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DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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For Dr. Erich Helge, for introducing me to the world of philosophy
and for modeling the virtues of intellectual humility and curiosity for me.

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary problem of disagreement has two prominent solutions. The Conciliationists think that after discovering a case of disagreement one should be less certain of one's original position. Those who favor Conciliatory views tend to think that disagreement is epistemically significant because it causes problems for one's rationality. The Steadfasters, on the other hand, think that one should maintain one's belief in the face of a disagreement; thus, disagreement appears a less epistemically significant problem to them. But neither of these solutions address the actual problem of disagreements: that the very same faculties which cause me to trust myself provide you a differing opinion. Therefore, we need a solution for disagreement that responds to the issues it presents to one's self-trust rather than secondary factors, like the likelihood of peerhood or the truth of the Uniqueness Thesis. Such an account ought to be regulative in nature. That is, it should offer insight to epistemic agents. The best of the regulative accounts can be found in virtue epistemology, because its practical nature is grounded in a holistic appraisal of epistemic agents. In cases of disagreement, to be epistemically virtuous, an agent needs to balance her intellectual fortitude with her intellectual humility and open-mindedness. But in order to balance these virtues when they appear to be in conflict, we need another resource that is able to govern them. For this purpose, I introduce intellectual *phronesis*. Like its moral counterpart, intellectual *phronesis* can help one to discern the particularity of situations in order to determine the appropriate response. Accordingly, intellectual *phronesis* is the ideal tool to adjudicate which intellectual virtue is appropriate for a particular disagreement.

INTRODUCTION

Disagreements are familiar to anyone participating in philosophical conversation. But even beyond the debates evident in the field of philosophy, disagreement is a common experience as we pursue truth in politics, religion, history, and science. Questions about disagreement are typically conceived as problems of rationality. If persons presented with identical evidence end up coming to two different epistemically rational beliefs about *p*, how should this impact an individual's assurance of her belief? Because of this focus on rationality, not all disagreements are equal in epistemic interest. Some disagreements, though annoying, are based on a difference of preference, like whether pineapple belongs on pizza. While I may strongly disagree with your opinions about the relationship of pineapple to pizza, we both can maintain our disagreement "rationally" by counting our difference in opinions up to a difference in taste buds; that is to say, if we both continue in our belief after being exposed to the disagreement, no one would think our judgment misguided. Some disagreements, however, are such that once discovered, they may cause an individual to doubt her ability to correctly interpret a given situation. Such disagreements make up the majority of the cases discussed in the contemporary epistemology of disagreement.

For the most part, epistemologists are concerned about disagreements of belief rather than disagreements of taste.[1] But even among more epistemically significant disagreements, epistemologists have generally also preferred to focus on "belief disagreements" as opposed to what Frances and Matheson term "action disagreements" (Frances and Matheson 2018). Whereas belief disagreements are related to the actual beliefs a person has, action disagreements concern what a person does. There are situations where a person must act even if she is uncertain. Action disagreements in themselves are thought to be less epistemically interesting because acting at all requires that one is not able to suspend judgment about the action.[2] However, as Frances and Matheson note, there is a way to construe most action disagreements as belief disagreements by changing the frame of the disagreement from one about a particular action to one over the truth of the claim "We should do such and such."[3]

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[1] I note, however, the growing interest in exploring the potential relationship between disagreements of taste and disagreements of beliefs. See Marques & Garcia-Carpintero 2014.

Great emphasis has been placed on peer disagreements, in which some philosophers think that when faced with a disagreement there should be some general negative consequences, including revision or abandonment of a belief. Others think that there are no general epistemic consequences of revealed peer disagreement, so that one could justifiably hold their belief even in the face of disagreement.[4] The problem, in short, is: if someone equally likely to be right as I am about a given proposition disagrees with me, should I be able to trust myself or should I somehow revise my position?

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[2] Richard Feldman makes a similar point along these lines. If one suspends judgment about doing an action, it is basically the same as not doing that action, because in both cases you do not do the action (Feldman 2006a). I will suggest in Chapter One that the inability to suspend judgment does not make these cases less epistemically interesting if one expands their understanding of rationality.

[3] Even though we are able to "translate" action disagreements into belief disagreements, this does not change the fact that action disagreements require a choice. See Frances & Matheson 2018.

[4] Revealed disagreement is Feldman and Warfield's term. It is a kind of peer disagreement in which the peers know that there is a disagreement and that it is with a peer (Feldman & Warfield 2010, 3).

But this conception of disagreement is inadequate. While I am not the first to level objections against the present state of the disagreement literature, my concerns are oriented differently than those who have also raised objections about the prevailing treatment of disagreement in epistemology. Recent literature has devoted considerable space to arguing for particular types of disagreements that have not historically been given much attention and against particular types of disagreements that are not considered worthwhile. In the case of the former, Maura Priest argues that disagreements with superiors have been underexplored, whereas Peter Forrest argues from the latter position that preoccupation with particular kinds of disagreements within philosophy of religion have occurred due to the "collective failure of philosophers of religion" (Priest 2016; Forrest 2009). Priest's concern about the epistemic significance of disagreement with superiors has been echoed by others, including Clifton Granby (Granby 2017).[5] The relationship between individuals in disagreement will be considered more fully later in my discussion of epistemic peers, but what Priest and Forrest's positions reveal is that there are genuine disagreements about the content and structure of disagreement.

What these and other accounts of disagreement do not question is the overarching framework within which we conceive of epistemic significance. There are two reasons that I find the current conversation about disagreement insufficient: (1) it misunderstands the epistemic significance of disagreement and (2) it is more concerned with understanding disagreement for the sake of knowledge rather than with helping epistemic agents be good at disagreeing. By making disagreement a rationality problem, current conversation about disagreement removes it from its origin in concerns regarding self-trust. Even among the recent trends among epistemologists to connect Pyrrhonian Skepticism with disagreement, self-trust is not the goal but rather a by-product of another goal: rationality. Secondly, because philosophers utilize disagreement as an opportunity to learn more about knowledge, they focus on idealized disagreements, isolating the disagreements from the epistemic situations in which they take place. While philosophers are able to clarify truths about knowledge because of these distinctions, the solutions they provide for disagreement are not useful for non-philosophers.

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[5] Bryan Frances also considers these issues, although he finds epistemic peer disagreement more significant than epistemic disagreement with superiors. See Frances 2012.

After describing how disagreement is currently envisioned, I will raise my concerns about the limiting nature of the setup of the problem. In my first chapter I argue that in the literature on disagreement, a philosopher's position on the epistemological significance of disagreement usually depends on how seriously they take the following two ideas: (1) the fact that some people are epistemic peers, and (2) the truth of the Uniqueness Thesis; that is, that for any given body of evidence and any given proposition there is some one level of confidence that it is uniquely rational to maintain about that proposition. First, in the case of peerhood, if philosophers think that it is possible to speak in terms of the symmetry and alikeness of epistemic agents, then they are more likely to find disagreement to be epistemically significant for the concept of knowledge. When philosophers think that epistemic peerhood is real, like Thomas Kelly or Richard Feldman, they think that the likelihood that two individuals should reach the same conclusion increases, consequently making disagreement a real threat. On the other hand, people like Louise Antony do not find peerhood to be real, and tend to find epistemic disagreement less significant because they believe in situated knowledge. In addition, if philosophers hold the Uniqueness Thesis, as Richard Feldman does, then they will find the problem of disagreement more compelling because they think there is only one correct belief in each case of disagreement. Likewise, philosophers who disagree with the Uniqueness Thesis, like Gideon Rosen, tend to find disagreement less epistemically significant because they think it is reasonable for there to be disagreement even given the same evidence.

I argue, however, that no matter what we think about peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis, disagreement is epistemically significant given the impact it has on self-trust. Following Linda Zagzebski, I suggest that the real problem for disagreement arises as we try to reconcile our epistemic trust in ourselves and our epistemic trust in others, which depends on our trust in ourselves (Zagzebski 2012). Accordingly, situations of disagreement become opportunities for individuals to wrestle with the fact that our trust in others is grounded in our self-trust when the two are not in unison. The epistemic significance arises when we attempt to create a holistic account of the self, given the disagreement. By focusing on the true epistemic significance of disagreement, the problem becomes more compelling even for those who previously did not find it so.

Peer language is no longer necessary to isolate the problem of disagreement from other epistemically interesting issues because it becomes clear that the very reasons I have to trust that I got it right also give me reason to think that others have the same faculties that justified my belief, so that they also got it right. Trust in myself seems to lead to opposing conclusions. Similarly, even if the Uniqueness Thesis is false, since disagreement's significance comes from our attempt to form a consistent view of the self, then if someone else arrives at a different credence from evidence you both share, it causes you to doubt yourself and the very faculties that justified your belief and that of the person with whom you are disagreeing.

However, the four most prominent solutions to the problem of disagreement do not respond to the problem of a consistent self. Rather, the Conciliatory, Steadfast, Total Evidence, and Justificationist views all respond to the epistemic problems that arise from peerhood or the Uniqueness Thesis. Moreover, because of this, the problem of disagreement has become nothing more than an excuse to talk about knowledge rather than providing solutions to the epistemic issues. I argue in Chapter Two that disagreement should not merely be conceived as an opportunity for greater epistemological discovery but as an epistemic quandary worth our time, particularly given the root of its epistemic significance. John Locke made an important distinction between regulative and analytic epistemology. Analytic epistemology aims to produce theories about knowledge, rationality, warrant, and justification, while regulative epistemology focuses on how one ought "to conduct our understandings," or go about forming beliefs. I use that distinction as updated by Nicholas Wolterstorff to argue that the disagreement problem should be understood as a problem in regulative and not analytic epistemology (Wolterstorff 1996). I suggest that disagreement is the perfect opportunity to generate guidance about epistemic practice, shifting the discussion into regulative territory. Given that disagreement is more suited to regulative epistemology then analytic, I argue, following Roberts and Wood's pivotal *Intellectual Virtues: Essay in Regulative Epistemology*, that the best way to do so is to utilize intellectual virtues.

In Chapter Three I will show that the most effective way to modify current discussions about disagreement so that they address regulative epistemology concerns is by completely turning away from evidentialists' accounts of disagreement to one framed by virtue epistemology. Most popular treatments misdiagnose the problem of disagreement because they are focused on theoretical issues involved in the debate rather than self-consistency. Intellectual virtue theories can be used to illuminate the problem of reasonable disagreement more fruitfully than can approaches framed solely in terms of rationality concerns, by providing a link between disagreement as an intellectual problem and a theory of practical action. This approach provides thicker concepts which add subtlety and richness to the discussion of the variety of intellectual dispositions and processes present in disagreements. I conclude by arguing that putting intellectual virtues and vices at the forefront of our consideration of disagreement reveals and remedies the failures of epistemic peerhood and its use in contemporary analytic epistemology.

In Chapter Four, I formulate a solution to the problem of disagreement focusing on the virtue of intellectual *phronesis*. This approach is capable of adjudicating scenarios of moral and epistemic complexity. Intellectual *phronesis* extends the practical reasoning normally identified as prudential, aiming at true belief by adjudicating the competing demands of the other two virtues, intellectual humility and intellectual fortitude. I will show that *phronesis* acts as enabling proper sensitivity to the specifics of disagreement. The cultivation of *phronesis* allows epistemic agents to pursue and navigate disagreements rationally and virtuously, and constitutes an immediate and urgent agenda for forming a more just and understanding society. In my conclusion I transition from language about disagreement as a problem to focus on the epistemic benefits of disagreement: that is, although disagreement provides an occasion for doubting one's self trust, it also offers an opportunity for an individual to discern their own position and to strengthen their views.

CHAPTER 1: The Problem is not the Problem: Self-trust and Disagreement

INTRODUCTION

This chapter lays the groundwork for this project by briefly sketching and problematizing contemporary approaches to disagreement within the analytic tradition. This chapter will have two parts. In the first I will outline how the problem of disagreement has most commonly been framed and motivated, particularly in regards to the question of whether disagreement is epistemically significant. After presenting the structure of these questions, I will show how this framework limits the possibility for epistemic significance due to the narrow interpretation of rationality that it assumes. In the second part, I will reframe the question of significance to address the concerns raised in the previous section. This reorganization will focus on what the problem means for an individual's self-trust. Because this problem is commonly framed as a conundrum about how to act rationally in the face of disagreement, philosophers like Matheson characterize the significance of disagreement by asking: "Does evidence of a disagreement give me a defeater for my belief?" (Matheson 2015b, 13).[1] There are two factors which predict whether a philosopher will find disagreement epistemically significant: first, if philosophers find disagreement among epistemic peers—roughly someone "as good as you at evaluating such claims"—to be a comprehensible question (Elga 2007) and second, whether philosophers find the Uniqueness Thesis to be true—that is, that for any given body of evidence and any given proposition, there is some one level of confidence that it is uniquely rational to maintain about that proposition (Feldman 2007). Both of these concerns artificially limit the significance of disagreement, as those who do not find peer language to be comprehensible or those who do not hold the Uniqueness Thesis will thus find disagreement to lack epistemic consequence. But by changing the inquiry so that it looks at what disagreement means for self-trust, even philosophers who in the past have not found disagreement significant can realize the epistemic worth of questions related to disagreement.

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[1] This description of the problem of disagreement is taken from Feldman & Warfield 2010, as well as Christensen & Lackey 2013.

The problem of disagreement has been a mainstay in epistemology over the past few decades. Emerging from literature concerning religious disagreement in particular, philosophical questions about disagreement now occupy their own sub-field within social epistemology. To facilitate our understanding of the problem of disagreement, we will begin by asking what many philosophers before us have asked: is disagreement epistemically significant? The impact that disagreements have on our lives is undeniable, but this truth does not necessarily mean that there is an issue of epistemic concern at the heart of disagreement. To ask if something is epistemically significant is often seen as a means to ask how that something might impact an individual's belief itself. After I lay out the current framing of the disagreement question, I will turn to what has been argued to be the most epistemically significant case: disagreement with a so-called epistemic peer. Although peer language can be found throughout disagreement literature, its fruitfulness has been the subject of much debate. Besides giving us the vocabulary within which disagreement is discussed, the presumption of an intellectual peer also generates the two standard approaches to disagreement. Those with

Conciliatory views of disagreement argue that evidence of peer disagreement should impact one's justification for a proposition, while those who hold a Steadfast View believe there are numerous ways to consider a proposition and, consequently, rebuff the Conciliationists by disputing the epistemic significance of disagreement altogether.[2] Chapter Two canvasses these positions as well as their inadequacies, given the argument regarding self-trust I pursue at the end of the present chapter.

One may object already to the task of this chapter by claiming that whether one finds disagreement epistemically significant is determined simply by one's intuitions regarding the solution to it. This possibility is raised by Matheson, who observes that those who find disagreement epistemically significant overwhelming hold the abovementioned Conciliatory View of disagreement, and those who hold the Steadfast View tend not to find disagreement epistemically significant at all.[3] While Matheson's observation is generally true, his account is insufficient in that it overlooks more fundamental factors impacting philosophers' intuitions, particularly concerning epistemic peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis. In the case of epistemic peers, there is still much debate about what an epistemic peer actually is and whether this concept is even fruitful, given its possible abstraction from actual disagreements in the world. Many philosophers, including Louise Antony, object to the concept of epistemic peers because of the impossibility of finding such a thing in the real world. It is my goal in this chapter not only to show that one's position on the significance of disagreement depends on these deeper intuitions regarding knowledge and rationality but to move beyond these two positions towards a more accessible and realistic account of the problem.

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[2] This means of classifying solutions is Matheson's. While it is generally true, there are many defenders of Steadfast positions who would still consider peer disagreement to be epistemically significant. Examples of this can be found in Alvin Plantinga 2000a, Peter Van Inwagen 2010, and Gideon Rosen 2001.

[3] As Matheson notes, the exception to the latter is Plantinga. See Matheson 2015b, 65. The account I will present shortly is able to explain why Plantinga finds disagreement significant but also maintains a Steadfast solution to it.

Although I will engage the proposed responses to disagreement more substantially in Chapter Two, for the moment, allow the following brief excursus to suffice. The Conciliatory position maintains that, in cases of peer disagreement, one should give equal weight to the opinion of one's peer and to one's own opinion.[4] Philosophers who hold this view argue that when one finds oneself in a situation of peer disagreement, rationality requires one to split the difference between one's confidence that p and one's peer's confidence that not p, which may lead the individual to withhold belief that p.[5] Unsurprisingly, Conciliationists also find the Uniqueness Thesis to be true: if there is only one appropriate credence to have about a proposition, given a certain amount of evidence, then in the case of disagreeing with your epistemic peer, you ought to believe at least one of you made an error. At the other end of the spectrum is the Steadfast View, according to which one is not required to change one's view in the face of peer disagreement in order to be counted as still acting rationally.[6] Most philosophers who maintain a Steadfast position also think that the Uniqueness Thesis is false; thus they are not inclined to change their beliefs in the face of peer disagreement.

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[4] Examples of Conciliatory positions include Adam Elga's partly Conciliatory view, in which he argues we ought to be conciliatory on topics other than disagreement. See Elga 2010, 175-186. See also David Christenson's account of epistemic modesty in Christenson 2007, 187-217.

[5] There are several types of Conciliatory positions. The one described above in which the two individuals in a disagreement split the difference between their credences is usually called the Equal Weight View, as named by Kelly 2005, 167-96.

In this chapter, I will not make a judgment about the possibility of peer disagreement or whether the Uniqueness Thesis is true. Instead, I will argue that even if one does believe that disagreement is significant by these accounts, peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis are not the most central problems for disagreement anyway. In the very framing of this question, the possibilities for epistemic significance have already been seriously limited due to the narrow interpretation of rationality on which these concepts depend. It is a limited view of rationality that makes disagreement significant only for those who find the possibility of epistemic peers conceivable or assent to the Uniqueness Thesis. By delving into the historical development of this problem and noting its origin in questions of religious disagreement, it becomes clear that questions of disagreement are about individual, first-person disagreements and not theoretical disagreements. The history of this problem in contemporary analytic philosophy is relevant, in part, because it reveals the urgency of dealing with such a question—that there are issues at stake so relevant to an individual's daily living that resorting to agnosticism or uncertainty would have a detrimental impact. The problem of disagreement is actually motivated by the epistemic concepts of self-trust and trust in others (Zagzebski 2012). Accordingly, to determine whether this problem is epistemically significant at all, one needs to understand how these concepts support each other and why they appear to conflict in problems of disagreement. While the problem of disagreement was initially framed to guide one's response to disagreement, philosophers reduce the epistemic significance when they determine that particular disagreements are more valuable to consider than others. By shifting the focus back to issues of self-trust, I will prove that no matter one's philosophical intuitions about the possibility of epistemic peers or the Uniqueness Thesis, the problem of disagreement is still epistemically significant for individual agents.

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[6] Thomas Kelly's account of higher order evidence is a type of Steadfast account (Kelly 2005). See also Bergmann 2009 and Goldman 2010.

I. The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement

The problem normally amounts to the fact that there are disagreements in the world and the existence of such disagreements necessarily impacts one's epistemic position. To review how this question is currently framed and motivated, I will mostly rely on Jonathon Matheson and Bryan Frances' accounts of disagreement.[7] I will begin as they do, by addressing terminology that is part of the contemporary discussion, with particular concern to disclose which disagreements are considered more interesting than others.[8] In the very setup of the question, Matheson and Frances assume that epistemic significance is directly related to the insights these questions provide for epistemology as a discipline. Thus, to consider whether a disagreement is epistemically significant—or as Matheson puts it, “does evidence of a disagreement give me a defeater for my belief?”—is to examine what this disagreement reveals about knowledge and beliefs in general. (Matheson 2015b, 13). To answer this question as they have posed it, I will look at two components of the current debates: (1) the possibility and comprehensibility of having an epistemic peer, and (2) the feasibility of the Uniqueness Thesis. An epistemic peer is an individual who is roughly equal to me both in evidence about the proposition in question and in reasoning capabilities (Elga 2007, 484). I will argue that a philosopher’s inclination towards accepting the possibility of epistemic peers approximately corresponds to one’s finding the problem of disagreement epistemically significant. Similarly, when looking at the Uniqueness Thesis, this argument tends to be used as evidence by those who maintain a Conciliatory View of disagreement; these same individuals are often those who find disagreement epistemically significant. In the cases of both epistemic peers and the Uniqueness Thesis, I will take time to expand on the relevant literature before showing why this conception of the significance of disagreement is ultimately too narrow.

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[7] Matheson has published a book specifically about articulating what is significant about disagreement—and for whom. He also co-wrote the recently re-written Stanford Encyclopedia entry on disagreement with Bryan Frances (Frances & Matheson 2018). Although I will use their setup, I will still mention where various philosophers disagree with their interpretation.

[8] One such distinction reviewed is Frances and Matheson's division between action disagreement and belief disagreement in order to clarify what is at stake in disagreement scenarios. As I mentioned in the introduction, because action disagreements eliminate the possibility for an agent to suspend belief, Frances and Matheson find them to be less epistemically fruitful to discuss.

As we are talking about differences in beliefs, we should determine what possible doxastic attitudes a person might have towards a proposition. It seems that there are just three doxastic attitudes that an agent can adopt regarding the truth of a proposition: she can believe it is true, she can believe it is false, or she can suspend judgment on it. When we say that two people are in a disagreement, we are saying that they have adopted different doxastic attitudes towards the same proposition. Some philosophers prefer to break these three doxastic attitudes into smaller bits. These degrees of belief, or credences, are usually represented as point values on a scale from 0-1 with 1 signifying complete and total confidence in the truth of a proposition. Therefore, when talking about disagreement, philosophers mean this to encompass any difference in levels of confidences that agents have regarding a proposition. Persons with varying degrees of belief would be considered to be in a philosophical disagreement even if both believe a proposition to be true, so that someone who has a .7 belief in God would be in a disagreement with someone who has a .9 belief in God.[9] Because there are seemingly only three doxastic attitudes that a person can have towards a belief, speaking about these in terms of belief, disbelief, and withholding belief appears to be as accurate as using the following numbers to convey those states: 1, 0, and .5. Matheson argues that degrees of beliefs allow for a more fine-tuned way of dividing doxastic states, which in turn allows more opportunities for disagreements among doxastic beliefs, such as the varying level of belief in God mentioned earlier. However, he does admit that that taxonomy of doxastic attitudes “artificially imposes a quantitative precision on our doxastic attitudes that does not appear to be there.” Speaking about disagreement in terms of degrees of belief is quite common; however, because I have deep reservations about the unrealistic precision this forces on our doxastic attitudes, I prefer not to use credence language whenever possible. Disagreement discourse without numerating degrees of belief not only avoids Bayesian assumptions but also simplifies the scenarios that we will consider. It does not significantly impact the philosophical content at stake.[10]

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[9] Matheson discusses this possibility in an endnote, admitting that for this to be possible the “level of generality is kept constant.” Otherwise there might be some confusion about what credence levels are similar to others. Is a .7 like a .6-.8 or is it just a .7? Although some find credence language to provide the possibility for more disagreements of epistemic significance, I again deem the potential for confusion to be too great and thus prefer to simplify the language when possible. See Matheson 2015b*,* 167.

So far, we have defined a disagreement as a case where at least two persons have different doxastic attitudes towards a proposition. From this situation there arises at least two questions of epistemic importance: (1) Is the fact that someone finds herself in a disagreement rationally problematic? (2) How then should a person respond rationally to this situation? To address both questions requires discerning whether disagreements provide individuals in those situations with a defeater for their belief.[11] Prior to explaining what a defeater is, we need to consider the role epistemic justification plays in disagreement.[12] The main division in justification is between internalists and externalists.[13] Internalists maintain that justification supervenes on the internal states of the subject, whereas for externalists, there is some external feature relevant to whether the individual is justified in believing a proposition.

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[10] Similarly, Matheson suggests that not much hangs on which account is adopted and also prefers the straightforwardness of the three doxastic states account (Matheson 2015b, 6-7). For the first and second chapters, I will utilize credence language more than in later chapters simply because most of the authors I am analyzing also utilize it.

[11] It is assumed throughout the literature that unless otherwise stated, cases of disagreement or peer disagreements are “revealed peer disagreements,” that is to say the individuals in the disagreement both know that they are in a disagreement, and in cases of peer disagreement they also know that they are in a disagreement with a peer (Feldman and Warfield 2010, 3). We will discuss in section I.A of this chapter the problems with this assumption.

[12] Although the term ‘justification’ could be used to refer to several relations between an individual and a belief, in the case of disagreement, we are concerned here with an individual’s propositional justification, the relationship the individual has towards a proposition justified, as opposed to doxastic justification, which is the relation that an individual has to a doxastic attitude that she holds (Matheson 2015b, 10).

