equality in the concepts possessed by the parties of the disagreement. Cases in which the parties of the disagreement differ only with respect to evidence and concepts which do not affect their justification for believing the disputed proposition, will make the discovery of the disagreement have precisely the same epistemological effect as cases where there is equality in these matters (holding all the other factors fixed, that is). It is important to remember here that the evidence pertaining to one’s justification for believing $p$ does not simply include evidence directly pertaining to $p$, but also any relevant higher-order evidence such as evidence about the nature of evidence and disagreements. Other differences in evidence or concepts possessed will not make an epistemological difference regarding the disputed proposition.

Recall that the evidential equality condition can be met in two ways: by having the same body of evidence, or by having an equally good body of evidence. We can see here why in either case the same amount of conciliation is called for. If $S_1$ is justified in believing that $S_2$ has a different body of evidence which is equal in its justificatory power regarding $p$ (i.e. a body of evidence that supports not-$p$ to the same degree that $S_1$’s body of evidence supports $p$), then just as much conciliation will be called for as in the case where $S_1$ is justified in believing that $S_2$ has the same evidence. In the case of evidential sameness, $S_1$ becomes justified in suspending judgment as to what the shared body of evidence supports and when the other conditions are met, and this results in requiring that he give $S_2$’s conclusion equal weight. In the case where $S_1$ is
justified in believing that S2 has a different, yet equally strong, body of evidence regarding p, S1 is justified in believing that one of the two bodies of evidence is misleading, but it not justified in believing of either body of evidence that it is the misleading body of evidence. As such, if the other conditions are met, S1 is required to give S2’s conclusion equal weight.\textsuperscript{173}

Differences in the evidence possessed by the parties which is relevant to the justification of the disputed proposition, however, can make for conciliatory differences. If S1 is justified in believing that he has more evidence on the issue (i.e. all the evidence S2 has on the matter, plus some additional evidence), then he will have reason to make more modest concessions. Alternatively, if S1 is justified in believing that S2’s evidential position toward p is superior to S1’s, then S1 will have reason to make even more conciliation due to the discovery of the disagreement.

The third condition stipulates that S1 have no undefeated reason to discount either his or S2’s conclusion. In typical cases S1 will have at least some such reasons. Often such reasons will be minor and will not significantly mitigate the amount of conciliation required of S1 from the discovery of the disagreement. If S1 is justified in

\textsuperscript{173} Feldman’s (2006b) Dean on the Quad case is an example of this. In this case, both disagreeing parties had distinct perceptual bodies of evidence. One perceives the dean to be on the quad, and the other does not. While these are distinct bodies of evidence, they each support their possessor’s conclusion equally well since each party is equally perceptually adept. Given this, each party should give the other’s conclusion equal weight even though each party may know that they each possess distinct bodies of evidence.

On this same point Christensen (2007) imagines a case where the two disagreeing parties had each conducted their own poll on the issue with populations of the same size, etc.. Upon discovering the disagreement, each party knows that the other has a distinct body of evidence, but one that is just as good as his own. It seems that in this case too, the thing for each party to do is to give the other’s conclusion equal weight.
believing that S2 has had a beer before adopting D2 toward p (while S1 had not), then this gives some reason to discount S2’s conclusion, but not a reason that significantly mitigates the justificatory effect of the discovery. In such a case S1 may not be required to give S2’s conclusion equal weight, but he will be required to give it something very close to it. The more significant the reason to discount the other’s conclusion, the more mitigated the justificatory effect of the reason to make conciliation will be. S1 will typically also have some reasons to discount his own conclusion. Perhaps it is he who has ingested a moderate amount of alcohol before considering the disputed proposition, while his opponent has not. Here again, the reasons on both sides will be weighed against each other. If S1 has on balance stronger reasons to discount S2’s conclusion, then S1 has a reason to make less conciliation. If S1 has on balance stronger reasons to discount his own conclusion, then S1 has reason to make even more conciliation.

Condition (iv) stipulates that S1 gains no other evidence regarding p between t and t’. This condition may seem idealized, but if t is the time immediately before the discovery of the disagreement, t’, then it will often be the case that this condition is met. Further, without keeping this condition we simply cannot give a principle that gives a summary epistemic evaluation. If S1’s evidence regarding the disputed proposition might change in ways other than from the discovery of the disagreement since t, then we cannot say what his evidence regarding p looks like at t’.
We have seen in quite broad strokes what justificatory effect would result from stripping away our idealized conditions in various ways. Unfortunately, not much else can be truly said about such non-idealized cases in universal terms. How these reasons to favor one’s own conclusion, or to make greater deference, add up will be a matter of what the particular bits of evidence are, and thus it will be unique to particular cases of disagreement. Sometimes a reason to discount S2’s conclusion will be more significant than the fact that S1 is justified in believing that S2 has a superior body of evidence regarding the disputed proposition; other times it will not. Sometimes S1 being justified in believing that he is more intelligent than S2 will be more significant than S1 having a reason to discount his own conclusion; other times it will not. In cases of non-idealized disagreement, the particular details matter. How each of these bits of evidence adds up will depend upon what exactly the reasons are.

6.7 An Ethical Analogy

This account of the epistemic significance of disagreement bears some similarity to W.D. Ross’s ethical theory which utilizes *prima facie* obligations. Ross’s theory is a particularist ethical theory in that what one is obligated to do is determined by the particular circumstances. Nevertheless, Ross’s theory gives seven *prima facie* obligations which are features of an act which tend to make it one’s actual obligation. How these obligations add up in any particular case, however, depends on the details of the particular case. One’s actual obligation is to follow the most stringent *prima facie* duty or duties, but what the most stringent *prima facie* duty or duties are is a feature of
particular cases – different *prima facie* duties can be the most stringent based upon the particular details of the case at hand.

So too with our non-idealized account of disagreement, true and precise universal claims cannot be made about particular non-idealized cases of disagreement. We have seen in broad strokes various ways in which when one is in a non-idealized case of disagreement one thereby gets a reason to make more or less conciliation than in the idealized case, but how those reasons add up depends upon the details of the particular case and what those reasons consist of. Like Ross’s account of what makes for one’s actual obligation, which doxastic attitude one should adopt after discovering the disagreement will depend upon how the particular reasons add up.

### 6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how much conciliation is required of individuals in our idealized conditions. We have also seen in broad strokes what epistemological effects stripping away those idealizations can have. The resulting picture for everyday disagreements is messy, but we have seen at least in principle how one might go about determining how much conciliation is required in such cases.
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