[13] Evidentialism is an example of an internalist theory whereas Plantinga’s Proper Functionalism is an externalist theory.

In cases of peer disagreement, there are two kinds of defeaters—that is, ways a person might lose her justification in believing p even after having initial evidence for p, which are especially problematic. One such way is evidence rebutting. Although one might confuse this with limited evidence,[14] rebutting means that a person becomes aware of evidence for p that would then rebut any evidence that justified p in the first place: in other words, to "obtain evidence that there is a problem with the link between the truth of p and what you took to be your evidence for p" (Rotondo 2013, 564). Take, for instance, my belief about my friend's car. I see my friend stepping out of a blue car in the morning. I form the belief that she has a blue car. But the next day I see her stepping out of a green car. This is evidence for the opposite of my prior belief, and this new evidence causes me to be uncertain about my original belief. Even if my friend actually does have a blue car, this evidence gives me reason to doubt my initial belief. My friend could have borrowed the green car, or she could have been borrowing the blue one; I do not know for sure, but I do have evidence that rebuts my prior claim to her having a blue car.[15]

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[14] An example of limited evidence would be if I see a friend walking away from a green car in the morning, and I believe that the green car is in fact hers, but if given additional evidence—like if someone else who knows her well told me she has a blue car, and then I saw her drive a blue car for the next two weeks—then this new evidence would outweigh my initial evidence. Some philosophers, like Kelly, consider disagreement to be a case of new evidence (Kelly 2010). In contrast to evidence rebutting, in a case of limited evidence I have made my judgement without sufficient evidence.

[15] Defeaters can be either partial or full. In partial defeaters, the proposition as a whole is still justified even if it is less justified than earlier. Full defeaters occur when the proposition is rendered on a balance unjustified. In the case of my friend's car, this

Another kind of defeater is undermining.[16] Undermining shows that the evidence I had for my belief was not good evidence. Consider the following example: I look into a shop window, and I see a chair. The chair looks like it's the color green. Accordingly, I form the belief that it is a green chair. But then I learn that the window is illuminated by green lights.[17] It might still be the case that the chair is green, as my evidence is not definitively otherwise. But this new evidence shows that the evidence I had before was not the right kind of evidence for my belief. This way of losing one's own justification is thus called evidence undermining (Rotondo 2013).

Matheson argues that this framing of disagreement is available to anyone, no matter their preferred theory of justification. He supports this by pointing out that any features an agent has which make their belief in a proposition good can, all things considered, be defeated.[18] Yet even when setting up of the problem of disagreement, an internalist interpretation of justification and evidence appears to be assumed. Although total consensus among all those who defend a Conciliatory or Steadfast position is elusive, the majority accept an evidentialist account of justification of beliefs,

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rebutting evidence might not fully defeat my belief about the color of my friend's car. The terms "partial" and "full defeaters" come from Bergmann 2005, 422. See also Thune 2010.

[16] Christenson refers to this kind of undermining as "undercutting." He uses "undercutting" to define first-order undermining—that is, undermining in the case of someone initially justifying their belief. Accordingly, "undermining" as he uses it refers to higher-order undermining, that is, undermining after one has initial justification for a belief. Matheson also prefers undercutting to undermining, but with this particular distinction. See Christensen 2010; Matheson 2015b, 11.

[17] I owe this example of the chair in the window of a shop to Christenson, who gets it from Feldman in turn. See Christensen 2010 and Feldman 2007.

[18] For evidentialism this could be some change in evidence, and for a properly functioning account this would be something that makes the belief forming process no longer function properly.

in which evidentialism means that a person is justified in believing a proposition p at time t if and only if S's evidence for p at t support believing p.[19] Richard Feldman and Earl Conee, two leading defenders of this view, have explicitly defined evidentialism as a thesis about the justificatory status of all of the doxastic attitudes, including belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment. Furthermore, evidentialism endeavors to explain a situation when one is justified in believing a proposition, not when one's believing is justified.[20] It is clear, then, that to the extent an account of disagreement relies on evidentialism, it is oriented towards a rationality that satisfies knowledge, rather than any other sort of rationality.

By couching the epistemic significance of disagreement in terms of defeaters, Matheson limits the possibility for significance to gathering more information about epistemology as a field and not more deeply understanding the situation of the individuals involved. He writes that this setup is not necessarily in favor of internalism because "prominent externalist theories have explicitly endorsed the idea the evidence can play such a defeating role" (Matheson 2015b, 13). Moreover, he notes that it is plausible that evidence can independently play this role: he argues that, as many of the cases considered in disagreement literature do not say how the prima facie justification came to be, it is possible that newly gained evidence would defeat a justification. I remain skeptical that this framing of the problem of disagreement does not force internalist inclinations. I will discuss my worries about the popular framework for this problem in greater detail after evaluating what provides epistemic significance according to this view.

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[19] Examples of those in favor of evidentialist accounts include Richard Feldman, Alvin Goldman, Brian Weatherson, and Earl Conee. Evidentialism is also very prominent in philosophy of religion circles, especially those concerned with religious disagreements. On evidentialism in the philosophy of religion, see Plantinga 1983. For a more extended discussion, see Plantinga 2000a.

[20] In order for someone's beliefs to be justified, one must have good reasons to believe, as well as believe precisely for those very same good reasons.

Another problem with the defeater-centric formation of the question is that it assumes the individuals in a disagreement began with a rational belief. As Frances and Matheson note, it is quite possible for someone to enter a disagreement with an irrational belief but to still respond to the disagreement rationally (Frances and Matheson 2018). However, since the question is posed as how to rationally respond to disagreement, it assumes that both individuals began with justified beliefs (Kelly 2008, 611). Frances and Matheson use this as an opportunity to distinguish between the individual's new level of confidence regarding a proposition as rational, on the one hand, and the new level of confidence needed in order for the individual's response to the new information to be rational, on the other (Frances and Matheson 2018). As I will argue later in Chapter Three, I believe my account of disagreement will be able to address both of these considerations at the same time.

A. Epistemic Peers

If we are setting up this question with the goal of providing greater insight to the field of epistemology, then it would seem that certain cases of disagreement are more philosophically interesting than others. One of the ways that philosophers could gain more insight for the field of epistemology would be to emphasize the relationship between the person's reasoning abilities and the evidence in a particular disagreement.

As philosophers rely on examples to show not only the usefulness of their solutions but also the extent of the problem, we will begin to examine the various relationships between persons in disagreements by considering several examples.[21] Consider the following examples from Matheson:

> Case 1: I believe that Saturn is the only planet in our solar system with rings. I then strike up a conversation with astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson. As the conversation goes on, it becomes apparent that he believes that there are four planets with rings in our solar system. (Matheson 2015b, 19)

In Case 1, most philosophers would agree that once the disagreement is revealed, I should change my credence about p, as Neil deGrasse Tyson and I are not epistemically symmetrical in this particular proposition. I do not have the same evidence as Neil deGrasse Tyson about the number of planets in our solar system with rings.[22] This case provides interesting questions about recognizing experts and other concerns within testimony literature; however, taking into account the goal of understanding what disagreements reveal about knowledge in general, this example does not provide similarly fruitful material. We learn here that to best achieve the present goal, the cases of disagreement ought to be between two individuals with equal evidence. But equality in evidence is not sufficient alone to provide the kinds of examples needed to achieve the goal of gaining insight into knowledge. We also need to consider reasoning abilities, as Matheson suggests with this next case:

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[21] The type of argument that an author utilizes depends oftentimes on the solution for which they will be arguing. For the most part, those in favor of Conciliatory views tend to give straightforward examples of disagreements about mathematical or scientific cases. I think perhaps this is because they are trying to encourage an intuitive affirmation of the Uniqueness Thesis. The Uniqueness Thesis argues that "for a given body of evidence and a given proposition, there is some one level of confidence that it is uniquely rational to have in that proposition given that evidence." A particularly strong example of this move is David Christensen's example of the splitting of a bill among five friends after a meal. See Feldman 2006b.

[22] It would be safe to assume this, as an expert has had access to more evidence than that which was available in my seventh-grade science textbook, which was the last time I gained evidence about this proposition. I also lack the same reasoning abilities for this particular case. Again, it seems fair to assume that even if I had access to the same evidence as Neil deGrasse Tyson about this claim, I would not know how to reason accordingly about the evidence as well as he would. Since Case 1 does a nice job of motivating why individuals would want a similarity of evidence between individuals in a disagreement, I choose to focus initially on that part of this example (Matheson 2015b, 19).

> Case 2: I am picking up a friend after having minor surgery. When I arrive, my friend is still quite groggy from the anesthetics. He looks down at his hands and claims that he has four thumbs. While he is in general an intelligent guy, it is quite clear to me that he has exactly two thumbs… since I am aware he is still under the effects of anesthesia (and I am not), I maintain my belief that he has exactly two thumbs. (Matheson 2015b, 19)

In Case 2, while my friend and I might usually share the same reasoning abilities, in this instance, because my friend is under the influence of drugs, and I have no reason to think my reasoning is compromised, he is not my equal. Again, it seems that we could learn numerous philosophically interesting things from evaluating disagreement situations in which we have reason to believe that one agent has more reasoning ability than the other. Yet by controlling for other mitigating factors, we might, as Matheson suggests, "best isolate the epistemic effects of the discovered disagreement itself" (Matheson 2015b, 21). This of course completely goes along with Matheson's goal of discovering what disagreement tells us for epistemology generally.

Thomas Kelly also shares the goal of discerning what disagreement means for contemporary accounts of knowledge. In order to devise these apparently more philosophically interesting cases, he introduced to the literature the concept of epistemic peers.[23] As briefly mentioned earlier, epistemic peers are characterized as two individuals equal with respect to some question only if they fulfill these two conditions: first, “they are equals with respect to their familiarity with the evidence and arguments which bear on that question,” and, second, “they are equals with respect to general epistemic virtues such as intelligence, thoughtfulness, and freedom from bias” (Kelly 2005, 174). Regarding the first criterion: while it is tempting to think that this requires both agents to have identical evidence, this is not necessarily the case, even if the idea of identical evidence is often used as shorthand to simplify the problem of disagreement. In fact, Matheson suggests that two epistemic peers could have equally good but not identical evidence.[24] Equality in evidential possession can be obtained in light of equally good, though different, bodies of evidence regarding p. However, just because individuals are epistemic peers does not mean they actually have good evidence. My friend Charlie and I might have equality in evidential possession about how many planets there are, but we both could be very wrong, even though we are epistemic peers in this evidential sense.[25]

Regarding the second criterion, concerning “equality with respect to epistemic virtues,” Kelly’s point here is crucial, because while he thinks epistemic virtues cover skills and faculties such as intelligence, memory, and perception, as well as character traits such as open-mindedness, intellectual courage, and thoughtfulness, he—like Matheson—affirms the necessity of epistemic virtue language, notwithstanding the fact that it might be easier to simply discuss intelligence. In short, Matheson and Kelly argue that equality in the capacity to process evidence does not mean that an individual actually processes the evidence in the exact same way. As Matheson notes:

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[23] Although most credit Kelly for introducing the term into the literature on the epistemic significance of disagreement, Kelly himself gives credit for the term to Gary Gutting. See Kelly 2005, Gutting 1982.

[24] Matheson suggests the example of two sociologists studying the same topic with their own equally representative surveys. While the studies might be equally good, they could be gathered independently of one another, and thus not be identical (Matheson 2015b, 22).

[25] This is another concern I have with the formulation of peer disagreement as it currently stands. I will discuss how my account can provide a solution to this issue in Chapter Three.

> Equality in evidence processing also does not entail that the peers have the same faculties… what equality in evidential processing does require is that the faculties of epistemic peers are equally good—that is the likelihood of their processing of the evidence correctly is equally high. (Matheson 2015b, 22)

It would be unreasonable to think that peers would have the same faculties—indeed, more unrealistic than the idea of epistemic peers already seems. But it is not impossible to assume that two individuals might be equally likely to process evidence correctly. It follows from this likelihood that the individuals would not only be equally good at processing information, but also perhaps have some of the same epistemic virtues, such as neutrality. Furthermore, if two individuals were equal in terms of epistemic virtues, then they would be equally good at processing and evaluating evidence. Since Kelly hones in on the importance of epistemic peers being equally likely to get the same answer, it seems that epistemic virtues are necessary, given the support they lend to evaluating information.

Kelly is an outlier as far as his definition of epistemic peers is concerned. Most disagreement literature defines epistemic peers so narrowly that a person's epistemic virtues do not even enter consideration. Early uses of the term "epistemic peerhood" utilized epistemic virtues as a way to define peers (Gutting 1982, 83). Similarly to Kelly, Matheson and Axel Gelfert used epistemic virtues as their starting point. For his part, though, Matheson ends up dropping all epistemic virtue language in his definition of epistemic peers, as he is much more concerned about one's epistemic position at the moment regarding p. And Gelfert, having referenced the importance of epistemic virtues in his very early discussions of disagreement, proposes removing epistemic virtue language altogether in favor of self-awareness, something for which, he argues, epistemic virtues do not account.[26] Ensuing treatments of epistemic peerhood quickly added the requirement that for two epistemic agents to count as peers, they must be "equals with respect to their familiarity with the evidence and arguments which bear on that question" (Kelly 2005,174). Others removed any reference to epistemic virtues at all. Richard Feldman's definition of peers is unique in that it has only one condition and not two, describing epistemic peers in terms of equality with familiarity to evidence alone.[27] However, he focuses on cases in which both conditions—equality with evidence and equality in evaluating evidence—are met.[28] Because Adam Elga, another prominent philosopher in the disagreement literature, roughly defines one's epistemic peer as someone "as good as you at evaluating such claims," he also does not include epistemic virtues in his understanding of peerhood (Elga 2007, 484). David Enoch similarly suggests that an epistemic peer is someone who is "somewhat roughly, antecedently as likely as you are to get things right (on matters of the relevant kind)" (Enoch 2010, 956).

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[26] Gelfert argues that awareness of one's epistemic standing relative to that of a disagreeing party cannot be found in traditional definitions of epistemic peerhood (Gelfert 2011). This does not seem to consider contemporary literature on epistemic virtues, particularly open-mindedness as described by Baehr, which he describes as the willingness to transcend one's own cognitive standpoint in order to take seriously the merits of another—thus requiring an awareness of the other's cognitive standpoint. See Baehr 2011.

[27] Feldman suggests that cases of peer disagreement "involve intelligent, serious, and thoughtful people with access to the same information who come to different and incompatible conclusions" (Feldman 2006b).

[28] Nathan King suggests that Kelly and Elga's position is only a difference in terminology (King 2013, 214). I am less certain this is only a terminological difference, especially given Feldman's position that no rational disagreement actually occurs, ever.

Matheson clarifies a portion of Kelly's account by suggesting that "being in an equally good epistemic position regarding p requires both more and less than equality in evidential possession and equality in evidential processing" (Matheson 2015b, 23). What Matheson means by this is that differing levels of equality in evidential possession and processing can balance each other out, so that two individuals would still count as epistemic peers. Although Kelly sets these two as criteria for epistemic peers, what is really at stake, Matheson suggests, is equality in overall epistemic position. Given his concern for one's epistemic position at the moment regarding p, Matheson defines epistemic peers as follows:

> S1 and S2 are epistemic peers regarding p at t just in case S1 and S2 are in an equally good epistemic position regarding p at t (where one's epistemic position is determined by one's evidence and one's ability to process it well). (Matheson 2015b, 24)

Along this same line, Bryan Frances sets up the idea of epistemic peers by giving what he calls "disagreement factors" (Frances 2014, 26). He suggests that peers need to have equality with regards to these factors: data, evidence, time, ability, background knowledge, and circumstances of investigation (Frances 2014, 26). He expands this list later to include distractions encountered in answering the question, relevant biases, attentiveness when answering the question, and intellectual virtues possessed. (Frances and Matheson 2018). Moreover, both Frances and Matheson note that peers may not be identical with regard to all disagreement factors. One of the individuals might be less equal in some respects, but this deficit might be compensated by her overall position with respect to this proposition.[29] Furthermore, Matheson argues that people will, of course, each have their own unique reasoning abilities. You will not have my reasoning faculties, and I will not have yours, so while we do not have to have the exact same reasoning abilities regarding p, we do need to have the same epistemic position at this moment to be considered peers. This is a necessary but not sufficient criterion for epistemic peers, however. An individual's general epistemic position does not suffice to qualify that individual as an epistemic peer, since two individuals might be equal in terms of their evidential possession and processing but not be in an equally good epistemic position at a given moment, because "there can be circumstantial factors that indicate that one of them is less likely to have utilized their abilities and/or virtuous intellectual character on this particular occasion" (Matheson 2015b, 23). Matheson's earlier example of a friend who just had minor surgery and is still feeling the effects of anesthesia is a useful illustration of this. While, generally speaking, my friend might be my epistemic peer, in this moment he is not due to his compromised intellectual abilities (Matheson 2015b, 24).

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[29] Matheson suggests that this is a reason that epistemic virtues might be important, because the qualities of an epistemically virtuous individual might make up for her lacking other processing skills. This seems a step in the right direction, but does not go far enough, as I will argue in Chapter Three (Matheson 2015b, 23).

There seem to be at least two problems with epistemic peer language. The first is whether or not the concept of epistemic peers is at all related to actual disagreements happening in the world. Following Nathan King, we will call this the satisfaction problem. The second issue is that there exist genuine philosophical theories according to which asking if someone is my epistemic peer is not even a comprehensible question. These concerns totally preempt figuring out how to determine if the peer in question has the same reasoning capabilities as oneself or whether both individuals have been exposed to the exact same evidence. However, even in the unlikely case that two individuals do in fact have the same reasoning abilities and are exposed to the same evidence, there is always a concern as to whether individuals then act rationally in fact.

Beginning with concerns from the disagreement literature, King makes the argument that subjects in the real world rarely, if ever, count as epistemic peers (King, 2008, 199). For an agent to be in a peer disagreement, he argues that the agent needs to meet four conditions: the disagreement condition, the same evidence condition, the dispositional condition, and the acknowledgment condition. The first condition seems obvious: that the agent must genuinely disagree with some other subject. Although King admits this condition is often satisfied, he suggests that it is "possible for two intelligent persons [merely] to think that they disagree."[30] For the second condition to be met, both agents must have the same evidence relevant to the disagreement, and for the third, they must be equally well-disposed to respond reliably to their shared evidence. The same evidence and dispositional conditions are King's way of defining epistemic peerhood. Finally, to be in a reasonable peer disagreement, the agents must also acknowledge that the three previous conditions are met, and thus that they are in a peer disagreement. Moreover, King argues that in addition to these standards, each subject must also lack some independent reason to think she is more likely to be right. After all of these conditions are met, the individuals are considered to be in a reasonable peer disagreement.

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[30] To support this claim, King references Ernest Sosa's 2010 article on the epistemology of disagreement, in which Sosa argues along this line. See Sosa 2010.

It is not difficult to see why King and others are thus concerned about the actuality of peer disagreements, given the impossible conditions that the individuals must meet. Just consider condition two, the same evidence condition, and the enormous obligations that arise from it. Putting aside the issue of what counts as evidence for the moment, what is the likelihood that two subjects will have the same evidence, including, for example, "their nonfactive mental states, factive mental states, cogent arguments, background beliefs, intuitions, and seemings?"[31] (King 2008, 200). Yet even if we do not want to accept all of these as evidence, to be epistemic peers, individuals are required to share all and only the same evidence relevant to the disagreement. The agents in question could not have any evidence beyond the shared evidence that might appear relevant. The other two conditions, the dispositional condition and the acknowledgment condition, would similarly have numerous challenges.[32]

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[31] Kelly takes on this debate in Kelly 2008b.

[32] Robert Audi provides an example of what might be a problem for the dispositional condition in his comparison of cognitive disparities. See Audi 2013.

While King presents these arguments in part to argue against the skepticism generated by peer disagreements, his concerns about the plausibility of epistemic peers extend to the concept of peerhood itself. Given this idealized and abstracted terminology, the importance of epistemic peer language in the problem of disagreement may appear ridiculous (Matheson 2015b, 33). Even Matheson admits the idealization of epistemic peer cases beyond the concerns raised by King. Matheson acknowledges that it is rare to have a case of disagreement between only two people, as we are often aware of numerous expert opinions on a controversial issue (Mathenson 2015, 33). Nonetheless, proponents of peer language like Matheson argue that epistemic peers embody the core concern of the disagreement literature: that is, how can I maintain my rationality in disagreement? Although idealized, epistemic peers provide symmetry to the proposition of disagreement, leading Matheson to suggest that we can eliminate other epistemic factors so as to "isolate the epistemic significance of disagreement itself" (Matheson 2015b, 33). This is not to suggest that asymmetric cases are not relevant to the disagreement literature, but rather to acknowledge that, so far as disagreement is considered a rationality problem, the more symmetric the case the better.

However, concerns about peer language do not end there. There are some philosophical theories according to which the concept of peer disagreement is outright incomprehensible. For these philosophers, even to ask if someone is my epistemic peer assumes far too much about the nature of knowledge. Although there are many epistemic positions for which peerhood is unimaginable, I will be focusing on just one:

feminist standpoint theory. Emerging out of second-wave feminism, standpoint theorists like Sandra Harding, Nancy Harstock, and Dorothy Smith see all knowledge as socially situated. Furthermore, they maintain that knowledge gained from individuals outside the socially dominant views challenges the conversations and practices which legitimize the subjugation and marginalization of others, as those outside the socially dominant view have a less obscured view of it.[33] While there are, of course, critics of this epistemic theory, feminist standpoint theorists are still an important part of contemporary social epistemology.[34] In their view, the concept of epistemic peerhood would not be coherent because it relies on a notion of rationality which they do not accept. Moreover, because knowledge is socially situated, even to talk of peers would require an additional condition of social similarity. However, feminist standpoint theorists would be unlikely even to accept this modified definition of peerhood because they would dispute the premise that similar social locations are possible.

For standpoint theorists, disagreement is not significant as a rationality problem but simply returns us to the more fundamental problem of the socially located character of all knowledge. As I mentioned earlier, those who find epistemic peerhood to be compelling, though idealized, also tend to find the problem of disagreement significant.

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[33] Harding uses the language of "provide a less partial and distorted account," whereas Hartsock writes that those who are marginalized have a "more complete understanding" of society or a "less partial and perverse understanding" (Harding 1991, 268, 284; Hartsock 1983, 1, 116, 246).

[34] Critiques include that feminist standpoint theory makes social location essentialized, that it encourages a dangerous epistemic relativism, and that its two main ideas (that there is no standpoint-neutral vantage point and that marginalized standpoints offer epistemic advantage) are in conflict with each other. See Longino 1993 or Hekman 1997 for some of these critiques. Rebecca Kukla responds to these objections in Kukla 2006.

This is, of course, because their underlying understanding of rationality is such that two people could be in the same epistemic situation and thus be equally likely to “get this question right.” Conversely, those who find the concept of epistemic peerhood incomprehensible do not find disagreement to be significant. This is because their understanding of rationality is such that this scenario of disagreement is unlikely, given each agent’s unique social location. These thinkers tend not to address disagreement except when talking about individuals from different social locations. In these cases, the solution is rather obvious, because those outside the social norm have a clearer insight into what is happening. Louise Antony perfectly sums up both concerns in her *New York Times* interview with Gary Gutting:

> How could two epistemic peers—two equally rational, equally well-informed thinkers—fail to converge on the same opinions? But it is not a problem in the real world. In the real world, there are no epistemic peers—no matter how similar our experiences and our psychological capacities, no two of us are exactly alike, and any difference in either of these respects can be rationally relevant to what we believe. (Gutting 2014)

Accordingly, there exists a subsection of epistemology that does not find the problem of disagreement significant because they do not have the same fundamental interpretation of rationality as those who have defined the question so far. Despite the concerns raised above, it is tempting to utilize epistemic peerhood language, given many philosophers’ pursuit of the most rational option in the most straightforward case. Nevertheless, the language of epistemic peerhood does present some challenges when discussing real disagreements, particularly the polarizing disagreements that exist in a society such as ours.

B. The Uniqueness Thesis

In the previous section of this chapter, I showed that the perceived utility of epistemic peerhood is one of the factors determining whether a philosopher finds the problem of disagreement significant. In this section, I will argue that the perceived feasibility of the Uniqueness Thesis also determines whether a philosopher finds disagreement significant. Matheson states that one way to frame solutions to disagreement is simply to ask whether peer disagreements are epistemically significant (Matheson 2015b, 65). If a scholar answers yes, then, Matheson argues, she will be a Conciliationist.[35] However, if a scholar answers no, then she will hold to the Steadfast approach. That is to say, they seem to believe there are numerous ways to believe regarding a proposition p. But this means of classifying solutions does not seem nearly adequate because many defenders of Steadfast positions would agree that peer disagreement is epistemically significant but would not concede that this necessarily entails that they must give up their belief regarding p.[36]

Most of the philosophers who are addressing the Uniqueness Thesis have already admitted the conceivability of epistemic peers, even if they find them idealized, and it is possible still to find disagreement significant given a concern for epistemic peerhood without also motivating the problem using the Uniqueness Thesis.[37] For those who do hold the Uniqueness Thesis, in the case of peer disagreements, the concern is whether or not there is only one rational conclusion. For one who is sympathetic to the Equal Weight View (a Conciliatory View), the Uniqueness Thesis might provide a defense of the view that agents are rationally required to revise their original opinions in circumstances such as peer disagreement, as the Uniqueness Thesis suggests that "for a given body of evidence and a given proposition, there is some one level of confidence that it is uniquely rational to have in that proposition given that evidence" (Kelly 2010, 119).[38] Some Conciliationists have argued for their position from these uniqueness principles; indeed, Kelly himself argues that a certain sort of strong Conciliatory View carries a commitment to uniqueness.[39] Because the Uniqueness Thesis states that there is only one rational position to have regarding p in respond to a particular amount of information, it seems reasonable that those who hold a Conciliatory viewpoint would find it supportive of their position, especially since one of the factors that sets up a peer disagreement is equality in evidence. But, like the Conciliatory position more generally, the Uniqueness Thesis often leads to skepticism when utilized in disagreement. If I find myself in a peer disagreement, meaning you and I have the same evidence regarding p and same reasoning ability, and the Uniqueness Thesis is true, then at most, only one of us can be correct in our doxastic attitude. Accordingly, philosophers like Kelly and

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[35] In fact, Matheson begins his chapter on Conciliatory views of disagreement by arguing that when one gains evidence of idealized disagreement, this should impact one's justification for the proposition. For Matheson, idealized disagreement means a symmetrical peer disagreement (Matheson 2015b, 65).

[36] Examples of philosophers who are in this position include Plantinga, Van Inwagen, and Rosen.

[37] An example of this might be Rosen, who actively argues against the uniqueness thesis, as well as Kelly, who argues likewise.

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[38] The Uniqueness Thesis comes from Feldman 2007.

[39] Ballantyne and Coffman argue against this in Ballantyne & Coffman 2012. The thesis has many refuters, in fact, from those who find it in direct disagreement with the Bayesian framework, to others who find that pre-theoretically it is just false. Proponents of Bayesian epistemology who disagree with this thesis do so on the grounds that it contrasts with Bayesian standards in which "any prior probability distribution is reasonable so long as it is probabilistically coherent" (Kelly 2010, 120).

Rosen who argue against the Uniqueness Thesis do so believing that it leads to unreasonable skepticism. Peter van Inwagen also suggests that because we find ourselves in disagreements about controversial issues, such as politics or religion, the Uniqueness Thesis is problematic (Van Inwagen 1996).[40] David Christensen responds to van Inwagen's concern that the Uniqueness Thesis yields an objectionable amount of skepticism by suggesting that if we think of belief in terms of gradual levels rather than all or nothing, in most cases where I split the difference in degree of confidence between my peer and myself, I would still probably have a sufficient degree of confidence in order to believe p.[41]

To further explore the strengths and weaknesses of these positions, let us consider a case from Feldman, adapted by Matheson (Matheson 2015b, 53; Feldman 2006b). Suppose there are two detectives investigating a crime. They share all the same total evidence about the case, which contains some strong indications that Righty committed the crime, but also equally strong evidence that Lefty committed the crime. On the basis of this total evidence, one of the detectives believes Lefty committed the crime while the other believes that Righty did. If these two detectives' beliefs are thought to be reasonable, then this case appears to point towards the truth of the Underdetermination Thesis, which states that given "any body of evidence there are multiple competitor theories that are all equally well confirmed by that evidence"

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[40] Plantinga has a similar argument focused on moral examples in chapter 13 of Plantinga 2000a.

[41] Linda Zagzebski has a unique argument against the Uniqueness Thesis: "that it follows that as reasonable personas we ought to aim to be epistemically identical, thus threating to dissolve a large part of the self" (Zagzebski 2012, 206).

(Matheson 2015b, 53). The Underdetermination Thesis is thus directly opposed to the Uniqueness Thesis. Those opposed to the Uniqueness Thesis, like Kelly and Rosen, suggest that many evidential situations leave room for more than one completely reasonable doxastic response. Then when my (equally informed, equally intelligent, and so on) friend disagrees with me, we might both be fully rational in our beliefs.

The argument surrounding the Uniqueness Thesis quickly becomes a discussion about what counts as reasonable. While some like Davis or Rosen think that there can be disagreements in which neither party is at epistemic fault, those to whom the Uniqueness Thesis is appealing often disagree with their notion of epistemic fault or rationality (Davis 2015). Matheson presents the arguments for the Uniqueness Thesis and then immediately transitions to concerns about reasonable disagreements by critiquing Rosen's use of the term rational (Matheson 2015b, 53). Rosen writes: "It should be obvious that reasonable people can disagree, even when confronted with a single body of evidence … the mere fact of disagreement does not mean that someone is being unreasonable," and again, "To the contrary, it would appear to be a fact of the epistemic life that a careful review of the evidence does not guarantee consensus, even among thoughtful and otherwise rational investigators" (Matheson 2015b, 53). Matheson responds by pointing out that Rosen's use of "rational" here is different from that of the majority of philosophers of disagreement. Because Rosen uses "rational" to refer to the inquiry of the disagreeing parties rather than the epistemic status of their resulting doxastic attitudes, his sense of the rational does "not entail that each party is justified in believing their resultant belief about p," nor does it follow that each has "correctly responded to the evidence from the fact that each was a responsible inquirer and deliberator on the matter" (Matheson 2015b, 53). As Matheson's critique makes clear, in the case of the Uniqueness Thesis as in the case of peerhood, only a limited account of rationality is being taken into consideration, and to the extent that one disputes that account of rationality, one is unlikely to find disagreement epistemically significant.

It is possible to dispute the account of rationality presupposed by the Uniqueness Thesis in an even more radical way than do the critics I have treated thus far, namely to adopt a full-blown relativist position. Individuals with relativistic leanings would, obviously, not find the problem of disagreement significant because arriving at a different yet still rational conclusion than their peers would not seem problematic. Contesting the Uniqueness Thesis and the account of rationality on which it depends again leads them to consider disagreement epistemically insignificant. The seriously curtailed understanding of rationality assumed by the concepts of epistemic peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis leads us in each case to an incredibly flimsy defense of the significance of disagreement. The question before us is whether disagreement can be shown to be epistemically significant by other means than those just surveyed.

II. A Different Kind of Epistemic Significance

In the first section of this chapter, we explored how contemporary analytic philosophers address the problem of disagreement. They set up the problem as one of rationality and argue that disagreement becomes significant if a disagreement provides evidence of a defeater of my original belief. I argued that a philosopher's intuitions about two philosophical conceptions usually determines whether she will or will not see disagreement as epistemically significant. The first is whether they find idea of epistemic peerhood is comprehensible. Many philosophers who are concerned that peerhood is too idealized a concept do not find peer disagreement as it is currently understood to be as epistemically significant as the actual disagreements that occur in the world. Moreover, philosophers who argue that social context deeply impacts one's knowledge find peerhood an even less realistic concept. This is because at the core of their theory is a solution to disagreement: that the social location of certain individuals allows them to better see all surrounding social relations than that of others; their beliefs are less obscured and have greater justification. For both sorts of peerhood skeptics, because disagreement in its current form is predicated on peerhood, they do not consider it to be epistemically significant. The second is whether the Uniqueness Thesis—that for any batch of evidence there is only one perfectly rational doxastic attitude to have towards a particular belief—holds. Because this thesis maintains that there can only be one totally rational attitude towards a belief, it entails that when we find ourselves in peer disagreements, only one person can be right. Those who do not find the Uniqueness Thesis to be true tend to find disagreement on the whole less significant because they believe it is possible for participants in a disagreement all to maintain their positions and remain rational. My focus in the previous section was on showing that one of the crucial background factors impacting philosophers' positions on both peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis is their assumed interpretation of rationality. From Matheson and Frances' very setup of the question of disagreement, an evidentialist understanding of justification was favored. The language of peerhood assumes problematically strict boundaries for what counts as epistemic factors, and the Uniqueness Thesis artificially circumscribes rationality to internalists' definitions of evidence and justification (Matheson 2015b, 53). I am not concerned here directly to confront these interpretations of rationality. I hope simply to show, instead, that when we separate the epistemic significance of disagreement from peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis, we can provide a broader foundation that includes more philosophical traditions. By articulating a different way to motivate the epistemic significance of disagreement, I am not aiming to create a new way of motivating the problem itself so much as returning to what has always been the most captivating part of disagreement.

To do so, I will begin with a very brief review of the first several articles from which disagreement literature arose. These articles, which focus mainly on religious disagreement, clearly show that what is at stake are issues of self-trust. After reviewing the foundational literature on self-trust from Zagzebski, we will see that the balance of self-trust and trust in others is the key to understanding what is at stake in disagreement. My recognition of self-trust as the fundamental problem presented by disagreement is not unique. But rather than utilizing self-trust as evidence for a particular solution, as have previous attempts (Foley 2001), I contend that the greatest argumentative benefit self-trust provides us is the opportunity to restructure disagreement in terms of one's attempt to have a consistent understanding of the self (Zagzebski 2010, 210).

After describing how self-trust can reorganize what we think of as epistemically significant in cases of disagreement, I will then look at the examples of philosophers from my first section who did and did not find epistemic significance in disagreement. I will show that even those who did not find disagreement to be epistemically significant according to the original framing of the problem will now find it so. Finally, I will conclude this chapter by gesturing to the next, where we will explore the contemporary solutions to disagreement and the ways in which I believe they misunderstand what is truly at stake, especially given the conclusions of the present analysis.

A. Self-Trust and the Epistemic Significance of Disagreement

Although philosophy has often been mocked for dealing with questions too distant from real life, sometimes philosophical quarrels do actually arise from issues most important to our everyday lives.[42] It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that disagreement as a modern phenomenon in contemporary analytic philosophy has its roots in the religious and political disagreements that most frequently impact an individual's life. The modern analytic analysis of disagreement began with Gary Gutting's article, "Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism" (Gutting 1982). Around the same time, Alvin Plantinga addressed religious disagreement in "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?" which he later developed into his book *Warranted Christian Belief*.[43] Plantinga expanded the conversation about religious disagreement so that it included conversations about the role of faith and religious experience and how these concepts link up with the importance of responding rationally to a disagreement. Because the disagreement literature arose from questions about how to deal with issues of a specifically religious sort, it was initially conceived as a first-person problem wherein individuals were uncertain how to deal with disagreements about issues of great significance in their life. Yet over time, disagreement literature lost that first-person perspective and became more theoretical and abstracted from the sorts of disagreements we face on a daily basis.

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[42] Haslanger 2008 is perhaps the most famous example of the abstraction critique. Indeed, Haslanger would have many issues with the way that the disagreement literature has been abstracted from its origins.

[43] Religious disagreement was not Plantinga's only concern in either of these works. See Plantinga 1981, 2000a.

When determining what kind of disagreements were most epistemically salient, Matheson and Frances prefer to focus on what they term belief disagreements. They ignore action disagreements, wherein the disagreement requires an individual to respond to the conflict. Because in the latter, they argue, there is no way to withhold judgement about *p* without essentially believing not *p*, they find action disagreements less epistemically significant, notwithstanding the epistemic significance these kinds of disagreements have in individuals' lives. But this is the opposite of what the original disagreement literature found significant. Peter van Inwagen and Plantinga argue that certain topics, like religion and politics, are of a pressing enough character that we cannot just withhold judgment on all beliefs related to them. Nonetheless, because action disagreements and other first-person disagreements are essentially ignored, the urgency of disagreement is less prevalent in contemporary conversations. While the disagreement literature has expanded to include questions beyond these controversial topics, at the heart of disagreement is still the fundamental question of how do I, in my life, respond to disagreeing with someone about a particular belief—especially one which impacts my life in a particularly urgent way. The unsettled feeling which drives us to ask how we ought to respond to disagreements arises from the tension between our two most fundamental epistemic instincts: our self-trust and our trust in others.

In *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy in Belief*, Linda Zagzebski discusses the dimensions of epistemic self-trust. She considers the rational need for self-trust and trust in others and whether either can withstand reflection. Because self-trust relies on our belief-forming faculties, when we try to justify our trust in ourselves we find ourselves in what is often called epistemic circularity, in which there is no "noncircular way to tell that our belief-forming faculties are reliable as a whole" (Zagzebski 2012, 39). The epistemic circularity of justifying self-trust is not unique to Zagzebski's account, as any philosopher hoping to utilize self-trust finds themselves caught in the same problem of circularity, which is not unique to self-trust either.[44]

Richard Foley argues that self-trust that has been through critical reflection is still rational, and we are entitled to a degree of confidence in it (Foley 2001, 47). But Foley understands self-trust as merely a state to which we retreat given the inadequate responses we have to skepticism (Foley 2001, 24). While Zagzebski agrees with Foley that we are "entitled to our confidence when it withstands self-criticism," she wants self-trust to be more than just a last resort (Zagzebski 2012, 39). For Zagzebski, self-trust is not a sophisticated position which has to be reached by traversing numerous intellectual obstacles. Instead, she argues that before we reflect on our justification for beliefs we already trust ourselves. Because this self-trust is pre-reflective, it leads us naturally to trust our environment and the faculties of others:

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[44] Alston 1986, 2001, and 2005 address related epistemic problems of circularity. Alston argues that we cannot justify any belief arising from a basic practice (such as perception, memory, introspection etc.) without justifying the well-groundedness of the practice. But we cannot justify the well-groundedness of the practice without using the same practice. However, he argues that this circularity does not prevent us from using an inductive argument to prove the groundedness of a practice (Alston 1986, 202-203). Accordingly, Alston does not find circularity to lead to skepticism. Alston's position on self-trust, however, is similar to Foley's, because they both take self-trust to be a position one arrives at after argumentation.

> The faculties I rely on in forming belief operate in an environment, so trusting my faculties includes trusting that the environment is appropriate to the faculties. My faculties may operate on the environment directly, or they may operate indirectly through the faculties of others. It is natural to believe what people tell me. Trust in my faculties and environment includes trust in the faculties of many other persons. Trust in others, like trust in the self, is the starting point. It is a component of the pre-reflective self. (Zagzebski 2012, 38)

Zagzebski thus disagrees with Foley because he believes that trust in our faculties arises from the realization that we do not have proof to connect our faculties to the truth. As Zagzebski notes, Foley seems to assume that "we do not trust the connection between x and y unless we lack proof of the desired connection between x and y and realize that we lack the proof" (Zagzebski 2012, 42). But, she points out, to revert to a state of trustworthiness because of the lack of proof requires that the feeling of trust must have preceded the lack of proof in order for one to now "fall back" on it (Zagzebski 2012, 42). Accordingly, Zagzebski advocates for three components included in a pre-reflective trust in faculties: we treat these faculties as if they will get us to the truth; we believe that they will get us there; and we feel a trusting emotion towards them.[45]

I am not the first in the disagreement literature to turn to self-trust. Supporters of the Steadfast View—who believe one can rationally maintain their belief in the face of disagreement—have long presented self-trust as possible evidence in their favor. Ralph Wedgewood, for example, argues that there is a rational asymmetry of sorts between one's own intuitions and the intuitions of other people.[46] The symmetry that appears in cases of peer disagreement is only symmetrical from a third-person point of view; each person in the disagreement occupies a first-person perspective from which they cannot extract themselves. Thus, Wedgewood argues, it is rational to have an egocentric bias towards our beliefs (Wedgewood 2007). Some have used self-trust as a means for arguing for Conciliatory views as well—that we should have less confidence in our original belief when we find ourselves in a disagreement—given the relationship between self-trust and trust in others. Like Zagzebski, Foley also believes that our self-trust is foundational for our trust in others:

> The presumption of trust in others is generated out of self-trust. My opinions have been shaped by faculties and circumstances that shape the opinions of others. Thus, insofar as I trust my opinions and faculties, I am pressured to trust the opinions and faculties of others as well, even when I know little or nothing about their track record of reliability or their specific

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[45] See Zagzebski 2012, 34. Elizabeth Fricker suggests that Zagzebski's third component, the feeling of trust, requires an absence of doubts and anxieties (Fricker 2016, 152). However, I do not think the requirement is quite this strong. We will explore shortly the fact that Zagzebski views disagreement as just a problem of self-trust and not self-trust as opposed to trust in others. This view seems to make room for doubts about our self-trust.

[46] In this case Wedgewood is focusing on moral intuitions rather than all types of intuitions (Wedgewood 2007).

> circumstances or backgrounds. (Foley 2001, 108)

Considering this statement, it should not be surprising that Foley holds a Conciliatory position on disagreement.[47]

I depart from these deployments of self-trust in that I want to consider self-trust not as motivating any particular solution to disagreement but as the very foundation of the problem it presents us. Zagzebski discusses disagreement as a conflict between the modern values of self-reliance and egalitarianism (Zagzebski 2012, 204). As already noted, Zagzebski holds that many of the qualities that justify me in trusting myself are the same as those that others also possess. Accordingly, there is no reason to favor myself, and moreover, it is reasonable to think of myself as just one among a number of selves (Zagzebski 2012, 208). At the same time, however, she emphasizes the self-reflective capacity of the self which is personal to myself and not necessarily a part of other selves: "I have to assume that the self satisfies the conditions of an executive self in order to go through the reflective processes I perform. There is no need for me to treat other selves as satisfying those conditions because other selves are not doing my reflecting" (Zagzebski 2012, 208). Disagreement is no longer conceived as a conflict between myself and others; it is a conflict about how to take a consistent point of view of the self. In this way, the conflict between self-trust and trust in others fundamentally resolves to a conflict about the self, because without taking myself as trustworthy, I would not trust others (Zagzebski 2012, 208).

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[47] Tomas Bogardus argues against two examples of disagreement from Foley: one with a stranger and one with a peer. Bogardus believes that Foley's position leads to "spinelessness." See Bogardus 2013.

Robert Pasnau argues along these same lines that self-trust and trust in others is at the heart of the disagreement conflict. While he agrees that self-trust is epistemic in nature, he thinks that trust in others counts as a “non-epistemic factor” and accordingly is not part of pure rationality (Pasnau 2015). While he is correct that trust in others has not been accounted for in the particular types of rationality utilized by philosophers in setting up the problem of disagreement, he is wrong to think this makes trust in others a non-epistemic factor. As Zagzebski noted, disagreement is a particular case in which reasonable persons are trying to figure out how to treat the self. Because self-trust is foundational for all epistemic beliefs, defining disagreement as an attempt to take a consistent point of view of the self is incredibly epistemically significant, given the influence the self has on all areas of epistemic importance.

Zagzebski’s account provides one further key to the epistemic significance of the problem of disagreement. As she argues, the problem of disagreement is most interesting when it is “formed out of the first-person, deliberative reasons for a belief and not the third-person, theoretical reasons” (Zagzebski 2012, 210). This turn from the theoretical to the first-person not only places the emphasis of the problem on self-trust, where it belongs, but it also returns the problem to its original form as an urgent and active part of an epistemic agent’s life. By recognizing that trust in others is fundamentally a form of self-trust, we can see that what is at stake in this question is of genuine epistemic concern. What is left now is to show how this new framework yields an epistemically significant account of disagreement even according to those philosophical positions that have not found disagreement significant historically.

B. Significance beyond Epistemic Peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis

In the previous section, we utilized self-trust to reinterpret the problem of disagreement as one of how to balance your trust in yourself with your trust in others. This balance is, at its essence, an attempt to take a consistent point of view on the self. By framing the question this way, the epistemic significance of the problem is returned to its most compelling form as a first-person issue within self-trust generally, opening the conversation beyond just those philosophers who share the interpretation of rationality presupposed by epistemic peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis. In this final section of the chapter, I will show how this new interpretation expands and deepens our sense of disagreement's epistemic significance.

In the first section of this chapter, I argued that philosophers who find epistemic peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis compelling usually find the problem of disagreement of epistemic concern. Though right, to my mind, in finding disagreement significant, these accounts mistake the reason for doing so. Given that disagreement is epistemically problematic because it is a clear example of our being forced to conceive of a consistent view of the self, its epistemic significance arises from the same. Earlier in this chapter, I cited Matheson, who argues that epistemic peer language is important because it allows us to separate all other epistemic issues from disagreement. Matheson thinks that by making the individuals as similar in epistemic situation as possible, we can isolate what is significant about disagreement alone from the other epistemic issues at play. From this view, what makes disagreement epistemically significant is that another individual has the same evidence and reasoning ability as me.

It is unsurprising then that only philosophers for whom epistemic peers are conceivable find disagreement to be an epistemically important problem. We observed a similar limitation with regard to the Uniqueness Thesis.

But what if we reframe this situation in terms of self-trust? If we take seriously Zagzebski's account that disagreement is about understanding the self—that the self gives me reason to trust that I got it right but also gives me reason to think that others have the same faculties which have justified me, so that they also got it right—peer language is unnecessary to conceive the problem of disagreement so understood. Consider Adam Elga's description of our epistemic situation and how it views disagreement:

> There are experts and gurus, people to whom we should defer entirely. There are fakes and fools, who should be ignored. In between, there are friends and other advisors (including our own future and past selves), whose opinions should guide us in a less than fully authoritative way. (Elga 2007, 478)

The amount of authority we ought to give to particular others' beliefs seems to be a problem no matter what philosophical viewpoint one takes. But it is a problem not because of their similarity to me but, rather, because of what it means for my understanding of myself, for no matter how dissimilar another individual and I may be in terms of our epistemic situations, if I am justified in trusting myself because of my possession of certain qualities, and I think that whoever I am in a disagreement with also possesses these qualities, then I will find myself uncertain of how to understand myself consistently. What does this mean for philosophers who find epistemic peers either unlikely or impossible? Feminist standpoint theorists hold that, while knowledge is socially located, and there is no one standpoint neutral vantage point, certain viewpoints are closer to a neutral vantage point than others, particularly those of the marginalized (Harding 1991, 268, 284). Even if I assume that knowledge is socially located, I will still have to figure out a consistent view of the self, for when I find myself in a disagreement, I might have reason to doubt myself given that someone else might possibly have a less obscured view than I do. Moreover, while we might not be epistemically situated in the same place, we might think that we are more similar than not to those with whom we disagree, because no matter our social location, the qualities that justify me in my beliefs also justify others in theirs. Therefore, when I find myself in a disagreement, I am still attempting to make a consistent view of the self, given the similarities we share.

We need, likewise, to consider what disagreement as a conflict of self-trust means for philosophers who maintain the Uniqueness Thesis. As it currently stands, the epistemic significance of disagreement arises from the concern that there is only one reasonable doxastic attitude to have regarding p given a particular amount of evidence. But this again misjudges the situation. Deep conflict within self-trust remains regardless of whether there is only one rational doxastic attitude to have given any amount of evidence. Suppose you and I are in a disagreement about the color of a particular car. I think it is blue while you think it is gray. It is true that there is some tension because the car can only be one color, and, thus, only one of us can be correct. But at a deeper level, we know that each of us is using the same faculties and the same environment to make a judgment about the color of the car. If you are wrong, then my abilities, which are just like yours, are also called into question. Likewise, if I am wrong, then your abilities are suspect as well. Even if there is no one correct color of the car, the instance of the disagreement causes doubt about our faculties and, accordingly, about our epistemic abilities as a whole. Regardless of the truth of the Uniqueness Thesis, disagreement is epistemically significant because of the questions it raises regarding our self-trust.

CONCLUSION

The problem of disagreement can have epistemic significance regardless of your interpretation of rationality so long as the emphasis is placed where it should be: on issues of self-trust. By reorienting the problem to one of self-trust, disagreement becomes a matter of epistemic urgency. Disagreement is no longer simply another way to figure out the bounds of justification or to gather intel about what knowledge itself is. Instead, disagreement returns to the heart of epistemology by reflecting on what the self is and how to understand others. In this chapter, I have shown that the contemporary setup for the problem of disagreement not only relies on too narrow an understanding of rationality but also neglects what is really of epistemic significance in the problem. By reframing the problem in terms of self-trust, disagreement becomes epistemically significant whether or not one finds epistemic peer language tenable or the Uniqueness Thesis true. This is only the first area in which current discussion of disagreement is lacking, however. Just as I have shown the extant framing of the question to depend on a limited interpretation of rationality, so too can the contemporary solutions that are provided for it. In the following chapter, I will examine the most common solutions to the problem of disagreement as well as the problematic understanding of rationality which underpins them. When I apply these solutions to our new framing of this problem as one rooted in an undermining of self-trust, it will be clear that they are insufficient to address what is happening in cases of first-person disagreement. Accordingly, we will need to consider a different approach to epistemology which concerns itself with providing epistemic guidance for individuals. From this chapter, it is clear that disagreement is most challenging when it is conceived in a first-person and not in a theoretical sense. To think this means disagreement concerns non-epistemic factors is to misunderstand the problem itself. Disagreement is, at its core, about achieving a consistent view of the self, and it requires a theory of knowledge which involves the whole self in order to address it.

CHAPTER 2: In Favor of a Regulative Epistemological Approach to Disagreement

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I problematized contemporary accounts of the epistemic significance of disagreement. Initially, I reasoned that philosophers' beliefs about the epistemic significance of disagreement depend on their beliefs relative to two ideas: first, the possibility of having an epistemic peer who shares the same reasoning abilities and evidence as yourself, and second, the truth of the Uniqueness Thesis, which maintains that for any proposition *p* that is supported by a certain set of evidence, there is only one correct doxastic attitude to hold about *p* given this evidence. After introducing how contemporary philosophers determine epistemic significance, I argued that these accounts are insufficient because they do not address the actual philosophical puzzle which arises in disagreement: that is, in cases of disagreement one finds herself struggling to form a coherent account of the self. In disagreement, the characteristics which give one reasons to trust oneself are the very same reasons that give one reasons to trust another. By shifting our concern from similar epistemic positions to the problem of ordering a coherent self, we not only move to a more epistemically noteworthy problem, but we also extend the number of philosophical perspectives which can find disagreement to be epistemically significant.

In the first chapter, my argument was limited to what philosophers find epistemically significant about the problem of disagreement. The majority of the chapter was spent discussing how to set up the problem of disagreement, particularly with regards to arguments about the necessity and possibility of epistemic peerhood. The discussion which followed also involved exploring the connection between the problem of disagreement and a philosopher's belief about the truth of the Uniqueness Thesis, which often correlates with whether or not she finds the problem epistemically significant. In this chapter, I will move beyond last chapter's discussion of how to set up the problem of disagreement to look at the contemporary solutions to disagreement. If the problem of disagreement is truly about a coherent view of the self, as I have argued, then the proposed solutions ought to address this problem and not the less significant problems that we saw arise from epistemic peerhood or the Uniqueness Thesis in Chapter One.

This chapter will begin by explicating the most prominent solutions to disagreement. The two most common responses exist on a spectrum. On one end of the spectrum are the Conciliatory views, which hold that a person who finds herself in a case of disagreement should be less confident in her original beliefs given the evidence of peer disagreement. The most popular of these views, although certainly not the most sophisticated one, is called the Equal Weight View (EWV) (Elga 2007). As its name suggests, proponents of the EWV think that in cases of peer disagreement, equal weight ought to be given to a peer's credence and to one's own credence. Accordingly, the EWV encourages those in peer disagreements to split the difference of their credences in order to find a median position. As one might suspect, the simple EWV has many criticisms, particularly that it might often lead to agnosticism about important propositions. Many of these critics maintain the Steadfast position, which is on the opposite side of the spectrum from the Conciliatory views. Those in favor of Steadfast positions hold that even in the face of disagreement, one ought to maintain one's prior credence, in essence giving more weight to one's own position than to that of one's peers.[1]

In addition to these primary responses to disagreement are two more popular views, each championed by a single philosopher. Thomas Kelly calls his view the Total Evidence View (TEV). It has sometimes been described as a type of Steadfast View, since Kelly thinks it is possible to maintain one's credence in the face of disagreement (Kelly 2010). However, Kelly's reasoning for the ability to rationally maintain one's credence in cases of disagreement differs from that of most Steadfast positions: he thinks that a person in a case of peer disagreement ought to weigh their prior evidence (the evidence they had in favor of their credence before they knew they were in a peer disagreement) with the new evidence they have that their peer disagrees. The final view, Jennifer Lackey's Justificationist View, brings to light one of the more popular areas of concern among philosophers who study disagreement: *Independence*. This raises the question of whether the evidence that your peer might be wrong should be independent of the disagreement itself. The Justificationist View denies *Independence* and lies somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. She suggests that in cases where your prior evidence strongly supports your credence about a proposition, then that can cause you to reassess your peer's epistemic credentials. The Justificationist View maintains that if your peer disagrees with you on something you are highly justified in believing, then you have reason to discount her opinion.

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[1] Examples include Kelly 2005, Bergmann 2009, and Goldman 2010.

After presenting these solutions I will use the second section of this chapter to raise concerns regarding their sufficiency to address the problems raised in Chapter One. Because contemporary understandings of what makes disagreement significant miss the mark, it is unsurprising that their solutions are also skewed. The Conciliatory and Steadfast accounts that we looked at in the previous section all attempt to address the problem of disagreement in terms of peerhood or the Uniqueness Thesis. These accounts only consider problems of epistemic and evidential symmetry. But, if the problem is one of maintaining a coherent sense of the self, as I argued in Chapter One, then each of these solutions is inadequate to address those concerns. The Steadfast and Conciliatory accounts do not actually deal with the issue of a coherent self. Instead, they sidestep this particular problem altogether in favor of addressing the puzzle of a rational response to symmetry. Both Thomas Kelly's Total Evidence View and Jennifer Lackey's Justificationist solution attempt to deal with the disquiet that occurs when self-trust and trust in others pull one in different directions. But both accounts still worry primarily about what the problem of symmetry tells us about knowledge. Rather than these accounts, we need a solution that wrestles with the problems of self-trust and trust in others for their own sake.

In the final section of this chapter, I will argue that properly addressing the issue of self-trust requires a regulative approach to disagreement. Like most concerns treated in epistemology, disagreement has become an occasion for theorizing more generally about knowledge, rationality, and belief, rather than attempting to solve the dilemma itself. Given the prominent role that disagreement plays in our political, religious, and social lives, disagreement should not merely be conceived as an opportunity for greater epistemological discovery but as an epistemic quandary worth our time. Moreover, because of the individualistic nature of the issues surrounding self-trust, the solution to disagreement needs to focus on how to help individuals address their own uncertainty in belief.

Utilizing Nicholas Wolterstorff's distinction between regulative and analytic epistemology, I suggest that because disagreement has its roots in problems of self-trust, it provides the perfect opportunity to generate guidance about epistemic practice, shifting the discussion into regulative territory.[2] Accordingly, in this chapter I will argue for a regulative approach to the problem of disagreement in order to more accurately explain what the problem of disagreement is, and to provide a link between disagreement as an intellectual problem and a theory of right action.

I. Contemporary Solutions to Disagreement

In this section, I will describe the most prominent solutions to peer disagreement as well as their critiques. Most philosophers agree that these solutions exist on a continuum between the two most extreme positions, Conciliatory views and Steadfast views.[3] Like the numerous supporters of these positions, both views have multiple iterations that differ from each other to varying degrees. In this section specifically, we will tackle arguments in favor of each view as well as perceived problems which each position. Beginning with the Conciliatory positions, we will focus on the most discussed (and simplistic) version named the Equal Weight View (EWV). From there, we will address the Steadfast positions based on their critiques of the EWV. On the spectrum between Conciliationism and Steadfast views, there are two other positions which I believe deserve attention, as noted above: Thomas Kelly's Total Evidence View (TEV), which is sometimes proffered as an argument against the EWV, and Jennifer Lackey's Justificationist theory, which is also considered an objection to Conciliationism.

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[2] Wolterstorff distinguishes between analytic epistemology, that which aims to produce theories about knowledge, rationality, warrant, justification, etc., and regulative epistemology, which focuses on "how we ought to conduct our understandings, what we ought to do by way of forming beliefs" (Wolterstorff 1996, xvi). See also Roberts & Wood 2007, which applies regulative epistemology to virtue theory.

[3] Jonathan Matheson defends such a position in Matheson 2015b, 13.

To begin this chapter, we will first introduce the family of Conciliatory views, as they are currently most popular among philosophers. Christenson, Feldman, and Elga are just a few philosophers who have publicly defended Conciliatory views.[4] As their name suggests, Conciliatory views maintain that when one finds oneself in a peer disagreement (that is, when one has a different credence about some proposition than someone else with whom one is a peer) then one ought to be less certain of one's original credence in some way. The exact amount of skepticism that rationality requires depends entirely on the particular view. The Equal Weight View (EWV) for example, demands that equal weight be given to one's own point of view and to one's peer's, in effect splitting the difference between the two credences. There are three major critiques of Conciliatory views, which also operate as arguments in favor of Steadfast responses to disagreement. The first is Thomas Kelly's criticism that Conciliatory views throw away evidence by focusing more on the evidence of disagreement than on the prior evidence for a proposition. This criticism leads to Kelly's own position of the Total

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[4] See Elga, 2010, Feldman 2006b, and Christenson 2007.

Evidence View, wherein he addresses this concern by balancing one's prior evidence for a proposition with the evidence of a peer disagreement. The second critique of Conciliatory views is one of inconsistency. Conciliatory views argue that in cases of disagreement one ought always to be conciliatory to their peer's view, except for in the case of disagreement about how to deal with disagreement, in which case those in favor of Conciliatory views argue that one ought to remain steadfast. The final critique is against the controversial Uniqueness Thesis, which we discussed in some detail in the previous chapter. Conciliationists, of course, have responded to these criticisms and I will look at their replies, particularly Adam Elga's response to the idea that Conciliatory views are self-refuting.

After addressing responses to Conciliatory critiques, I will move on to discuss Steadfast views, particularly as they are articulated by Ralph Wedgewood and Gideon Rosen. I will go into more depth here about arguments that Wedgewood uses to defend Steadfast views on account of self-trust, which I mentioned briefly in Chapter One. Unlike Conciliatory views, where disagreement is an occasion for skepticism, proponents of Steadfast views argue that rationality does not require one to adjust one's beliefs because of a peer disagreement. From here I will explore Jennifer Lackey's Justificationist account of disagreement, wherein certain kinds of disagreements give one reason to reconsider who is actually one's peer. In all the responses to disagreement we will consider, as in the setup of the problem, which we treated in Chapter One, what is defined as *rational* will play a key role in determining whether or not a response to disagreement is considered acceptable.

A. Conciliatory Views

Conciliatory views are the most popular philosophical responses to the problem of disagreement (Matheson 2015b, 66). Conciliationism is the view that disagreement with qualified disputants gives us a powerful reason for doubting our disputed views. This doubt can often be sufficient to defeat what would otherwise have been strong evidential justification for our position. Examples of Conciliatory positions include Adam Elga's Partly Conciliatory View (in which he argues we ought to be conciliatory on all topics other than disagreement), David Christenson's account of epistemic modesty, Richard Feldman's Evidentialist Conciliatory View, particularly as applied to religious disagreements, among others (Elga 2010; Feldman 2006b, 2007; Christenson 2007). Conciliatory views are solutions that suggest that when faced with a peer disagreement, one ought to revise the strength of one's original credence, *p*, given the objection of one's peer (Matheson 2015b, 65). The range of views within these resulting Conciliatory positions include either substantial revision to the original credence or complete agnosticism about the matter at hand.

According to Christenson, the main motivations for Conciliatory positions on disagreement are obvious when one considers a case in which one believes *p* on the basis of evidence, *E*. However, in this case, you learn that your apparent epistemic peer has an opposite belief on the basis of the same evidence, *E*. A very popular example of this type of disagreement, and one often used in defense of Conciliatory views, is the following example of "mental math":

> You and your friend have been going out to dinner together regularly for many years. You always tip 20% and split the check (with each person's share rounded up to the nearest dollar), and you each do the requisite calculation in your head upon receiving the check. Most of the time you have agreed, but in the instances when you have not, you have taken out a calculator to check; over the years, you and your friend have been right in these situations equally often. Tonight, you figure out that your shares are $43, and become quite confident of this. But then your friend announces that she is quite confident that your shares are $45. (Christenson 2009)

In this situation, Christenson suggests that one could have two possible intuitions: the first is that this disagreement is evidence that one has mistakenly interpreted the original evidence, and in this case "such evidence should diminish one's confidence in *p*" (Christenson 2009, 758). The other intuition leans toward Steadfast positions and says that there must be something wrong with any view that encourages such widespread withholding of belief.[5] The first intuition fails to define the amount of conciliation that one should have. Indeed, one could be very conciliatory by suspending her belief. Generally speaking the Conciliationist's position is this: in many of the cases of peer disagreement, individuals on each side of the debate have good reason to think that they are as likely to be wrong as their peer. Therefore, they believe, individuals ought to become more skeptical of their original positions. Furthermore, Conciliationists such as Christenson share the intuition that in fields like philosophy where disagreement is common, “reliable methods of inquiry must tend to produce agreement” (Christenson 2009, 758). Finally, as Christenson suggests, when faced with a peer disagreement, the first evaluative criteria that a person should accept is what he calls *Independence*:

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[5] Christenson suggests this is the most obvious motivation for Steadfast views on peer disagreement (Christenson 2009, 757-758). He thinks that this is especially true in cases like, "for example, compatibilism about free will, scientific realism, or contextualism about knowledge, [where] you must be aware that there are very intelligent and well-informed people on the other side. Yet many are quite averse to thinking that they should be agnostic about all such matters." A similar line of argument can be found in Van Inwagen 1996.

> In evaluating the epistemic credentials of another person’s belief about P, to determine how (if at all) to modify one’s own belief about P, one should do so in a way that is independent of the reasoning behind one’s own initial belief about P. (Christenson 2009, 758)

Therefore, to the extent that a peer disagreement gives one strong reason to think the other person is just as likely to have evaluated the evidence correctly, independent of the original evidence, Conciliatory positions would have one suspend their belief in *p* or adopt a credence .5 in *p*.

A particularly strong and popular type of Conciliationism is the Equal Weight View (EWV) (Elga 2007). Philosophers who hold to the EWV say that when you are in a situation such as the case mentioned above, you are rationally required to split the difference of your credences. The Equal Weight View, then, is as follows: in cases of peer disagreement one should give equal weight to the opinion of a peer and to one’s own opinion (Kelly 2010, 112). Kelly provides the following case as an example:

> You and I are watching a horse race. We both have the same, ideal location to watch the race from. I have no reason to think that I have any advantage at telling which horse won. It is a tight race, but I believe that Horse A has won. You, however, thought Horse B won.[6]

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[6] This example is paraphrased from one given in Kelly 2009, 113. Kelly provides this example first to explain what the EWV looks like so that he can later dispute it.

In this case, the EWV maintains that we need to suspend our judgment and become agnostic about which horse won the race until further evidence becomes available. Practically speaking, this might look like one individual, whose credence is higher than the other's, lowering her credence. Therefore, if my credence of hypothesis *H* is .8 and your credence is .2, then once we become aware of this difference, I will need to lower my credence to .5, thus becoming agnostic about *H*. Likewise, although you once thought that hypothesis *H* was unlikely given evidence *E*, you will have to raise your credence to .5, thus making you agnostic as well about *H*, according to Kelly.

This splitting-the-difference view is initially appealing, as it seems to make real the conciliatory idea of giving one's peer's opinion equal weight. However, there is no mandate for uniform difference-splitting. In fact, several prominent Conciliationists, like Christenson, argue against the EWV for two reasons. The first is because of the technical difficulties that such an account generates, especially for supporters of Bayesian theory.[7] The second is because this mechanism does not show the true motivation for Conciliationism. Consider the following example:

> I am a doctor determining what dosage of a drug to give my patient. I am very confident in my conclusion, but knowing that I can be fallible, I am .97 confidence in my conclusion. I ask my epistemic peer about for an opinion on this case. She arrives at the same dosage, but has .96 credence. (Christenson 2009, 758)

In this case, Christenson suggests that it is rational for me to increase my confidence that I have the correct dosage, rather than have .965 credence. He argues, "This is not inconsistent with giving equal weight to my colleague's opinion, or with the *Independence* principle" (Christenson 2009, 758).

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[7] Jehle & Fitelson 2009, Gardiner 2009, and Wilson 2010 each raise objections to EWV based on it violating the commutativity of evidence.

Because of these concerns leveled against EWV, other types of Conciliatory views have also been presented. Adam Elga defends a partly Conciliatory view, in which he argues that we ought to be conciliatory on all topics other than disagreement (Elga 2010). This is often seen as a response to the objection that Conciliatory views are self-undermining because Conciliationists argue for conciliatory accounts in almost all circumstances except in disagreements, in which cases they "remain steadfast" in their belief in Conciliationism (Elga 2010).[8] Elga discusses the problem of self-undermining and argues for a view in which Conciliationism is the right response to cases of peer disagreement, except when the controversy is about how to respond to disagreement.[9] This restriction, he claims, is not *ad hoc*, because any fundamental epistemic policy or rule must be dogmatic about its correctness on pain of incoherence (Elga 2010).[10] John Pittard defends what he calls "resolute conciliationism" in which one has a commitment to epistemic deference in cases of disagreements, but this deference does not itself provide a rational reason to reduce confidence when a person finds herself in dispute (Pittard 2015).

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[8] This issue has been brought up numerous times, including Frances 2014, Plantinga 2000a and 2000b, and Weatherson 2013.

[9] In addition, Bogardus 2009, Christensen 2013, Kornblith 2013, Littlejohn 2013, Matheson 2015a, and Pittard 2015 also respond to this issue. Bogardus 2009 argues that it is obvious that Conciliatory principles are true and that this prevents them from being self-undermining. Pittard 2015 argues that remaining resolute in Conciliationism is no more non-deferential than being conciliatory about Conciliationism.

[10] While such responses would avoid the self-defeat charge, Pittard and Simon Blessenohl see them as guilty of arbitrariness. See Pittard 2015 and Blessenohl 2015.

Many who are sympathetic to a Conciliatory View have argued that the Uniqueness Thesis provides support for their intuitions, as it posits that there is only one level of confidence that it is rational to have about a proposition given a body of evidence (Kelly 2010,119). As discussed in the first chapter, this thesis has many refuters, from those who find it in direct disagreement with the Bayesian framework, to others who find that pre-theoretically it is just false.[11] Often defenders of the Uniqueness Thesis use it to support the EWV.[12] However, there are others who argue that the EWV is actually not committed to the evidential uniqueness seen in the Uniqueness Thesis.[13] The best depiction of arguments against the Uniqueness Theory comes from Gideon Rosen: "It should be obvious that reasonable people can disagree, even when confronted with a single body of evidence … the mere fact of disagreement does not mean that someone is being unreasonable" (Rosen 2001). But one way to motivate a Steadfast View is to endorse evidential permissiveness and thus reject the Uniqueness Thesis.[14]

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[11] Proponents of Bayesian epistemology who disagree with this thesis do so on the grounds that it contrasts with Bayesian standards in which "any prior probability distribution is reasonable so long as it is probabilistically coherent" (Kelly 2010, 120).

[12] Examples include Matheson 2011, Dogramici & Horowitz 2016, Greco & Hedden 2016, and White 2005, 2013.

[13] Christensen in particular argues that the EWV does not require the truth of the Uniqueness Thesis. See Christensen 2007 and 2016. See also Lee 2013 and Levinstein 2017.

[14] I already covered in greater detail reasons to reject or doubt the Uniqueness Thesis in Chapter One.

B. Steadfast Solutions

Christenson discusses the intuitions that one might have when first faced with a peer disagreement. One of the most obvious motivations for Steadfast views comes from a rejection of the skepticism that Conciliationism implies. The theory says that there must be something wrong with a view that would bring about such widespread withholding of belief. Steadfast views hold that when faced with a peer disagreement, one does not need to revise one's original credence, *p*, given the evidence of the disagreement, but rather, one should remain steadfast in one's views.[15] Arguments for Steadfast views that are not just arguments against Conciliatory positions usually have two forms. The first focuses on the special relationship that a person might have with her own intuitions as compared to the intuitions of someone else, and the second is a relativist argument.

Disagreement philosophers are not the first to discuss the importance of self-trust, but many of the supporters of Steadfast views, including Wedgewood, argue that there is a rational asymmetry of sorts between one's own intuitions (in this case Wedgewood is focusing on moral intuitions) and the intuitions of other people. In fact, Wedgewood argues that it is rational to have a special trust in one's own intuition, and that it is impossible to trust another's intuition in the same way (Wedgewood 2007). Following along the lines of Richard Foley, Wedgewood argues that it is rational to have an egocentric bias, which he frames as a "fundamental trust in my own faculties and mental states." According to Wedgewood, the symmetry in idealized disagreement exists from only a third-person perspective, yet each party cannot help but occupy a first person perspective toward the disagreement (Wedgewood 2007, 261). While I briefly touched on how Wedgewood's arguments related to my own in Chapter One, I will discuss this in greater detail in the following section of this chapter when I consider the relationship between all of the abovementioned solutions and self-trust.

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[15] See the account of higher order evidence in Kelly 2005 for a type of Steadfast account, as well as Bergmann 2009 and Goldman 2010.

The second line of argument for Steadfast views is relativistic in nature and assumes that certain kinds of evidential situations make it possible for there to be more than one rational doxastic state.[16] This motivation for steadfastness derives from the thought that many evidential situations leave room for more than one completely reasonable doxastic response. If that is so, then when my (equally informed, equally intelligent, and so on) friend disagrees with me, we might both be fully rational in our beliefs. If you have an opinion on, for example, compatibilism about free will, scientific realism, or contextualism about knowledge, you must be aware that there are very intelligent and well-informed people on the other side of your position, whatever it may be. Yet many people are quite averse to thinking that they should be agnostic about all such matters. This aversion may be even stronger when we focus on our opinions about politics, the economy, or religion. The thought that steadfastness is appropriate in certain particular sorts of cases is even stronger.

Alvin Plantinga argues for a Steadfast View based on how true something seems to you. Plantinga argues that given human fallibility, we are in an epistemically risky domain, wherein we could be wrong regardless of which doxastic attitude we adopt toward a disputed proposition (Plantinga 2000a). The best that we can do is to proceed with what seems correct to us at the end of the day.[17] Matheson argues that this internal asymmetry does not provide support for the Steadfast View, because although *p* has continued to seem true to you, it has also continued to seem false to your peer (Matheson 2015b, 47). Matheson suggests that this does not provide an epistemically relevant asymmetry.

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[16] There are other similar arguments, including Peter van Inwagen's conception of some type of private insight that is "incommunicable," by virtue of which one is justified in remaining steadfast in one's belief. See Van Inwagen 1996.

C. Total Evidence View

As explained earlier, in cases of disagreement, EWV argues for either splitting the difference of your original credence or for some other type of skepticism about *p*. Thomas Kelly finds this adjustment problematic for one particular reason: that in the case of the EWV we end up throwing away evidence by giving more weight to the evidence of disagreement than to the original evidence. This criticism is the foundation of Kelly's own Total Evidence View.[18] In order for Kelly to defend his view, he first has to explain what the evidence is that he worries is being lost in Conciliatory views. Consider the following example:

> You and I have a substantial body of evidence, *E*. However, we arrive at different opinions about some hypothesis *H*. I am quite confident that *H* is true; you are very certain *H* is false. So at T0 before we encounter one another, my credence for *H* is at .8 while your credence is at .2. Taking for granted the truth of the

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[17] Matheson notes that Plantinga's concern is one of a deontological conception of justification and therefore "there are good reasons to believe that this is not the relevant sense of 'justification' under discussion here" (Matheson 2015b, 169).

[18] Matheson also suggests that Thomas Kelly's Total Evidence View counts as a Steadfast View. While Kelly is adamant about his concerns with Conciliatory views, his position is not strictly Steadfast, because his reasoning for remaining steadfast differs (Matheson 2015b, 169).

> Uniqueness Thesis, hypothesis *H* is very unlikely given evidence *E*. Your credence .2 for *H* is quite reasonable while my credence .8 is very unlikely given *E*.[19]

Before we encounter each other, I believe I am correct in thinking that evidence *E* supports hypothesis *H*. You, on the other hand, believe that given evidence *E* it is highly unlikely that *H*. Once we encounter each other, we realize this variance. According to the EWV, we are then called to give equal weight to each other's view, which requires us to split the difference between our two credences. Accordingly, we both end up with .5 credence in *H* and are agnostic about it. Yet, this is completely unreasonable, because given evidence *E*, you are correct: evidence *E* does not support hypothesis *H*. In this case I have misjudged the impact of *E* on the situation. However, because of the epistemic policy of giving equal weight to the opinion of our peers and despite the fact that you are indeed correct, you are called by the EWV to change your credence to .5, as am I, and this makes you wrong. What frustrates Kelly so much about this view is its overemphasis on the evidence of disagreement as compared to the prior evidence. Kelly argues that we should reject the EWV because it responds inadequately to the original evidence.

For Kelly, there are two types of evidence. The first is called first order evidence: the evidence that we have prior to the disagreement. This evidence is the evidence on the basis of which you and I originally decide our credence about hypothesis *H*. First order evidence corresponds to first order reasoning, which is the reasoning that causes an individual to make an initial judgment. The other type of evidence that Kelly introduces is higher-order evidence. Kelly defines higher-order evidence as "evidence about the normative upshot of the evidence to which [one] has been exposed" (Kelly 2010, 138).

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[19] Case 3 revised is a modified example from Kelly 2010.

What Kelly means here is that higher-order evidence is the evidence that bears on what one should do, having just been exposed to a certain piece of evidence. In the case of peer disagreement, the higher-order evidence that we are referring to is the evidence that you and I disagree. Take, for example, the case just considered above. You have an initial credence of .2. I have an initial credence of .8. In this case our first order evidence is *E*, the batch of evidence by which we made our original evaluations. But once we have revealed to each other our differing credences, we now have new evidence, higher-order evidence to be exact. In the case of the EWV, it is on the basis of this higher-order evidence that we make our decision to adjust our credences in order to give equal weight to the other's opinion.

But this very adjustment is the cause of Kelly's concern. As seen in my description above, when we adjust our beliefs, we do so on the grounds of the higher-order evidence. That is to say, our change of belief in this case of peer disagreement has nothing to do with the original (first-order) evidence; rather, our change of belief is motivated exclusively by higher-order evidence, namely the fact that you and I disagree. Kelly thinks that cases of peer disagreement ought not be solved simply on the basis that someone disagrees with me. Rather, what is at stake in cases of disagreement is the truth. As Kelly aptly puts it:

> In what circumstances does it make sense for me to treat the fact that someone else believes as she does evidence for the truth of that which

> she believes?—when I take her belief to be a reliable indication of how things stand in the relevant part of reality. (Kelly 2010, 142)

Therefore, in cases of disagreement, although having a peer who disagrees with me *may* make me less confident, my higher-order reasoning, or my reasoning about my initial reasoning, should not only consider my peer's beliefs. Rather, it would be wiser if I took the entire situation into account. This conclusion is what Kelly offers as a solution to the problem of peer disagreement. He calls his solution the Total Evidence View (TEV) (Kelly 2010, 135).

According to TEV, when one finds oneself in an instance of peer disagreement, rather than immediately giving equal weight to one's peer, one ought to take into account all of the evidence. This "taking into account" requires first considering the original evidence from which you reached your initial credence and, next, considering your credence about hypothesis *H* and, finally, considering your peer's credence about *H*. By doing this, Kelly argues, you are considering both the first order evidence as well as the higher-order evidence of your disagreement without giving too much weight to the higher-order evidence.

Christensen discusses the charge that Conciliationism requires throwing away evidence (Christenson 2010). He contends that when Conciliationists advocate for "splitting the difference," they do not mean that such revision of credence guarantees full rationality. Instead, Conciliationism is a view about the bearing of *one* kind of evidence: evidence regarding what epistemic peers believe on a certain subject matter. This sort of evidence should indeed be taken into account, but it is not the entire epistemic picture, and Conciliationism does not advocate ignoring the epistemic quality of the steps taken by agents in forming their initial beliefs. Like the concern raised by Kelly, Christenson argues that most criticisms of Conciliationism are focused on *Independence*, the principle that when reevaluating one's belief in *p*, one ought to do so independently, based on the evidence that you used to originally come to your conclusion about *p*.

D. Justificationist View

Jennifer Lackey has advocated for her Justificationist View of disagreements on the basis of extreme disagreements. While Kelly is concerned that first-order evidence might have an epistemically significant impact on the evidence of a disagreement, Lackey believes that personal information can have the same effect. Her particular worry arises from cases where the subject is very highly justified in her belief, at least prior to the disagreement. Consider this variation on the "mental math" case we evaluated earlier:

> Harry and I, who have been colleagues for the past six years, were drinking coffee at Starbucks and trying to determine how many people from our department will be attending the upcoming APA. I, reasoning aloud, say 'Well, Mark and Mary are going on Wednesday, and Sam and Stacey are going on Thursday, and since 2+2=4, there will be four other members of our department at that conference.' In response Harry asserts, 'But 2+2 does not equal 4.' (Lackey 2010, 283)

In cases like this one, Lackey strongly disagrees with the Conciliationists' approach that would require her to be less confident in her belief. She suggests that the Conciliatory View, although correct in many cases, offers the wrong solution in what she calls extreme disagreements (Lackey 2010, 283). Lackey thinks that this example differs from the "mental math" example because prior to the disagreement, she was highly justified in believing that 2+2=4. The Justificationist View denies *Independence*, meaning Lackey believes it is acceptable to use first-order evidence to reassess the epistemic credentials of her supposed peers. *Independence* prevents a problematic question-begging where an agent determines that her peer is wrong based on their very disagreement. Lackey defends her rejection of *Independence* by using personal information, focusing on the fact that an agent will always have more awareness of her own epistemic situation than she will of her peer's. She suggests that considering both the asymmetry between myself and my alleged peer, with my high level of justification prior to the argument, gives me good reason to believe that my supposed peer is not actually a peer in this proposition. Several arguments have been made against this view. In particular, one concern is that even in cases where an agent has high prior justification in her belief, new evidence in the form of a disagreement can defeat such justification.[20] Matheson also worries about Lackey's use of personal information because of its lack of usefulness in cases of idealized peer disagreement (Matheson 2015a).

II. Solutions to the Wrong Problem

Having presented the most prominent solutions to disagreement, in this section I will raise concerns regarding the sufficiency of those solutions to address the problem of self-trust, which I raised in Chapter One. There I brought to light what I consider the principal weakness of contemporary setups of the disagreement problem: that these solutions base the epistemological significance of disagreement on peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis rather than on self-trust. Because Conciliatory and Steadfast views provide solutions to the epistemic and evidential problem of symmetry generated by peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis, they are inadequate to solve the actual issues of self-trust that arise in disagreement.

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[20] One such example is the lucky lotto ticket from Christensen, wherein I might be highly justified in believing that my peer's lotto ticket is not a winner. However, if my peer says that she won, the rational thing to do would be to believe her, not to downgrade her epistemic credentials. See Christensen 2007. This example is also used by Vavova to argue against Lackey in Vavova 2014a, 2014b.

I begin this section with a short rehearsal of my previous argument, which contends that disagreement finds its significance in issues surrounding the self, an argument that particularly utilizes Zagzebski's thesis on disagreement (Zagzebski 2012). From there, I will look in detail at both the Conciliatory and Steadfast views in order to see what problems these views believe they solve. In doing so, it will become obvious that both accounts are attempting to address philosophers' concerns about peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis. It is only in peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis that these accounts find epistemic significance. Both Kelly's and Lackey's views are closer to solving a problem related to the epistemic uncertainty that arises from issues of self-trust. Yet both accounts are still ultimately inadequate because they remain too focused on the epistemic significance of the Uniqueness Thesis and peerhood. Moreover, these accounts are not sufficient because not only do they find significance in the wrong place, but they are also solving a problem too narrow and misguided to provide relief from the actual epistemic problem of disagreement.

Allow me to recap what a focus on self-trust implies in cases of disagreement. I have justified trust in my various faculties, which help me to arrive at the particular credence *c* that I have in proposition *p* given evidence *E*. Likewise, you also have a justified trust in your various faculties, which causes you to arrive at your particular credence *q* given evidence *E* about *p*. However, when your credence *q* differs from my credence *c*, and both are based on the evidence *E*, we have a problem. The bulk of this problem, as Zagzebski suggests, arises from the fact that my trust in myself includes trust in my beliefs, which commits me to also trust the beliefs of others (Zagzebski 2012). Therefore, in the case where your credence *q* differs from my credence *c* about proposition *p*, I find that I have reason to trust both my belief and yours. Moreover, the problem bears even more epistemic significance, because it becomes a problem of a consistent self: how can I weigh my beliefs as greater than yours when both beliefs come from the same faculties? For the same reason, how can I weigh your beliefs more than my own if both come from the same faculties? This, as I argued in the first chapter, is the fundamental problem of disagreement, not only because of the central aspects of its concerns, but also because it is a more epistemically significant question.

Given this foundational concern of disagreement, we could expect (and even insist) that purported solutions to the problem of disagreement address this in their answers. But how can a solution address this fundamental concern given that the central problem of the senses is at stake: How can I both (a) trust myself and my faculties and (b) not trust them *at the same time*? Often it is easier to begin defining a term by describing what it is not. Similarly, it seems easier to say here where solutions could go wrong before describing what they must do to fully address the issue. Indeed, I will spend the rest of my dissertation attempting to give a positive account of how a solution can adequately respond to this concern for the self. But for the moment, we should note at least one way in which a solution can go very wrong: that is, to fail to address problems of the self at all.

Two of our solutions go awry at this initial point. Both the Conciliatory views and the Steadfast views do not sufficiently engage the problems that disagreement creates for the self. Consider the following example. At the Thanksgiving table this year, Uncle James and Uncle John get into a debate about the Bible. Uncle James thinks that Psalm 118:8 is the verse at the very center of the Bible, subdividing it into two approximately equal sections, while Uncle John thinks that it is Psalm 104:6.[21] Prior to this debate both were quite confident in their beliefs. To simplify the problem, assume that the proposition *p* in dispute is that Psalm 118:8 is the center verse of the Bible. In this case, Uncle James would have a belief that *p* is true while Uncle John would have a belief that *p* is false. Moreover, suppose they came to their belief in *p* by the same evidence: they both read all the same books (they were gifts from family members at Christmas), watched the same History Channel show about the Bible, attended the same church and Sunday School. Additionally, Uncle John and Uncle James are, for our purposes, equal in reasoning abilities. As it turns out, Uncle John is correct and *p* is false.

Now, to meet the basic standard for disagreement solutions set out above, a solution must, at a minimum, address the self-trust problem. All it means to achieve this minimal requirement is to focus the solution on the uncertainty that Uncle John and Uncle James now feel about their sense of self. However, both the Conciliatory and Steadfast views avoid the problem of self-trust and instead address other problems, particularly that of symmetry of evidence and reasoning and whether there is only one correct belief given a particular set of evidences.

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[21] For the record, what counts as the middle verse of the Bible depends on the translation and whether the Apocrypha is included. For this example, we are using the Authorized Version of the Bible (the so-called “King James Version”), and although popular lore suggests that Psalm 118:8 is the center verse, it is actually Psalm 104:6.

Those who maintain Conciliatory views believe that, when faced with disagreement, the rational thing to do is to be less certain of your belief. If we applied the Equal Weight View (EWV) to this case, Uncle James and Uncle John should split the difference between their two beliefs about *p*. Thus, Uncle James and Uncle John ought both to be agnostic about the proposition that Psalm 118:8 is the center verse of the Bible. By suggesting that Uncle John needs to split the difference with Uncle James, the Conciliationists show that their real concern is the Uniqueness Thesis, that is, whether or not there is only one most justified credence to have about a proposition given a certain amount of evidence. If the Conciliationists were worried about solving the problem of self-trust, their solution would not be a compromise, because a compromise does nothing to satisfy the skepticism raised by the disagreement. Accordingly, if Uncle John wanted to respond rationally, a Conciliationist would say that Uncle John should lean into his agnosticism. But the agnosticism that Conciliatory views endorse is not related to Uncle John's faculties or to how he ought to navigate the situation, given that self-trust is fundamental to both his belief and to Uncle James's. Rather, the agnosticism that Conciliatory views promote regards their belief regarding *p* in particular and only this belief. However, in order to be rational, Conciliatory views do not require Uncle John to think about the greater impact that this particular disagreement might have on his overall epistemic abilities.

The Steadfast View would say that Uncle John should maintain his belief about *p* in the face of disagreement. In this case, Uncle John would maintain his belief that *p* is false and, in doing so, arrive at the truth. But do the Steadfasters contend he should hold onto his belief for the right reasons? One of the major arguments for the Steadfast View is self-trust. Therefore, it seems that this view more than any others would be concerned to solve the issue of self-trust. But instead, the Steadfast View actually answers a different problem because it does not engage with the epistemic significance of self-trust.

Because our trust in others is dependent upon our trust in ourselves, some philosophers, such as Ralph Wedgewood, have argued that we have an egocentric bias in cases of disagreement (Wedgewood 2007). According to Wedgewood, Uncle John could not help but have a bias toward his own belief over Uncles James's. Richard Foley, too, has made statements that seem to support this bias: "However, I am entitled to make what I can of the conflict using the faculties, procedures, and opinions I have confidence in, even if these faculties, procedures, and opinions are the very ones being challenged by others" (Foley 2001, 80). However, Matheson notes a tension for Foley which is not present in Wedgewood: when Foley discusses disagreement from a tripartite doxastic picture, Foley claims that suspension of judgement is called for, but later when discussing disagreement with degrees interpretation of belief, Foley suggests that no doxastic movement is required (Foley 2001, 114; Matheson 2015b, 43). The tension in Foley's view is closer to what the situation calls for, given the fact that self-trust does not automatically support an egocentric bias. Because the epistemic significance of disagreement comes from the fact that trust in my faculties justifies both my belief and your belief, it is not enough to just pick one side of this issue. Both beliefs are justified on the basis of my self-trust, so for me to trust only one over the other is arbitrary. The problem that the Steadfast views appear to solve instead is how to respond to symmetry of evidence and evaluation—that is, peer disagreement. Indeed, Matheson worries that if self-trust is relevant in cases of peer disagreement, "it is difficult to see how it is not relevant in cases of novice-expert disagreement" (Matheson 2015b, 46). He continues that "most maintain that when the novice learns that the expert disagrees he should make some doxastic movement if not completely defer" (Matheson, 2015, 46). Matheson believes that self-trust cannot be the ultimate deciding factor in all cases of disagreement. Matheson is correct to see that self-trust is still in effect in the case of a novice-expert disagreement. But he, like Wedgwood, is wrong to think that putting the epistemic significance on self-trust requires one to maintain a Steadfast View. While Conciliatory views argue that this symmetry is problematic, the Steadfast View does not see it to be so. When we look closer at Conciliatory and Steadfast views it is clear that the question they are considering is not self-trust. In fact, their solution responds to the problems that peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis raise.

At first glance it seems that TEV and the Justificationist View actually respond to the self-trust issues themselves. In the case of the TEV, by weighing the prior evidence and the new evidence of disagreement, you are in a sense weighing the two sides of self-trust: both your trust in yourself and your trust in others based on your trust in yourself. Similarly, the Justificationist View weighs the strength of your disagreement with your certainty in yourself. However, neither of these views are sufficient because in the end they locate the epistemic significance of the problem in the wrong place. Consider this same change to the Thanksgiving table disagreement I described earlier. Instead of arguing with Uncle John, Uncle James and I get into a disagreement about whether *p* is true, that is, Psalm 118:8 is the center verse of the Bible. Uncle James thinks that *p* is true while I think that *p* is false. Although Uncle James and Uncle John were peers for all practical purposes, Uncles James and I are not. While Uncle James has been attending church and teaching Sunday school for many years, and he is quite an intelligent person, I attended Yale Divinity School and obtained a Master's degree.[22] Prior to my disagreement with Uncle James, I was pretty confident in my belief that *p* is false. However, after this disagreement, the tension I feel is based on my concern for how to create a holistic account of myself, given the fact that I know my trust in myself is dependent upon the same faculties that Uncle James used to arrive at his own belief. Whether or not Uncle James is my peer, I still experience this tension. However, for TEV, the second Thanksgiving disagreement would not be problematic, as my prior evidence would be significantly stronger than the evidence of a disagreement. In fact, Kelly and others would not necessarily count Uncle James's and my disagreement as a peer disagreement because in this case he is not my peer. This reveals that TEV is inadequate because it still places the epistemic significance on peerhood and not on the problem of self-trust.

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[22] It is not clear that going to a Divinity School gives me any leg up in determining what the middle verse of the Bible is. But this example is less concerned with who is best equipped to determine the middle verse of the Bible and more concerned with showing the importance of non-peer disagreements.

Similarly, the Justificationist account still emphasizes the significance of peerhood so strongly that it misses the point of self-trust. Consider a third version of the Thanksgiving table disagreement. This time the disagreement is between my husband and myself about whether *p* is true. He believes that *p* is true: that Psalm 118:8 is the middle verse of the Bible, whereas I believe that *p* is false. As it turns out, he and I are peers. We met while attending Yale Divinity School, and we have taken many of the same classes. Moreover, suppose that we both took a class where this very topic was covered on the first day of class. He and I, being good students, took thorough notes and remember this class and have talked about it often since then. Prior to our disagreement, I was highly confident in my belief that *p* is false. According to Jennifer Lackey, in cases where I am very, very confident in my belief about *p*, and find myself in a disagreement, I have good reason to revise whether someone is a peer or not. It seems unreasonable in this case, though, that I would revise whether or not my husband is my peer. Even more so, it seems to miss the point, because in both the case of my Thanksgiving disagreement with Uncle James and my Thanksgiving disagreement with my husband, it does not matter whether or not the person with whom I am disagreeing is my peer. What matters is that a sufficient disagreement causes me to rethink how to maintain a coherent sense of self. The Justificationist account, instead, seems only to seek to solve the problem of symmetry.

Each of these solutions, then, is inadequate to address self-trust concerns. Neither the Steadfast nor the Conciliatory account actually deals with the issues of a coherent self. We need a solution that wrestles with the problems of self-trust and trust in others. Kelly's TEV and Lackey's Justificationist account appear to be better solutions than the Steadfast and Conciliatory views because they begin to wrestle with the problem, but as both accounts locate the epistemic significance of disagreement in the wrong place, they in turn under-explain the problem of disagreement and are inappropriately rigid in their recommendations for action.

III. Introducing Regulative Epistemology

In this section, I will argue that given our refocusing of disagreement's epistemic significance on self-trust, we need to transition from the analytic epistemology that currently dominates the disagreement literature to regulative epistemology. My proposed focus on the first-person in matters of self-trust differs from Richard Foley and Ralph Wedgewood's accounts of an egocentric bias in cases of disagreement, which I discussed briefly in the last section. While Wedgewood is right in suggesting that the first-person nature of self-trust prioritizes real cases of disagreement over idealized ones, this alone is not sufficient to tell how an agent should respond to a disagreement. I will begin this section by briefly reflecting on the current state of disagreement epistemology as I have characterized it so far. Next, I will analyze the importance of a first-person perspective within disagreement, given its relationship to self-trust. In order to push disagreement literature in the direction of actual, first-person cases, I will argue that philosophers ought to respond to disagreement with a regulative rather than an analytic epistemology. After briefly describing what the differences are, I will make a case for the benefits of the former in the case of disagreement.

In the first chapter, I argued that the setup of the study of disagreement reveals what is a stake for contemporary epistemologists: the epistemic consequences of peer disagreements. If this is true, then one might assume the purpose of disagreement literature is to draw the boundaries around what is rationally justified and what is not in cases relating to disagreement. However, if you look at the type of questions asked by epistemologists in these situations, it becomes clear that making recommendations for what to do in cases of peer disagreement is not of pressing interest. Indeed, many begin by asking, as Kelly does, "How (if at all) should we revise our original views once we are aware that we have different conclusions despite having the same evidence and arguments?" (Kelly 2005, 21). But the question quickly changes to, "Does it follow that at least one of the parties has an unjustified belief?" (Feldman & Warfield 2010, 4-5). These questions may appear to be the same at first glance, but their differences reveal a shift from solving disagreements to drawing more general conclusions about beliefs and justification. The first question is about what to do in the face of disagreement. The second, however, is about how the study of disagreement can contribute to broader conversations about rationality and knowledge. By making peer disagreement into another type of evidence, the focus becomes not disagreements in themselves but, rather, what disagreements reveal about the nature of knowledge in general.[23]

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[23] Thomas Kelly utilizes this language when he distinguishes between two types of evidence. See Kelly 2010, 38.

This trend continues in the popular solutions to disagreement as well. Consider the two most prominent responses that I described previously in this chapter. Conciliationists believe that acting rationally when faced with the disagreement of a seeming epistemic peer requires adjusting one's confidence in one's own positions. Steadfasters argue that one remains rational by maintaining one's original belief and seemingly disregarding the belief of one's peer. According to both Conciliationist and Steadfast views of disagreement, what is at stake in this disagreement is our rationality, given the fact that you, my apparent epistemic peer, are as likely as I am to be correct about this matter. Indeed, from the Conciliationist's position, I have no good reason to think that I am more correct than you, and thus it is rational for me to conclude that I am as likely to be wrong as you are. Practically speaking, that would look like I should lower my credence in my belief, and possibly even abandon it. From a Steadfast point of view, while there are particular cases in which I ought to revise my belief, on the whole, having a different belief than you does not rationally require that I revise my belief. In fact, I can maintain my belief, justifiably, even in the face of disagreement. However, the practical advice for what an epistemic agent ought to do in cases of peer disagreement is an afterthought. The importance of these peer disagreement scenarios lies in their ability to tell us more about other epistemic concepts.

While I argued in section two that Wedgewood's assertion of an egocentric bias provides little evidence for the Steadfast View, what it does suggest is the importance of a first-person perspective. As Wedgewood mentions, when we consider idealized cases such as the "mental math" example from Christensen in the first section of this chapter, there appears to be a symmetry in epistemic situation in part because the cases are in the third-person (Christenson 2009, 758). But when we find ourselves in actual cases of disagreement, "Each party occupies (and cannot help but occupy) a first-person perspective" (Wedgewood 2007, 261). We have no ability to get outside our first-person perspective. There are several arguments against a first-person perspective of disagreement. However, nearly every such argument is not against the first-person perspective itself. Rather, the majority of those who consider this question reject the epistemic importance of the first-person perspective because, while they agree that the first-person perspective is ineliminable, this of course does not make it infallible.[24]

One of the strongest arguments against the first-person perspective itself comes from Earl Conee (Conee 2009).[25] He asks us to consider what we are justified in believing about a dispute in three different stages of disclosure. In the first stage we are told that there is an idealized disagreement about the proposition. Given only that information, it is clear that you are only justified in suspending judgement on that proposition. Next it is revealed to you that you know one of the parties in this disagreement. Conee thinks that this new piece of information does not change what doxastic attitude you are justified in adopting about the disputed proposition. To be more specific, Conee says that the fact we are acquainted with one of the parties does not make any epistemic difference because you know that since this is an idealized case of disagreement, both parties are in an equally good position to make correct epistemic judgments. In the final stage of disclosure, Conee reveals that you are in fact one of the parties in the disagreement. He suggests that this information does nothing to change your justified doxastic state about the proposition in dispute. Matheson, agreeing with Conee, says that "personal identity simply does not have this kind of epistemic upshot," where first-person beliefs have a more justified doxastic state than third-person beliefs (Matheson 2015b, 47).

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[24] See Bogardus 2013 and Rattan 2014.

[25] A similar argument can be found in Littlejohn 2013.

It is not a liability if we cannot get beyond the first-person perspective in disagreement; rather we should treat the problem as it is. While I do not have any pre-theoretical objections to philosophers considering idealized problems, it does seem that philosophers should also attempt to address the problem as it is in addition to creating idealized cases. It seems that if the problem of disagreement is necessarily first-person in perspective, then a solution from a first-person perspective would also be required. To provide a solution in the first-person enables us to focus on a key aspect of philosophy that is often forgotten: providing epistemic advice. Disagreement is not the first time that philosophers have missed the point because they mistakenly transformed one problem into another that is similar to the original but with vastly different epistemic significance.

Nicholas Wolterstorff considers a similar problem in modern interpretations of Locke (Wolterstorff 1996). While some modern interpreters think of Locke as the "philosopher in the tower rending judgments on who knows what and how," Wolterstorff suggests that Locke was actually "the philosopher in the street offering advice to his anxious combative compatriots on how to overcome the cultural crisis engulfing them"

(Wolterstorff 1996, x). Indeed, as Wolterstorff presents it, Locke's culture was in warring fragments over this practical question:

> How should we form our beliefs on fundamental matters of religion and morality so as to live together in social harmony, when we can no longer appeal to a shared and unified tradition? (Wolterstorff 1996, x)

Wolterstorff discusses John Locke's concepts of analytic epistemology and regulative epistemology to distinguish between various goals in epistemology: analytic epistemology is the area of epistemology that is concerned with the criteria for what constitutes knowledge, whereas regulative epistemology discusses how a person ought to go about forming their beliefs. Wolterstorff notes that analytic epistemology "[is] not meant to offer guidance, except of course, guidance in analysis for those to wish to pick out knowledge from non-knowledge and rationality from non-rationality" (Wolterstorff 1996, xvi).

The disagreement literature is dominated by an analytic epistemology that aims to formulate theories of knowledge. The Conciliatory, Steadfast, Total Evidence, and Justificationist views are all inappropriately rigid in their recommendations for action because they have misplaced the epistemic significance of disagreement, as we have said. But even had they put epistemic significance where it belongs, they still do not aim to recommend anything. Rather, their goal is solely to see what disagreement tells us about knowledge, and their main concern is with idealized disagreements. Any recommendation they offer then is accidental.

On the other hand, regulative epistemology is concerned with providing agents epistemic advice. When an agent finds herself in a disagreement, she will ask the question “What should I do?” The agent needs an answer, a regulative epistemological answer that generates guidance for epistemic practice. If philosophers took more seriously the fact that disagreement naturally has a first-person perspective, they would, I believe, be more concerned to provide epistemic advice. Because the first-person perspective in a given disagreement is immutable, there arises a natural opportunity for philosophers to provide valuable guidance about how be a rational agent in the world. Current approaches miss the mark, since they, in general, are not concerned to generate epistemic advice for agents faced with disagreements and, when they do offer such advice, it is impractical and misleading because it originates in the idealized cases which offer disagreement epistemologists the most insight into the analytic questions with which they are really concerned.

CONCLUSION

Disagreement has become an opportunity for philosophers to draw conclusions not about what one should do when faced with disagreements but about what disagreement has to teach us about beliefs and evidence generally. There is no denying the importance of such work, given the opportunity it provides philosophers to make clear their interpretations of belief, knowledge, and even understanding. However, when we say that disagreement is epistemically significant, there can be more at stake. Indeed, it seems that something is missing when we treat disagreement solely in terms of idealized cases. Although presumably most of us would prefer to be correct rather than incorrect, there are many cases in which, given the evidence, we cannot prove ourselves either right or wrong definitively. We then bear the epistemic vulnerability of disagreeing with a person whose judgment we respect. When we are not wholly sure of the accuracy of our beliefs, rationality must justifiably enter. By focusing simply on analytic epistemology, the Conciliatory, Steadfast, Total Evidence, and Justificationist views flatten the situation faced by epistemic agents in such circumstances by eliding its social character. We can fruitfully expand the scope of the problem of disagreement by shifting our focus away from belief-oriented concerns to the epistemic agent herself. While you and I may share the same evidence and aptitude in a disagreement case, these factors do not account for the dispositions we possess and the ways those dispositions have influenced our conclusions. In the next chapter, I will present an argument for an intellectual virtue approach to disagreement that locates the epistemic significance appropriately in self-trust and provides a much-needed regulative epistemological framework.

CHAPTER 3: Virtue Epistemology as a Way to Reformulate the Problem of Disagreement

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will propose a new account aimed at addressing the concerns of self-trust explored in the past two chapters. In the first chapter I presented an interpretation of the problem of disagreement that attempts to determine what the significance of the problem of disagreement might be. I argued that a philosopher's intuitions about peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis tend to determine her belief about the epistemic significance of disagreement. I go on to argue that this correlation is deceiving because the epistemic significance of disagreement actually comes from the issues of self-trust that arise because of disagreement. Once the problem of disagreement is located properly as an issue of self-trust, other philosophical perspectives that never before considered it problematic can see its significance. In Chapter Two, I discussed the most popular contemporary solutions to disagreement. All of these accounts find their epistemic significance in a problem other than self-trust, making them not actual solutions to disagreement but to something else, like the problem of peerhood or the Uniqueness Thesis. After exploring how these accounts fall short of addressing the actual issues of self-trust in disagreement, I argued that a regulative epistemology account is needed to address the problem of self-trust. Given these arguments, we turn towards epistemic virtue in Chapter Three in order to address the problem of disagreement, particularly as it relates to issues of self-trust. I will demonstrate the utility of an intellectual virtue approach to disagreement by showing how it satisfies the two criteria I proposed in the previous chapter: that it is a regulative account and that it addresses self-trust.

John Turri suggests that virtue epistemologists have two central tendencies: the first is “to view epistemology as a normative discipline” and the second is “to view intellectual agents and communities as the primary source of epistemic value and the primary focus of epistemic evaluation” (Turri, Alfano, & Greco 2018). In this chapter, I will explore these two inclinations and their implications. Because virtue epistemologists view epistemology as a normative discipline, they are focused on understanding epistemic norms, values, and evaluation (Turri, Alfano, & Greco 2018). Some philosophers go as far as to say that this normative nature of epistemology means that epistemology cannot be expressed in non-normative language.[1] Moreover, there are also numerous virtue epistemologists who think that epistemology ought to promote intellectual well-being.[2] As for the second tendency, it means that for virtue epistemologists, people and communities are the more primary area of epistemic evaluation as compared to individual beliefs. In practice, this looks like shifting from abstract conceptions of perfect knowledge to a more holistic, realistic account of knowledge. This shift to focusing on agents rather than concepts of knowledge, along with the first tendency to view epistemology as normative, illuminates the relationship between moral and epistemic issues by linking a right belief and right action.

Because of virtue epistemology’s tendency to think in terms of agents, and to focus on human flourishing, much of virtue epistemology relies on virtue language, and in particular on that of epistemic or intellectual virtues (Battaly 2019, xi). In the first part of this chapter, I will suggest that intellectual virtue theories can be used to illuminate the problem of reasonable disagreement more fruitfully than can approaches framed solely in terms of belief-centric knowledge. This is primarily because virtue epistemology is situated to address both the regulative link between disagreement as an intellectual problem and a theory of right action, as well as the epistemically significant problem of self-trust. To make this argument I will present a case which shows that the rationality-for-the-purpose-of-knowledge-alone-based concerns of analytic approaches, on which the Steadfast and Conciliatory views rely, address only a subsection of the complex epistemic issues that develop in a case of disagreement. In doing so, I will foreshadow the ways that virtue epistemology is the natural choice to critique epistemic peerhood so as to move the focus of disagreement back to issues of self-trust where it belongs.

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[1] For example, some think that epistemological terms (or concepts) like knowledge, evidence, justification, duty, and virtue cannot be adequately defined in purely non-normative vocabulary. See Axtell & Carter 2008, Roberts & Wood 2007, Zagzebski 1996, 2009. Those who disagree include Goldman 1992, Greco 1999, and Sosa 2007.

[2] See Zagzebski 1996, 267, McDowell 1994, xi, and Pritchard 2016, among others.

In the second section of this chapter, I will show the connection between intellectual virtues and virtue epistemology. I will begin by showing how the aforementioned shared tendencies of virtue epistemology give rise to the need for epistemic virtues. Once virtue language is introduced, however, virtue epistemologists disagree on the exact definition of virtues. I will explore the various differences between virtue reliabilist and virtue responsibilist approaches to intellectual virtues. Bearing in mind recent critiques from Heather Battaly and others, which complicate the reliabilist versus responsibilist picture, I will argue that in the case of disagreement, I do not need to take either a virtue responsibilist or reliabilist stand. I will then adjudicate contemporary conversations about the framework of intellectual virtues and then, finally, turn to the virtues themselves and attempt to assess what exactly they are and what they do in relation to knowledge.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, there are two minimal standards that a solution must reach if it wants to address disagreement. First, it needs to be regulative, and second, it must address the issue of self-trust. In the last chapter I introduced several prominent solutions to disagreement, all of which were unable to fulfill these standards. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will argue not only that virtue epistemology fulfills these requirements but that it also provides a subtler and richer way to discuss the variety of intellectual dispositions and processes present in disagreements. Focusing on the two common tendencies of virtue epistemology, I will argue that virtue epistemology is not only a regulative epistemological account, but that it is better able to reckon with issues of self-trust than other solutions. The issues of self-trust arise because the same faculties that allow me to think that I am right in a situation of disagreement are the very same faculties that convince you that you are correct. Because virtue epistemology emphasizes agents and their flourishing, it rightly converts cases of disagreement from problems of peerhood or the Uniqueness Thesis to problems of self-trust.

I. Why Disagreement Needs Intellectual Virtues

The philosophical significance of peer disagreement has been understood in terms of the concern an individual has to act rationally in the face of disagreement. The significance of the problem intensifies, it is said, as the likelihood increases that individuals should reach the same conclusion. The epistemology of disagreement focuses on the extent to which a person ought to revise their belief in the face of disagreement, if at all, in order to remain rational.[3] As I showed in Chapter One, philosophers have argued that employing an idealized epistemic peer makes clear the stakes of rationality concerns, and so far as disagreement is understood as a rationality problem, the more symmetrical the relationship between the agents is, the better.[4] Assuming that epistemic peers are possible, when a disagreement arises between them each epistemic agent would need to be concerned that the apparent peer has evaluated the same evidence as she has as well as she has, and if this is so she might need to adjust her beliefs in order to act rationally. This concern relies heavily on the idea that to take a colleague's opinion seriously is to consider belief-revision in the face of peer-disagreement. The problem, as it has been posed, is: if someone equally as likely to be right as I am about this given proposition disagrees with me, should I somehow revise my position or should I be able to trust myself?

I have argued so far that this "rationality" problem is not the true problem of disagreement. While the two most common types of responses to disagreement both aim to address the rationality concern, they are inadequate to address the issues of self-trust. Conciliatory views suggest that when faced with a peer disagreement one ought to revise the strength of one's original credence, given the objection of one's peer. An agent's revision of her credence after disagreement is in direct response to the worry that she would be acting *irrationally* had she maintained her belief in light of the disagreement. Steadfast views suggest one does not need to revise one's original credence given the evidence of the disagreement but, rather, should remain steadfast in one's views. For both views, as well as Thomas Kelly and Jennifer Lackey's views, the focus is on acting rationally, in a limited sense of rationality, described in Chapters One and Two.

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[3] This description of the problem of disagreement is taken from Feldman and Warfield's introduction. See Feldman & Warfield 2010, iv.

[4] See Chapter One, Section 1 where I discuss what peerhood is and why it has been problematic for disagreement literature.

The kind of knowledge this rationality aims for is a perfect one, analyzed through highly stylized and unrealistic cases. This rationality is not weakened by agent error or impacted by outside sources. Rather, there are no other outside interactions. We have already determined that both the Steadfast and Conciliatory theories focus on rationality as they conceive of it, rather than on the agents participating in a disagreement.[5] If an approach to disagreement could consider *imperfect* rationality while still affirming the significance of disagreement, it would be a less rigid and, perhaps, even more useful account of the significance of disagreement. I suggest that a virtue epistemological account *can* account for this kind of imperfect rationality.

When we consider beliefs and the processes related to them, if we limit our view to an account of rationality that merely satisfies knowledge our analysis does not fully address all aspects of the situation. This is not merely to object to the impracticability and unattainability of rational perfection. Rather, to assume that knowledge lacks influences disregards the complexity of beliefs and their formation. Most importantly, it denies the ethical components at play in our coming to have beliefs. There are many cases in which asking how to remain rational after a disagreement misses what is truly at stake. Out of our obsession with evidence, ability, and processes, philosophers have failed to consider what epistemic dispositions are present in the persons participating in the disagreement.

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[5] See Chapter Two, Section 1.

To see the ways the traditional disagreement literature has under-interpreted cases of disagreement, consider the following example: In the fall of 2017, the Republican congress was working on a tax bill. There were many versions of this bill, but at one point there was a line in the bill which some interpreted to mean that Congress would start taxing graduate students' tuition waivers. At this same time, a post was made on a philosophy Facebook group of which I am a member.[6] The post cited several reputable sources claiming that the Republican tax bill, as it then stood, included a tax on graduate students' tuition waivers. This post then emphatically encouraged graduate students to contact their representatives in Congress about the harm this tax would do.[7] Shortly after this post appeared, another philosopher replied citing other reputable sources claiming that the law, as it then stood, would *not* tax graduate students' tuition waivers.[8] As Facebook arguments tend to, this conversation quickly spiraled out of control and in the following days numerous people posted arguing for their position about whether or not the tax bill, as it then stood, included a tax on graduate students' tuition waivers.

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[6] To protect the identity of the individuals in this group, I will not name either the Facebook group, nor the individuals taking part in the debate online.

[7] This chapter will not go into the numerous reasons why taxing graduate students' tuition waivers would be detrimental to graduate students, departments, and higher education in general. Even if you find this intuition wrong, please note that it was assumed by everyone on the Facebook page and, thus, will be assumed in this chapter: that it is a harmful thing to tax graduate student's tuition waivers.

[8] There is a sub-literature within disagreement studies regarding disagreement among experts. Unsurprisingly, the experts on disagreement disagree about how significant disagreement among experts is. See Dellsen 2018, Lackey 2018, and Beatty 2006.

Several days later, another post appeared asking us as philosophers to take a step back and recognize what was happening. This post argued that we found ourselves in a case of peer disagreement. This meta-post appeared urging the philosophers of this group to see the similarities between this case and cases of peer disagreement. In this case, we all have the same evidence: a particular subsection from the drafted tax bill and numerous interpretations of the bill posted on blogs, Facebook, and other social media outlets.[9] It is possible that one person in the group might have access to a more illuminating source that no one else had access to, but practically speaking, the majority of people in this online discussion were referring to the same articles.[10] In the same fashion, this meta-post claimed, not only do the people in this example have nearly identical evidence, but they seem to be of somewhat equal reasoning skills. As the particular debate was happening in a philosophy group on Facebook, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of persons on the page were trained in philosophy. Not only that, but most of the persons participating in the discussion were graduate students, which means they were roughly at the same level of education. Now obviously, just because everyone in the group is a graduate student in philosophy does not necessarily mean they are all of equal reasoning ability.[11] Having argued for the similarities between this Facebook argument and a peer disagreement, the writer of this meta-post asked what was our intuition about *p* where *p* means the following:

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[9] These sources vary from tweets from well-known tax lawyers to articles posted by higher education journals. The best, although not the most straightforward, summary of this discussion can be found on the *Daily Nous* blog and its comments. See Weinberg 2017. Also see Kelderman 2017.

[10] Although I am no tax scholar and do not know the nuances of the tax code, at least on the philosophical boards and other blogs, the majority of the debate hinged on how the terms *scholarship* and *tuition* are defined both legally and on the university level. See Weinberg 2017.

> **P: The Republican tax bill, at it stood at that time, includes a tax on graduate student's tuition waivers.**

Having resolved your beliefs about the proposition *p* and come to the realization that you disagree with people "as good as you at evaluating" this proposition, what are you going to do?[12] Is it the rational thing to be more skeptical of your original position and to decrease your certainty that you were correct? Or should you remain convinced of your belief about *p* and continue to maintain it?

These two possibilities correspond to Conciliatory and Steadfast views. These two contemporary accounts agree that peer disagreement is a problem of *rationality* because it is a question of *how a person can respond rationally* in a case in which they discover that they disagree with someone who has the same evidence and equal reasoning skills as they do. But this narrative does not take into account the complexities of beliefs.

Suppose that after reading several blogs, you come to the belief that *p* is false. That is, you believe that the Republican tax bill, as it stood at the time, did *not* include a tax on graduate students' tuition waivers. You come to find out that your peer who has similar evidence and similar reasoning abilities disagrees with you about *p*. Having found out that your peer (who is as likely as you to be correct) disagrees with you, you stand firm in your belief that *p* is false. In fact, you post on every social media site you participate in that *p* is false.

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[11] However, given the unrealistic character of the majority of devised disagreement cases, this particular case seems to be the most actual case of apparent "peer" disagreement we might see in the world.

[12] As mentioned briefly in Chapter One, "as good as you at evaluating" is Adam Elga's definition of an epistemic peer. See Elga 2007.

But beliefs have consequences. Although you believe it is rational to remain steadfast in the face of disagreement, most of your peers hold Conciliatory views. Subsequently, having seen on your Twitter or Facebook page that you believe *p* is false, and believing that in cases of peer disagreements one should give equal weight to their peer's belief as to their own, many of your peers determine that the only rational thing to do is to withhold judgment on *p.* Having influenced many of your peers to withholding judgment, suddenly the majority of the philosophy graduate students across the country are no longer calling their representatives demanding that the law be changed. As a result of your Steadfast position, and your peers' Conciliatory positions, the outcome could have tangible costs. For in reality, as the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reports, the effort to keep tuition waivers tax free was helped by 31 representatives who signed a letter arguing against it, many of whom admitted that the issue had been brought to their attention by numerous graduate student phone calls, letters, and protests (Harris 2017). It is quite plausible that this outcome would have happened even without the meager thousands of philosophy graduate students expressing their, no doubt, excessively longwinded opinions.[13] But a core component of the Steadfast and Conciliatory positions is that each position believes their account is *the way* to maintain rationality in the face of disagreement. Accordingly, they prescribe their view as universal; thus, a strict adherent to either position would say that in order to be rational (and everyone should want to be rational) every person *ought* to observe the Conciliatory or Steadfast positions. A collective endorsement of these positions could cause the aforementioned scenario, especially as supporters of these two positions precisely encourage us to think of disagreements only in terms of the strict rationality described in the previous chapters.

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[13] Another possibility is that the bill might have passed while it was still written in an underdetermined way. Accordingly, the bill would have gone to the courts to determine

For this reason, if *p* is false and the Republican tax bill as it stood did not include a tax on graduate student's tuition waivers, then it is neutral, and perhaps even a good that you remained steadfast and prevented your peers from acting on a false belief. But if *p* is true, then something epistemically harmful may have occurred. But it is not strictly the case that the harm that occurred was only epistemic. In swaying your peers to withhold belief, you have some moral culpability.[14] The harm that arises from your peers conciliating their beliefs in the face of disagreement is not merely epistemic, but also moral in nature. It is insufficient to merely address this problem in terms of rationality.

By offering this example, I am not attempting to convince you of a consequentialist approach to peer disagreement, where we discontinue seeking the truth in favor of seeking the path of practicality. Although it is apparent there is something misguided in the Steadfast and Conciliatory solutions, the bigger concern is

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how to interpret the bill. This possibility brings up an important point for some of these disagreement questions: are there disagreements to which there are no actual answers.

[14] I will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter the relationship between ethics and epistemology.

the way they under-explain disagreement. Much of this case hinges on the problem of peers, not disagreement. Indeed, as the question was setup on the Facebook page, the evidence of epistemic importance was that the group was made up of people similar enough that they might count as peers. There was no reference to the problems that disagreements like this one and others like it raise for self-trust. I contend that the problem of disagreement ought not to be conceived purely in terms of rationality, answered by evidentialist accounts of knowledge, but in terms of one's epistemic agency as a whole, taking into account intellectual virtues and vices. In these cases, asking what one should do in response to a disagreement requires looking at the dispositions possessed by each epistemic agent and the ways those dispositions influence their conclusions. In the long run, as epistemic agents, our goal will be to remain epistemically virtuous in all circumstances, even in cases of disagreement with apparent peers.

As mentioned previously in Chapter Two, while there is no consensus among everyone who defends a Conciliatory or Steadfast position, the majority accept an evidentialist account of justification of beliefs. In this case evidentialism means that a person is justified in believing a proposition *p* at time *t* if and only if *S*'s evidence for *p* at *t* support believing *p*.[15] Richard Feldman and Earl Conee, two leading defenders of evidentialism, have explicitly defined evidentialism as a thesis about the justificatory status of all of the doxastic attitudes. This includes belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment—all of which are important in the case of disagreement. Evidentialism explains when one is justified in believing a proposition; however, it does not explain when one's believing is justified.[16] It is clear, then, that to the extent an account of disagreement relies on evidentialism, it is oriented solely towards a rationality that satisfies knowledge, rather than an integrated rationality. Virtue epistemology, though, has greater explanatory power for describing cases of disagreement.

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[15] Philosophers who favor evidentialist accounts include Richard Feldman, Alvin Goldman, Brian Weatherson, and Earl Conee. Evidentialism is also very prominent in philosophy of religion circles, especially those concerned with religious disagreements. On evidentialism in the philosophy of religion, see Plantinga 1983. For a more extended discussion, see Plantinga 2000a.

II. Virtue Epistemology

Since their first appearance in Ernest Sosa's *The Raft and the Pyramid* (Sosa 1980, 1991), intellectual virtues have come to concern a substantial literature, including both virtue responsibilist as well as virtue reliabilist accounts of intellectual excellences.[17] Generally speaking, just as virtue ethics explains moral properties in terms of personal excellences, likewise, virtue epistemology explains epistemic properties in terms of the epistemic properties of *individuals* instead of beliefs or propositions.[18] Virtue epistemology shifts the epistemological conversation from abstract concepts to the characteristics of individuals. The diversity among virtue epistemologists, however, is vast, which makes it difficult to generalize it as a way of thinking. Practitioners are divided not only by how they define intellectual virtues, but also by the methods they use and the types of questions they ask.[19] As mentioned briefly in the introduction, there are a few common themes throughout virtue epistemology. These include a focus on agents as communities, a concern to reveal the moral characteristics of knowledge, and attention to flourishing.

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[16] In order for someone's believing to be justified, one must not only have good reasons to believe but also believe precisely for those very same good reasons.

[17] Virtue-reliabilists, including Sosa and Greco, argue that intellectual virtues are reliable faculties like sense perception, induction, deduction and memory. Virtue responsibilists, such as Linda Zagzebski, conceive of virtues as character traits, or "deep qualities of a person, closely identified with her selfhood" (Zagzebski 1996, 104).

[18] This analysis of virtue epistemology can be found in Zagzebski & Fairweather 2001, 3, Zagzebski & DePaul 2003, 1, and Greco & Turri 2012, vii, and elsewhere.

Depending on one's particular understanding of the relationship between epistemic virtues and true belief, there are several different ways to argue for the necessity of a shift from concepts to persons. Ernest Sosa best demonstrates the need for this shift to person-oriented epistemology when he writes:

> We need a clearer and more comprehensive view of the respects in which one's belief must be non-accidentally true if it is to constitute knowledge. Unaided, the tracking or causal requirements proposed … permit too narrow a focus on the particular target belief and its causal or counterfactional relation to the truth of its content. Just widening our focus will not do, however, if we widen it only far enough to include the process that yields the belief involved. We need a broader view. (Sosa 2009, 186-187)

The broader view that he endorses widens the focus from justified belief and knowledge language exclusively to a focus on the individual.[20] Zagzebski also argues for this shift because of her concern that traditional epistemology has neglected the epistemic value of wisdom in favor of propositional beliefs.[21] With these concerns in mind, virtue epistemologists focus on the evaluation of persons and their intellectual abilities and character traits first, rather than on justification or knowledge. As Heather Battaly explains, this change in perspective shifts the focus to agent evaluation:

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[19] Recent examples of the diversity in Virtue Epistemology includes the growth of virtue and vice studies, studies of epistemic injustices, and studies of epistemic emotions.

[20] In Sosa's case, his work in particular still uses language of justified belief and knowledge, while seeing agents as the fundamental objects of evaluation.

[21] In this specific chapter she does not talk about the needed shift in terms of concepts to persons but rather in terms of concepts to virtue. Because one of the greatest strengths of a virtue approach is its ability to focus on persons, I take this point to be similar (Zagzebski 1996, 50).

> [Virtue epistemology] contends that agents (people) are the primary objects of epistemic evaluation; and that epistemic (intellectual) virtues, which are evaluations of agents, are the fundamental concepts and properties in epistemology. (Battaly 2019, 1)

Besides the shift to an agent focused epistemology, virtue epistemology also illuminates the ethical processes present in knowledge. Stephen Napier writes that "virtue epistemology attempts to give an account of knowledge and other epistemic states, with reference to the agent's character, and the character can be both intellectual and moral" (Napier 2008, 1). Virtue epistemologists in particular have focused their efforts on understanding epistemic norms, value, and evaluation.[22] Finally, because virtue epistemology derived from virtue ethics, it too has concerns beyond just knowledge, which extend to flourishing and well-being. Indeed, no matter one's definition of virtues, the concept of virtue is rooted in the notion of human flourishing, as Wood suggests (Wood 1998, 47).

For our purposes, we will focus on the differing definitions of intellectual virtues provided by the virtue responsibilists and reliabilists. Virtue reliabilists, like Goldman, Greco, and Sosa, argue that intellectual virtues are [reliable] cognitive faculties or abilities like memory, sense perception, etc., which they call "faculty virtues" (Turri, Alfano, & Greco 2018). Virtue responsibilists, on the other hand, like Montmarquet and

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[22] Accordingly, VE features centrally in the recent "value turn" in epistemology. See Riggs 2006 and Pritchard 2007.

Zagzebski, interpret intellectual virtues as acquired, praiseworthy character traits, called "trait-virtues" (Turri, Alfano, & Greco 2018). Given that virtue epistemology maintains that agents are the primary means of evaluation with regards to epistemology, understanding the nature of intellectual virtues is crucial to evaluating any epistemic situation.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, virtue reliabilism derives from a more classical externalist, reliabilist argument. Reliabilism is the claim that a belief counts as justified if it is produced by a reliable source (Turri, Alfano, & Greco 2018). Reliabilism claims that not all knowledge requires reasons. Ernie Sosa, considered one of the founders of the virtue reliabilist method, first introduces virtue reliabilism as a solution to the fatal flaws he sees in both the foundationalist and coherentist positions on the justification of beliefs.[23] There he characterizes an intellectual virtue as "a quality bound to help maximize one's surplus of truth over error" (Sosa 1980, 225). Accordingly, Sosa suggests that epistemic justification would require an explanation; he believes that intellectual virtues can provide this explanation. Thus, a belief is justified in cases where it has its source in an intellectual virtue (Sosa 1980, 189). For Sosa, these virtues are truth-seeking while also illuminating the ethical processes present in knowledge.[24]

Similarly, John Greco considers intellectual virtues to be reliable cognitive faculties or abilities: "innate faculties or acquired habits that enable a person to arrive at truth and avoid error in some relevant field" (Greco 2002, 287). Therefore, for him, one has knowledge of a certain proposition just in cases where one believes the truth regarding that proposition because one believes out of an intellectual virtue (Greco 2002, 311). Greco suggests that his view is sufficient to ward off skepticism, because when the skeptic critiques our justification of the external world, the skeptic is misunderstanding the conditions of knowledge. As given in his account, the agent's grounds must be reliable to be believable. The view that he then offers emphasizes the subject's virtues, so that the subject's belief must be non-accidentally true, and not just non-accidentally present.[25]

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[23] Sosa believes the main problem with coherentism is that it fails to give adequate epistemic weight to experience, while he thinks that foundationalism cannot explain the unity of their foundational principles (Sosa 1980,184-89).

[24] For a detailed account of how virtue epistemology is truth seeking as well as intellectual reliability seeking, see Sosa 2001.

There are two key problems with virtue reliabilist approaches, both of which Linda Zagzebski points out. First, it is not clear that virtue reliabilism is Gettier-proof. Consider the following example from Zagzebski, in which she argues that any theory of knowledge that defines knowledge as true belief plus *X*, but *X* does not entail getting the truth, is subject to a double-luck case.[26] She notes that all that is needed to generate a Gettier case is what she calls "double-luck," that is, where "an instance of good luck cancels out an instance of bad luck" (Zagzebski 1994, 72 and 1996, 295).

The second worry about virtue reliabilism is that it is not able to account for what has been termed the value problem: that is, it cannot explain how (or whether?)

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[25] Sosa expands this account by adding the conception of aptness. He compares the evaluation of knowledge to the evaluation of an archer: the archer can be judged on her success in hitting the target, her skill, and her aptness. That is, her success is sufficiently attributable to her competence. Likewise, we can distinguish between a belief's truth, its adroitness (that is, its manifesting of epistemic virtue), and its aptness (Sosa 2007, 23-24).

[26] See Zagzebski 1996, 72 and Zagzebski 1996, 285-286.

knowledge is more valuable than a true belief.[27] Zagzebski argues that just because a process is reliable does not automatically add value to it, using the analogy of a cup of coffee (Zagzebski 1996, 312). A good cup of coffee which is produced by a reliable coffee machine is no more valuable than an equally good cup of coffee that is produced by an unreliable machine. Likewise, she suggests that a true belief formed via a reliable belief-forming process is no more valuable than a true belief formed via an unreliable belief-forming process, as a reliable process does not transfer value onto its product.[28] Zagzebski argues that what gives rise to this difficulty is the fact that the reliabilist has signed up to a “machine-product model of belief” wherein the product is external to the cause (Zagzebski 1996, 312).

Virtue responsibilism, on the other hand, contrasts with virtue reliabilism, because virtue responsibilists think of intellectual virtue as traits of character. Linda Zagzebski and other responsibilists see epistemic virtues as acquired character traits as opposed to the natural traits which the reliabilists consider most like virtues, like memory or perception. Linda suggests that the best way to tell if an excellence is acquired or natural is to compare one’s emotions about the excellences. Acquired excellences, which Zagzebski thinks of as virtues, cause a person to feel a distinct kind of admiration towards them. In fact, she at one point defines virtues as “qualities we admire on reflection" (Zagzebski 2019, 26).[29] Because responsibilists see virtue as acquired, they also believe that they can be imitated. That is to say, while I might admire someone with perfect pitch, this is not a skill that I can acquire for myself. But an excellence like honesty is one that I can acquire by emulating someone with said excellence. Another key factor about virtues that Zagzebski makes clear is that because admiration is what allows us to recognize virtues, we recognize the importance of motives given our emotional response to persons acting with motives that we do not find admirable (Zagzebski 2019, 27). Her example is Leopold Socha, who rescued Jews from the Nazis. Initially his motive was financial but after they ran out of money he continued to shelter them out of love. Earlier, Zagzebski had called this component the motivation component in comparison with the success component (Zagzebski 2019, 27). That is, on her account, to possess an intellectual virtue, a person must be motivated by and reliably successful at achieving certain intellectual ends (Zagzebski 1996, 106). And finally, a virtue, she suggests, is "a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person" (Zagzebski 1996, 137; 2019, 30). For Zagzebski and other responsibilists, then, to have knowledge you must believe the truth because of your intellectual virtues.[30]

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[27] This problem has also been referred to as the swamping problem in the sense that the value of true belief swamps the value of the true belief being produced in a reliable way.

[28] Some have suggested that this is a problem for any account of knowledge that regards the greater value of knowledge over true belief as instrumental value, where the instrumental value in question is relative to the valuable good of true belief.

Some critics have argued that this view is uninformative because it is not clear what "because of" means in this context (Roberts & Wood 2007). Others worry that it does not fit the actual nature of knowledge and justification, which are "often acquired in a more or less passive way, that is in a way that makes few if any demands on the character of the cognitive agent in question" (Baehr n.d.). In particular, counterexamples have been offered wherein a person seems to be justified although they did not act in a way that is characteristic of an intellectual virtue, even while not necessarily acting differently than an intellectually virtuous person would act. (Baehr n.d.).

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[29] She agrees that we can feel admiration for natural talents but the admiration for natural talents has a different emotion than the one directed at the acquired excellence (Zagzebski 2019, 27).

[30] See Zagzebski 1996, 285 ff., Greco 2003, Sosa 2007, and Turri 2011.

This distinction between reliabilists and responsibilists has attracted criticism in the past few years. It is not entirely clear why a person would need to choose between faculty virtues and trait virtues if all seem to promote flourishing. Heather Battaly suggests that arguments about which concept is the real virtue are counterproductive, because both are ways of flourishing epistemologically (Battaly 2001). Moreover, it is plausible, as John Turri suggests, that a complete epistemology would feature both faculty and trait virtues (Turri, Alfano, & Greco 2018). He gives the example of intellectual courage and perseverance, in addition to good memory and perception, as a means of helping explain how a knower arrived at the truth (Turri, Alfano, & Greco 2018). Accordingly, John Greco and John Turri say that "most virtue epistemologists are happy to agree that there are at least two kinds of intellectual virtue" (Greco & Turri 2012, vviii). But what is apparent is that because there are numerous notions of human flourishing, each notion "will give rise to differing accounts of the virtues and their various interrelations" (Wood 1998, 46-47). Moreover, Wood suggests that "whether a trait is virtuous or vicious hinges on where our lives as a whole ought to be headed"

(Wood 1998, 46).[31] Nevertheless it is clear that whatever view one takes of virtues, the virtues are aimed towards the good.

III. Intellectual Virtue, Regulative Epistemology, and Self-Trust

Having introduced intellectual virtue theory, I will now argue that intellectual virtue theory is, at its heart, a regulative epistemology, thus fulfilling the first of our two criteria for an appropriate philosophical study of disagreement. While there are numerous trends within virtue epistemology that lend themselves to a regulative mindset, I will focus on the same three areas of emphasis from the first section: first, the intuition of virtue epistemologists to locate persons as the primary site of epistemic value, which in turn orients virtue epistemology towards epistemic practices and not theories. Secondly, the value turn within virtue epistemology, which makes obvious the moral implications of epistemic action, encouraging a mindset of best practices. Finally, as already seen in our definition of intellectual virtues, virtue theory embeds the *telos* of flourishing in the discussion from the very beginning. The end goal of flourishing in itself functions as a regulative element within intellectual virtue theory.

Having argued for the advantages of an intellectual virtue theory response to disagreement because of the regulative nature of virtue epistemology, I will further strengthen this position by showing how virtue epistemology is uniquely able to respond to the central issues of disagreement: that the faculties which allow me to trust my own opinion are the same faculties that my peer has used to arrive at her contrary belief.

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[31] W. Jay Wood provides the example of Buddhism and analytic philosophy. Analytic philosophy values logical dissection of the world whereas Zen Buddhism sees such thinking as intellectually vicious (Wood 1998, 46-47).

While the analytic responses to disagreement, like Conciliatory and Steadfast views, remain focused on peerhood and the Uniqueness Thesis, virtue epistemology makes philosophical reflection on disagreement about responding in a regulative matter because it places emphasis on agents and the moral characteristics of knowledge. Accordingly, virtue epistemology allows the real issues of self-trust to remain central, as it does not matter to a virtue epistemology account whether the people in question are peers or not; what matters is who is acting virtuously, and who is not.

Christopher Hookway asks what the goal of epistemology ought to be in his article “How to be a Virtue Epistemologist” (Hookway 2001, 191). He provides two possible answers as a response. The first, he suggests, is that epistemology ought to explain what knowledge and justified belief are, and that it ought “to investigate how far we are able to possess states of knowledge and justified belief” (Hookway 2001,192). The majority of late 20th century epistemology has also considered this the goal of epistemology. But Sosa, like many virtue epistemologists, suggests that there is more to the practice of epistemic evaluation than this (Sosa, 1980). Accordingly these philosophers turn to the second possibility Hookway proposes: to describe and explain our practice of epistemic evaluation. In addition to describing the practices as they are, he suggests that we also ought “to investigate how far our epistemic goals are appropriate and how far our evaluative practices enable us to achieve our epistemic ends” (Hookway 2001, 192). To explain his point, he mentions what he considers to be an analogous case: prior to virtue theory, the sum of the moral questions asked by ethicists emphasized the moral “ought.” However, virtue theory allowed ethicists to realize they were asking the wrong question and could instead focus on how to act and live well (Hookway 2001, 193). Likewise, Hookway thinks that virtue epistemology also provides epistemology with the opportunity to recognize how its focus on knowledge and justified belief have also missed the epistemic point.

Hookway stops short of defining the transition from answer one to answer two as a shift from analytic epistemology to regulative. It is clear from the language he uses, though, that he has something akin to this in mind. If virtue epistemology is about investigating our epistemic goals and how our evaluative practices allow us to achieve them, then he is indeed talking about regulative epistemology. What allows virtue epistemology to answer these questions is its ability to shift focus from epistemic ideas to epistemic agents. A focus on people alone would not be sufficient to transform virtue epistemology into a regulative approach. Rather, it is the fact that agents become the source of epistemic normativity that makes this possible. Consider Turri and Greco's definition of virtue epistemology from the introduction in their joint volume *Virtue Epistemology*:

> Virtue epistemologists agree that the ultimate source of epistemic normativity, and thence the central focus of epistemological inquiry, are cognitive agents and communities, along with the fundamental powers, traits and habits that constitute their intellect. (Greco & Turri 2012, 1-2)

For analytic epistemology, the source of normativity comes from concepts created by a perfected sense of rationality. Their inquiry seeks to solve such problems. But because virtue epistemology finds agents and communities as the ultimate source of epistemic normativity, their focus becomes, as Robert Roberts and Jay Wood put it, "practical and social, rather than just an interesting theoretical challenge for philosophy professors and smart students" (Roberts & Wood 2007, 21).

There are numerous ways one can discuss the ethical dimension of epistemology. In fact, Chisholm once noted that "many of the characteristics philosophers have thought peculiar to ethical statements also hold of epistemic statements" (Chisholm 1969, 4). Virtue epistemologists in particular have focused their efforts on understanding epistemic norms, value, and evaluation.[32] Take for example the ethics of belief debate, which is important to both evidentialist and virtue epistemologists. The debate centers on questions at the intersection of epistemology, moral theory, and philosophy of mind: if we commend or critique people for their beliefs, is this evaluation moral in nature?[33] Evidentialists argue that we should only base our beliefs on relevant evidence, while virtue epistemologists would want to consider a more holistic approach. Evidentialists, as Foley noted, define "relevant evidence" as evidence limited to that which bears on the truth of the proposition for the purposes of knowledge. However, as Zagzebski has argued, no matter if one is an internalist or an externalist, knowledge and justified belief are desirable and, therefore, there is something good about them. But *what* is good about them is unclear, given that internalists and externalists cannot agree on what epistemic states are desirable. Virtue epistemologists can provide an answer as to why knowledge and justified belief are desirable that avoids this quandary: the cultivation of intellectual virtue.

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[32] Accordingly, Virtue Epistemology features centrally in the recent "value turn" in epistemology. See Riggs 2006 and Pritchard 2007.

[33] My interpretation of this question is influenced by Zagzebski's first chapter of *Virtues of the Mind*, in which she defends the idea that epistemologists borrow ethical theories themselves when they borrow moral concepts. See Zagzebski 1996.

In addition, virtue epistemology can also provide an answer to another ethics of belief question that analytic epistemology ignores: that is, whether there are certain ways of obtaining evidence that are irrational and immoral. Although many evidentialists have written about possible irrational ways of obtaining evidence, they do not consider immoral ones. Take for example Miranda Fricker's testimonial injustices, in which epistemic agents (perhaps unknowingly) make immoral judgments when discerning what testimonies to count as evidence (Fricker 2007). In Fricker's accounting, these injustices reveal examples of biases impacting our discernment of which testimonies are trustworthy and which are not. If we judge certain testimonies to be insufficient and decide to not allow them, then we obstruct access to all possible testimonies and, accordingly, our knowledge is biased. While Fricker's examples of testimonial injustices are particularly potent, there are other, more mundane examples that likewise reveal ways in which persons have obtained evidence or come to beliefs while committing injustices.[34] By illuminating the ethical nature of knowledge, virtue epistemology shows that it cares about the practical formation of virtuous epistemic agents. By tying right action and belief together, virtue epistemology acts regulatively.

One of the strongest reasons that virtue epistemology is regulative epistemology is because of its orientation towards a flourishing life. One way virtue epistemology promotes well-being is by the consequences it produces. Julia Driver, for example, defends an account of moral virtue in which a moral virtue is a trait of character that could “systemically (reliably) produce good consequences” (Zagzebski 1996,126). Zagzebski, on the other hand, sees virtues as an “intrinsically valuable motivation,” and one that is reliable “at bringing about the end or ends proper to the virtue in question” (Zagzebski 1996,136-137). We might need to ask then what is the good of epistemic virtues? Philosophers have provided several explanations of their value. Christopher Hookway suggests that their importance comes from their explanatory power (Hookway 2003, 190). Anne Baril considers this question as well and suggests that intellectual virtues might be valuable because they are a means to the good life. She goes further to suggest that rather than having just instrumental power, intellectual virtues themselves might be constitutive of the good life (Baril 2019, 77). No matter one’s definition of virtues, the concept of virtue is rooted in the notion of human flourishing, as Wood suggests. Because virtue epistemology, and therefore epistemic virtues themselves, promote flourishing, they encourage ways of life that bring about such flourishing. In the case of epistemic virtues, the goal then is to have a flourishing intellectual life. Like regulative epistemology, virtue epistemology is invested in helping people flourish, and, thus, in becoming better knowers.

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[34] See Alcoff 2000 and Kidd, Medina, & Pohlhaus 2017.

Because virtue epistemology is regulative in nature, it addresses one of the criteria laid out in Chapter Two. But there is still the greater problem of whether or not virtue epistemology is able to satisfy the second criteria: does it address the problem of self-trust? Although some have suggested that disagreement is a problem of balancing trust in others with trust in yourself, Zagzebski argues that it is actually a problem for self-trust alone (Zagzebski 2012). The faculties that I trust to bring me to a true belief, are the same faculties that you trust to bring you to a true belief. If we find that our beliefs differ, then to call into question either one of our faculties is to call both into question. When I find myself in a disagreement with someone, if I doubt her or him, I am at the same time casting doubt on my own faculties which helped me arrive at my belief.

The other solutions to disagreement that we have seen have been insufficient to deal with this problem of self-trust. In fact, most of them ignore this issue for other less significant problems, such as a problem of peerhood or problems related to the Uniqueness Thesis. Virtue epistemology, however, is able to bring self-trust to the center of disagreement because intellectual virtues are closely related to issues of self-trust and trust in others. Zagzebski argues that some intellectual virtues can help "train ourselves to be alert to new evidence, to be willing to criticize our own beliefs, and to be sensitive to the arguments of others" (Zagzebski 2009, 82). These skills are vital to learning the limits of one's self-trust. For disagreements, we need to be able to enhance our self-trust when necessary and to limit inappropriate forms of self-trust when it is required.

One further way that virtue epistemology emphasizes self-trust is because it is able to extend the problem beyond peerhood. To show this, I will first reflect on peerhood from a virtue epistemological perspective. Once I have done so, further problems with peer language will become obvious, as will virtue epistemology's strength in extricating itself from these problems. It is interesting to note that one of the only places "virtue language" has appeared in disagreement literature hitherto is in the definition of "peer." Thomas Kelly's account, which I mentioned earlier, assumes that epistemic peers are “equals with respect to general *epistemic virtues* such as intelligence, thoughtfulness, and freedom from bias” (Kelly 2005, 21). Kelly is an outlier as far as his definition of peerhood is concerned, however, as most of the disagreement literature defines epistemic peerhood so narrowly that a person’s epistemic virtues are not taken into consideration.[35] Similarly to Kelly, Jonathan Matheson and Axel Gelfert employ epistemic virtues as their starting point for defining peerhood. For his part, though, Matheson ends up dropping all epistemic virtue language in his definition of epistemic peerhood, as he is much more concerned with one’s epistemic position at a given moment regarding *p*.[36] And Gelfert, having referenced the importance of epistemic virtues in his very early discussions of disagreement, proposes removing epistemic virtue language altogether in favor of self-awareness, something he argues epistemic virtues do not provide.[37] Whether because definitions of epistemic peerhood require a symmetry of epistemic virtues, or because epistemic virtue language is erased from the definition of peerhood, none of the existing treatments of peerhood account for the possibility that one's peer might be epistemically vicious.

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[35] Early uses of epistemic peerhood utilize epistemic virtues as a way to account for peerhood (Gutting 1982, 83). However, treatments of epistemic peerhood quickly added the requirement that for two epistemic agents to count as peers, they must be “equals with respect to their familiarity with the evidence and arguments which bear on that question” (Kelly 2005, 174). Others remove any reference to epistemic virtues at all: Elga, for example, roughly defines one’s epistemic peer as the one who is “as good as you at evaluating such claims” (Elga 2007, 484). David Enoch similarly suggests that an epistemic peer is someone who is “somewhat roughly, antecedently as likely as you are to get things right (on matters of the relevant kind)” (Enoch 2010, 956).

[36] Matheson defines epistemic peers as follows: “S1 and S2 are epistemic peers regarding p at *t* just in case S1 and S2 are in an equally good epistemic position regarding p at *t* (where one’s epistemic position is determined by one’s evidence and one’s ability to process it well” (Matheson 2015b, 24).

[37] Gelfert argues that awareness of one’s epistemic standing relative to that of a disagreeing party cannot be found in traditional definitions of epistemic peerhood (Gelfert 2011). This does not seem to consider contemporary literature on epistemic virtues, particularly open-mindedness as described by Baehr, which he describes as a willingness to transcend one’s own cognitive standpoint in order to take seriously the merits of another—thus requiring an awareness of the other’s cognitive standpoint. See Baehr 2001.

Many philosophers of disagreement will object to the notion that a peer might have epistemic vices that I do not have, as this would seem to remove the supposed symmetry of peerhood that philosophers have worked so hard to devise. If we want to remove the possibility of epistemic viciousness from peerhood, we have two choices: either we admit that current definitions of peerhood are too narrow to account for this problem, or we return to Kelly's definition of peerhood, which includes equality among epistemic virtues. In either case, the definition of peerhood must be enhanced such that it addresses concerns raised by virtue epistemology. In the case of epistemic peerhood, it is not surprising that this definition also needs to be broadened in order to address intellectual virtues.

But, even a conception of peerhood that includes epistemic virtues is inadequate for two reasons: first because it is too limited in its understanding of rationality, and second because it makes peerhood and not the virtues of the epistemic agents the standard. Since Kelly's position does have a definition of peerhood that includes intellectual virtue, let us consider whether it could actually remove the possibility of epistemic viciousness from a peer. Kelly characterizes epistemic peers as two individuals equal with respect to a given question only if they fulfill these two conditions: first, "they are equals with respect to their familiarity with the evidence and arguments which bear on that question," and, second, "they are equals with respect to general *epistemic virtues* such as intelligence, thoughtfulness, and freedom from bias" (Matheson 2015b, 21). Matheson clarifies a portion of Kelly's account by suggesting that "being in an equally good epistemic position regarding *p* requires both more and less than equality in evidential possession and equality in evidential processing" (Matheson 2015b, 23). Matheson concedes that equality in evidential possession or in processing could balance out so that two individuals would count as epistemic peers even if there are differences between the two. In fact, one of the individuals might be less equal in some respects, but their deficit can be compensated by their overall position with respect to this proposition. Matheson further suggests that epistemic virtues might be important simply because they make up for a lack of other processing skills (Matheson 2015b, 23).

In Kelly's account what matters most is similarity in one's overall epistemic position; one could have *different* epistemic virtues than one's peer and *still* count as epistemic peers. If the sum of my epistemic virtues and vices is equal to the sum of yours, we would be considered epistemic peers. Although our epistemic positions *overall* might be equal—making us peers in his model—you might have an epistemic virtue or vice that I do not have. While not all epistemic vices impact the agent's ability to think rationally, some do. If we are arguing about the bill after a dinner, your intellectual prejudices may not matter; however, if we are considering the causes of the Civil War, they almost certainly will. Although Kelly's position can ensure our overall equality, it does not eliminate the possibility that one of us may have epistemic vices. Epistemic peerhood seeks equality only, not intellectual virtues themselves. Moreover, even if I could determine that we share identical intellectual virtues, this does not remove the possibility that you and I both have epistemic vices that bias our opinions. This possibility of vice limits the contribution epistemic peerhood can make to a theory of right action with regard to disagreement. My aim as an epistemic agent ought not to simply be equal to someone, but rather to be as virtuous as I can be. If epistemic peerhood simply means general equality, then it, like the rest of the evidentialist approaches, misses the point. My question in cases of disagreement should not be, “Who is my peer?” but rather, “Is my interlocutor virtuous?”

Since epistemic peerhood does not seek intellectual virtues themselves, but rather general equality, it is not a useful model in helping an agent reach her epistemic goals. Furthermore, if we are just considering the goods of peerhood versus the goods of epistemic virtue, peerhood is not only less practical but also easier to appraise incorrectly. If I am an agent attempting to discern whether someone is my epistemic peer, I am prone to make errors in my determination of your ability, my ability, the similarity of our intellectual ability, processing ability, evidence, and epistemic states. All these errors are prior to my consideration of epistemic virtues, which only makes matters more difficult: I may have an epistemic vice that you do not, or you may have a virtue that I lack, or we both may have some combination of virtues and vices that we would have to score in order to see if we are still peers.

Such are the problems of epistemic peerhood. While it is (at most) a useful term to determine rationality in the face of evidence, because it misses the most epistemically significant aspect of disagreement, it loses any semblance of usefulness.

The problem of disagreement is one of self-trust and not merely evidential and intellectual similarity. Accordingly, using peer language misleads us into thinking that all issues of epistemic significance disappear if I can prove that someone is not my peer. But issues of self-trust remain even when someone is not my peer. Virtue epistemology is able to place the emphasis on self-trust because it too finds peer language a distraction from the more epistemically significant problem. Once we have introduced the concepts of epistemic virtue and vice, it is clear that it is better to seek epistemic virtues in cases of disagreement rather than trying to determine whether someone is a peer. By considering your own virtues or vices, you gain much more information about whether the occasion calls for restraining or enhancing one's self-trust than you do from peerhood. This information is vital in cases of disagreement where you are adjudicating how to have a coherent sense of the self when the faculties that you trust support various beliefs. Epistemic vices alert you to the untrustworthiness of someone. Because epistemic vices detract from trustworthiness, they make our account of disagreement a more appropriate way to navigate issues of self-trust. If I truly seek the truth in a situation, the relevant point is not whether or not a person is my peer, but whether this person or myself have an epistemic vice that could impair our decisions. Accordingly, we can shift the conversation away from a focus on determining who counts as a peer and concentrate instead on *what to do* in cases of disagreement. The cases in which intellectual virtues are relevant are not restricted to cases of morality or practicality. Rather, epistemic virtues can provide a path forward in all cases in which two or more agents disagree.

Intellectual virtue theory not only adds considerable richness to our understanding of what happens in cases of disagreement, but it also provides a link between disagreement as an intellectual question and a theory of right action. What is good in my overt behavior parallels what is good is my epistemic behavior. In a virtue epistemological account of disagreement, however, we would begin by intuiting what intellectual virtues are at stake and what, if any, epistemic vices are involved. When presented with the belief of an agent who is my peer in all other ways, but whose epistemic character includes the vices of prejudice, dogmatism, or closed-mindedness, a virtue epistemological approach to disagreement would hold that I should not vary my own belief. While the Steadfast View might encourage you to do the same by firmly holding to your prior belief, it does not have the resources to account specifically for *why* someone's belief should be disregarded in this case, even though it comes from a seeming epistemic peer. Similarly, Conciliatory positions would suggest that you ought to revise your own belief in light of someone else's belief, even if this person committed epistemic vices in the process of coming to said belief.[38]

CONCLUSION

In cases of disagreement, you need to know more than just whether or not the person with whom you are disagreeing has any intellectual virtues or vices, however. Although this knowledge is relevant for your determination of whether to maintain your self-trust or to trust in others, you also need to be aware of your *own* intellectual virtues and vices. This requires one to apply the same criteria to oneself as to others, and this demands intellectual humility and honesty about one's own position and dispositions. Given that we have removed the concern for determining epistemic peerhood, however, intellectual virtues are capable of signaling whether I ought to trust you or not in a case of a disagreement. Besides the concern about my ability to know my own virtues and vices, there is the further concern of whether I would be able to judge the virtues and vices of the person I am disagreeing with. To address this concern, I will move into a discussion of intellectual *phronesis* in the next chapter.

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[38] John Pittard considers this problem, although from the constraints of rationality concerns, in Pittard 2015. While he supports a Conciliatory account of disagreement, he suggests that there are certain cases where, due to the rational unlikelihood and absurdity of a belief, one can give less weight to a peer's belief.

As I have shown, Conciliatory and Steadfast approaches to disagreement do not yet provide a convincing framework within which to adjudicate disagreement philosophically, nor do they offer a practical solution to disagreement in a complex pluralistic society such as our own. Intellectual virtue theory, however, provides the disagreement literature a depth and subtlety it often lacks—and promises much more than merely taking existing solutions to the problem of disagreement and stirring in the virtues. By shifting the conversation toward a more holistic appraisal of the epistemic agents involved, we can clarify real-world scenarios whose complexity outstrips the too-rigid recommendations of the most common contemporary answers to disagreement.

Thus far we have been assuming that it is easy to discern whether to trust yourself in cases of disagreement. Rarely, however, is this decision an obvious one. Intellectual virtue theory is able to bring self-trust to the center of disagreement because intellectual virtues are closely related to issues of self-trust and trust in others. As stated above, Zagzebski argues that some intellectual virtues can help “train ourselves to be alert to new evidence, to be willing to criticize our own beliefs, and to be sensitive to the arguments of others” (Zagzebski 2009, 82). These skills are vital to learning the limits of one’s self-trust. For disagreements, we need to be able to enhance our self-trust when necessary and limit inappropriate forms of self-trust when it is required. And there remains the daunting task of discerning what to do in cases of disagreement between two persons who are not acting epistemically viciously. Besides concerns about what virtues might impact what beliefs, we may also encounter situations in which the epistemic virtues appear to be in conflict with each other. If this occurs, how can virtue epistemology provide a solution to the problem of disagreement? I will argue in the next chapter for an overarching virtue—intellectual *phronesis*—which is capable of weighing possible virtues and determining which one has the most relevance in a case of disagreement. *Phronesis* is crucial not simply in weighing conflicting virtues, but, indeed, to the entire process of agent appraisal.

CHAPTER 4: Intellectual *Phronesis* and Disagreement

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will reestablish the problem of disagreement as one of self-trust by introducing a solution to the problem oriented toward virtue epistemology. To do so, we first will look at the intellectual virtues that are related to disagreement. While the list could go on and on, I will limit the discussion to intellectual humility, intellectual fortitude, and open-mindedness. I will formulate a *phronesis* based account of disagreement capable of adjudicating scenarios of moral and epistemic complexity. Though not synonymous with its equivalent in the moral virtues, intellectual *phronesis* extends the practical reasoning normally identified as prudential, acting as a unifying virtue and enabling proper sensitivity to the components of a given disagreement. The cultivation of *phronesis* allows epistemic agents to pursue and navigate disagreements rationally and virtuously, and constitutes an immediate and urgent agenda for forming a more just and understanding society.

Thus far, we have seen that analytic approaches to disagreement are not satisfactory for a number of reasons: first, they do not adequately account for the ethical nature of knowledge; second, they are not focused on the more epistemically significant problem of self-trust; and third, they do not provide epistemic advice to agents. In this chapter I will argue that by focusing on the intellectual virtues present in disagreement, an agent can more clearly seek the epistemic good of true belief in cases of disagreement. I will begin this chapter by examining the intellectual virtues most pertinent to disagreement: intellectual humility, intellectual fortitude, and open-mindedness. Intellectual humility enables an agent to be aware of her intellectual limitations, whereas intellectual fortitude disposes an agent to hold onto her belief in the face of disagreement. Quite noticeably, these two accounts map onto Conciliatory and Steadfast views of disagreement. Open-mindedness is also important because it ensures that an agent takes seriously the merits of views with which they disagree. By focusing on these virtues rather than on peerhood or other analytic concerns, we can consider the dispositions of each epistemic agent and the ways those dispositions influence their conclusions. In this section, I will also argue against Olli-Pekka Vainio's virtuous disagreement account. While he shares a similar list of virtues related to disagreement, Vainio introduces the questionable virtue of "tolerance." In analyzing his use of tolerance, it will be clear that he and I do not share the same epistemic concerns about disagreement.

In the next portion of the chapter I will present the virtue which I believe can help individuals determine what to do in cases of seeming conflict between virtues: intellectual *phronesis*. Like its ethical counterpart, intellectual *phronesis* has two key abilities: first to perceive the particulars of the situation and secondly to provide judgment on the situation. In cases of disagreement, we can break these up into three steps: the first step involves perceiving the situation's virtues, values, vices, and any authorities the disagreement relies on. The second includes making plain the demands these virtues place on the agent. And the third, related to judgment, involves weighing the virtues and values of the disagreement so that an agent can discern which virtue most pertains to the given situation.

In the final section of this chapter, I present two cases of disagreement in order to demonstrate how these steps can play out to provide an intellectually prudent response. While one case is historical, the second case is a recent debate related to politics and abortion. Because the nature of intellectual *phronesis* requires an agent to discern the particularities of cases, general principles are impossible. But in observing several cases of disagreement where the agent acts with intellectual *phronesis*, it becomes possible for individuals to emulate the process of *phronesis* for themselves.

I. Intellectual Virtues and Disagreement

In the last chapter I argued that the intellectual virtues within virtue epistemology are robust enough to adequately describe the problem of disagreement. But I did not articulate exactly what a virtue epistemological account of disagreement would look like. Before I can introduce my specific account, we need to look at the relationship between virtues and disagreement. As I briefly mentioned in Chapter One, the kinds of questions that cause disagreements are nearly limitless. Given the fact that disagreements can occur over mathematics, ethics, politics, as well as religion, it might seem unclear where a situation requires moral, intellectual, civic, or spiritual virtues. As I have shown, the core problem within disagreement is the tension that occurs when an individual's self-trust is torn between supporting her own beliefs and the beliefs of the person with whom she disagrees. Accordingly, my solution for disagreement will incorporate epistemic virtues in order to address this epistemic problem.

Let us now reflect on the intellectual virtues that relate to disagreement, of which there are no small number. At first glance almost all of the intellectual virtues seem like they would be helpful in situations of disagreement: intellectual autonomy, so that one appropriates one's intellectual dependencies properly; intellectual generosity to the position of one's peer; courage and caution to manage new intellectual ideas; intellectual carefulness; thoroughness and attentiveness, so that one's beliefs are meticulously analyzed; and of course open-mindedness to new concepts.[1] Recent literature describing the variety of intellectual virtues has multiplied, and so too have the virtues related to disagreement. But there are three particular intellectual virtues that I have found key to discussions of disagreement: intellectual humility, intellectual fortitude, and open-mindedness. In this section I will explore these three virtues and their importance to disagreement. Intellectual humility provides the agent who has it with the ability to recognize her limitations. In the case of disagreements, this capacity for recognition is central to curbing one's self-importance. Intellectual fortitude, a term I have coined, has similarities to intellectual perseverance, as well as to the virtue of intellectual firmness.[2] While intellectual firmness relates to the strength with which one holds a belief, intellectual fortitude relates to the longevity of a belief. Finally, open-mindedness gives the agent the ability to carefully evaluate the merits of their peer's position. In defending the importance of humility, fortitude, and open-mindedness for disagreement, I will oppose Olli-Pekka Vainio's intellectual virtue theory of disagreement wherein he contends that tolerance is the chief epistemic virtue related to disagreement (Vainio 2017).

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[1] The definition of autonomy, generosity, courage and caution all come from Roberts and Wood 2007.

[2] Nathan King and Heather Battaly have both written about intellectual perseverance, while Roberts and Wood discussed intellectual firmness. See King 2019, 256-272 and Roberts and Wood 2007, 183-214.

Humility is often regarded as the virtue opposed to vanity. Intellectual humility, then, is the virtue that opposes intellectual egotism. Roberts and Wood endorse two prominent models for defining intellectual humility: the first argues that intellectual humility consists in a lack of attention to one's own social status, and the second that intellectual humility is the disposition to not "make unwarranted intellectual entitlement claims on the basis of one's supposed superiority."[3] Whitcomb et al. critique three accounts of intellectual humility, including Roberts and Wood's model where humility means a low concern for social status. The first account which Whitcomb et al. reject is one of intellectual humility as "a disposition to form proper beliefs about the epistemic status of one's beliefs" (Whitcomb et al. 2017). Alan Hazlett and Samuelson et al. both offer definitions of intellectual humility wherein to have intellectual humility is to believe as one ought without over-estimating the epistemic status of one's beliefs.[4] But, as Whitcomb et al. argue, intellectual humility is not merely to have the disposition to have proper beliefs, but rather to have the disposition to "believe virtuously or the disposition to believe responsibly" (Whitcomb et al. 2017, 512). Whitcomb at al. argue that to define intellectual humility as proper belief about the status of one's belief leaves open the possibility of actions inconsistent with intellectual humility. Nancy Snow suggests the example of a person who might “properly believe that [her] beliefs about foreign affairs are unjustified” but still react poorly when questioned, therefore signaling a lack of intellectual humility (Snow 2019, 181).

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[3] See Roberts & Wood 2007*,* 250; also Roberts and Wood 2003, 257-280.

[4] See Hazlett 2012 and Samuelson et al. 2015.

The next account rejected by Whitcomb et al. is Roberts and Wood’s, wherein moral humility connects directly with intellectual humility. In such cases, intellectual humility is the disposition “to underestimate one’s intellectual strength” and the quality of having “a low concern for one’s own intellectual status” (Whitcomb et al. 2017, 514). While I am sympathetic to the critique of the Whitcomb et al. that having low concern for intellectual status is not necessary for intellectual humility, I still find that an account of intellectual humility that includes low concern for one’s intellectual status might be useful when talking about disagreement. While there are accounts of intellectual humility that are more relevant to cases of disagreement, one’s willingness to disregard one’s own social status to allow belief-revision is often crucial to arriving at the truth in disagreements.[5]

The Whitcomb group then introduce their own view that intellectual humility “consists in proper attentiveness to one’s intellectual limitations” (Whitcomb et al. 2017, 520). In a second iteration of this definition, they qualify that one’s proper attentiveness to one’s intellectual limitations comes because “one is appropriately motivated to pursue epistemic goods” such as truth, knowledge, and understanding (Whitcomb et al. 2017, 520). This disposition, they suggest, includes “cognitive, behavioral, motivational, and affective responses to an awareness of one’s limitations” (Whitcomb et al. 2017, 518).

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[5] I am grateful to Ryan McAnnally-Linz for an important conversation about this.

They suggest this disposition would characteristically look like believing that one has limits, and believing in their negative impact (Whitcomb et al. 2017, 519). Moreover, one would acknowledge one's limits and take them seriously, and in particular, feel regret over them (Whitcomb et al. 2017, 519).

A historical example of intellectual humility can be found in Benjamin Franklin's involvement in the Constitution Convention. Although Franklin disagreed with specific parts of the new United States Constitution, he argued in favor of it on the final day of the convention. As the oldest delegate, Franklin used his influence to argue for intellectual humility, saying:

> I confess that there are several parts of this Constitution which I do not at present approve, but I am not sure I shall never approve them: For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged by better information, or fuller consideration, to change opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise. It is therefore that the older I grow, the more apt I am to doubt my own judgment, and to pay more respect to the judgment of others … Most men indeed as well as most sects in Religion, think themselves in possession of all truth, and that wherever others differ from them it is so far error. (Webb 2013)

Franklin, having recognized throughout his life his intellectual limitations exercised his intellectual humility by acknowledging and feeling remorse for his past mistakes. Moreover, he recognized this situation as one where he would be prone to make mistakes and thus encouraged others in a similar situation to "doubt a little of [their] own infallibility" and to sign the Constitution (Webb 2013).

It seems fairly obvious that recognizing one's limitations would be important in cases of disagreement, particularly in cases of disagreement among experts. But even in ordinary cases of disagreement the ability to recognize limitations is necessary to adequately adjudicate the information given. A person's ability to take seriously her limits is very much a part of determining how to respond to a disagreement. Those in favor of Conciliatory views often employ language similar to that of intellectual humility. It seems like an intellectual humble person would take the Conciliatory position because from a Conciliationist's view, when I am in a disagreement with someone, there is no reason to think I am more likely to be right about the situation than she is. Philosophers with Conciliatory views correctly perceive the need for intellectual humility in cases of disagreement. However, Conciliationists still require one to combat the problem of peerhood and not issues related to self-trust.

The problem of disagreement is not one of peerhood. The primary problem in a disagreement is the fact that the faculties that allow me to trust myself are the very ones that others use to arrive at their belief. Accordingly, disagreement becomes a crisis of self-trust; my trust is pulled both in support of my own belief and in support of the person with whom I have a disagreement. But intellectual humility assists with this predicament by accurately accounting for the limitations of my self-trust. By knowing your limitations, you are able to keep from putting too much trust in your own beliefs at the expense of another's belief. The individual who has intellectual humility has a disposition to accurately weigh her own beliefs in relation to others in cases of disagreement. This disposition of humility assists in preventing the inconsistency of self-trust that derives from trusting your own beliefs but not that of others in disagreements. This disposition does not prevent the feeling of inconsistency from arising in an agent with the intellectual virtue of humility, but it does help prevent an agent from weighing the merits of her own view too heavily over the views of others. The virtue of intellectual humility helps an agent seek the truth by taking seriously her own limitations and thus addresses one of the concerns of the Conciliationist without defaulting to peerhood language.

One problem that Whitcomb et al. admit is that their view of intellectual humility says nothing about appropriate attitudes toward intellectual strengths. Therefore, by their account, it is possible for a person to be both intellectually humble about her intellectual weaknesses while also being intellectually arrogant about her strengths (Whitcomb et al. 2017, 528-534). Accordingly, in the case of disagreement, individuals not only need intellectual humility but a way to properly address their intellectual strengths as well.[6] To address this, I will rely on the virtue of intellectual fortitude. Roberts and Wood discuss the virtue of firmness in one's own belief. They describe the importance of firmness using the grip analogy, wherein firmness's well-toned grip is similar to the Aristotelian mean between flabbiness and rigidity of belief.[7] Some situations call for a tighter grip than others, but having the wrong firmness can be problematic. Similarity, having the appropriate firmness when holding onto an individual epistemic good is a virtue.

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[6] Whitcomb et al. attempt to resolve this omission by discussing humility in relation to proper pride. Nancy Snow analyzes this nicely. See Snow 2019, 187.

[7] Roberts and Wood's attempt to call firmness an Aristotelian mean is not quite accurate. See Roberts and Wood 2007, 184.

The virtue that I am calling intellectual fortitude is similar to intellectual firmness because it too is about holding onto an individual epistemic good. But Roberts and Wood's firmness, along the lines of the grip analogy, primarily concerns the strength of the hold, whereas the issue I am concerned with for intellectual fortitude is the longevity of the hold (Roberts and Wood 2007, 184). And like Roberts and Wood's firmness, where there is a range of grips which exist "depending on the particularities of epistemic situations" (Roberts and Wood 2007, 184), so too intellectual fortitude is a virtue wherein the particularities of an individual's epistemic situation determine the amount of time an individual ought to hold onto a particular belief.

In addition to intellectual firmness, intellectual fortitude shares some parallels with the virtue of intellectual perseverance. Nathan King says an agent possesses the trait of intellectually virtuous perseverance if and only if she is

> disposed to continue in [her] intellectual endeavors for an appropriate amount of time, with serious effort, with appropriate thought and emotion, with motivation for intellectual goods, and despite being aware of obstacles to [her] acquiring, maintaining, or disseminating these goods. (King 2019, 258)

Like agents with the virtue of intellectual perseverance, agents with intellectual fortitude are disposed to overcome obstacles in pursuit of their intellectual goals (King 2019, 258). This act of overcoming obstacles particularly pertains to an agent's disposition to preserve true beliefs upon the appearance of contrary evidence. In cases of disagreement where intellectual fortitude is lacking, people might *give up* their true and good beliefs, hindering the realization of important goods in the name of compromise.[8]

A particularly stark contrast between someone who has the virtue of intellectual fortitude and a person who lacks it can be found in the celebrated Broadway show *Hamilton* in the relationship between the title character, Alexander Hamilton, and the main antagonist, Aaron Burr (Manuel Miranda 2015). Throughout the play, Aaron Burr encourages Hamilton to be more like him, repeatedly suggesting that Hamilton should "talk less" and "smile more," so that Hamilton, like Burr, can adapt any of his beliefs to be successful no matter the circumstances. In the final song before intermission, Hamilton questions Burr's motivations for not defending the new United States Constitution, urging him, "For once in your life, take a stand with pride."[9] Although it would be difficult to claim that Hamilton has the virtue of intellectual humility, Hamilton does have the disposition to hold onto his beliefs in the face of obstacles. This is especially evident in his resolve to get his national debt plan passed through Congress.[10] Nearing the end of the show, Hamilton's two nemeses, Aaron Burr and Thomas Jefferson, are running for president against each other. Thomas Jefferson laments to his friend, James Madison, the fact that Burr is doing so well because he is "not very forthcoming about any particular stances." Madison agrees, saying, "Ask [Burr] a question, it glances off, he obfuscates, he dances." The presidential race ends in a tie and the party asks Alexander Hamilton to endorse one or the other candidates. He sings:

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[8] Zagzebski has a useful discussion on the epistemic harms of compromise in her discussion of disagreement (Zagzebski 2012, 207-210). I will explore her analysis later in this chapter.

[9] The pride he mentions here is similar to the proper pride mentioned by Whitcomb et al. 2017.

[10] See "Cabinet Battle 1," "Take A Break," and "The Room Where it Happens."

> But the country is facing a difficult choice, [a]nd you were to ask me who I'd promote, Jefferson has my vote, I have never agreed with Jefferson once, we have fought on like 75 different fronts, but when all is said and all is done, Jefferson has beliefs; Burr has none. (Manuel Miranda 2015)

In this moment of the play, Alexander Hamilton points to the dangers of lacking intellectual fortitude. Although he does not agree with Jefferson on anything, he believes that it is better for the country to have a president with whom he deeply disagrees than one who lacks the dispositions to hold onto his beliefs in the face of conflict.

Philosophers who argue for a Steadfast View of disagreement endorse a stance similar to intellectual fortitude. These philosophers argue that a Steadfast agent ought to maintain her belief in the face of disagreement, just as those with the virtue of intellectual fortitude will have the disposition to maintain their beliefs even in the face of contradicting evidence in order to achieve the goods of knowledge and understanding. But those who endorse a Steadfast View of disagreement encourage agents to apply this resilience in order to solve problems of peerhood, ignoring the more substantial issue of epistemic significance surrounding one's self-trust. While the virtue of intellectual humility keeps an individual from regarding herself over and above another in disagreement, agents with intellectual fortitude are disposed to regard their beliefs appropriately without giving up on their true beliefs too easily. Thus, when an individual is balancing the tension of self-trust because of disagreements, intellectual fortitude enables the agent not to place too much emphasis on the beliefs of others at the expense of her true beliefs. The stability intellectual humility and intellectual fortitude provide to agents enables them to evaluate cases of disagreement without fictional views of their self.

At this point, someone might critique these two virtues as insufficient for disagreement. While intellectual humility disposes an individual to accurately know her limitations, it does not provide an accurate account of a peer's limitations. In the same way, intellectual fortitude disposes an agent to maintain her true beliefs in the face of challenges, but it does not provide the agent with the ability to take seriously the opinions of others. It is possible, then, that someone who has intellectual humility and intellectual fortitude would still misjudge the strengths of the other's beliefs in a case of disagreement. Accordingly, agents need another virtue in order to "take seriously the merits of another standpoint," which is partly how Jason Baehr defines *open-mindedness* (Baehr 2011, 152). Baehr rejects what he calls the "adjunction model" of open-mindedness wherein an agent with this virtue is disposed to assess one or more sides of an intellectual dispute in a fair and impartial way, as he thinks this definition limits open-mindedness only to cases with intellectual conflict (Baehr 2011, 145). Instead, Baehr endorses an account of open-mindedness which disposes agents who have it "to willingly transcend [their] own default cognitive standpoint in order to take seriously the merits of another" (Baehr 2011, 152).

From this definition, open-mindedness is relevant to disagreement, even though Adam Carter and Emma Gordon have called this into question by arguing that the connection between open-mindedness and the epistemic good of true belief is "fuzzy" (Carter & Gordon 2014, 207). They argue that open-mindedness is not useful to someone who already has true beliefs, and that the potential for open-mindedness to be conducive to forming true beliefs is “largely beholden to whether the environment is epistemically hospitable or epistemically inhospitable” (Carter & Gordon 2014, 207). However, as Wayne Riggs points out, there are at least three claims that defenders of open-mindedness as a virtue can use (Riggs 2019, 151). Two of these defenses are particularly relevant to cases of disagreement: first, that though open-mindedness is not perfectly truth-conducive, it is truth-conducive enough to count as an epistemic virtue.[11] In cases of disagreement, especially when open-mindedness is being weighed with intellectual humility and intellectual fortitude, it seems that open-mindedness is probably reliable enough to lead one to true belief. The second defense of open-mindedness arises from other possible epistemic values that open-mindedness is conducive of including wisdom or understanding.[12] Although knowledge has often been the main concern of philosophers in the disagreement literature, wisdom and understanding both fit into the new perspective of disagreement that I am defending. Open-mindedness, then, is key to justly assessing the beliefs of the person with whom you are disagreeing. Moreover, without the ability to transcend your own position and take up or take seriously the position of another, one cannot rightly judge whether it is best to be intellectually humble or intellectually fortitudinous in any given situation.

In a recently published book, Vainio too argues that virtues are key to disagreement (Vainio 2017). While Vainio and I share a similar aim, our projects are quite different. Vainio's particular concern is religious disagreement, whereas I remain concerned about political, ethical, religious, and various other types alike. Vainio also distinguishes between the value of inquiry into certain types of disagreements, noting that disagreements in "analytic truths, mathematics, and empirical science" are due to ignorance or under-determination of the evidence (Vainio 2017, xviii-xix). Although I agree this certainly is the case in some instances of empirical and mathematical disagreement, I find there are many other reasons for these kinds of disagreements, including epistemic injustices as described by Miranda Fricker (Fricker 2007).

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[11] See Riggs 2019, 151. Kwong argues this in Kwong 2017.

[12] Riggs summarizes this argument in Riggs 2019, 151, but the core arguments are found in Riggs 2003 and in Carter Gordon 2014, 207-224.

Despite these differences, Vainio and I share similar intuitions about the importance of the three virtues I have mentioned so far: intellectual humility, open-mindedness, and what he calls "intellectual courage," with respect to disagreement.[13] However, in addition to these he adds a fourth virtue which he ranks as the most important of the virtues related to disagreement: tolerance (Vainio 2017,169.) After briefly describing how Vainio defines tolerance, I will present the three problems I find with it: first, that it does not seem to actually qualify as a virtue; second, that it does not address what to believe in a disagreement; and third, that it seems unnecessary if one considers also the virtue of open-mindedness.

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[13] See Vainio 2017, 165. Vainio argues that epistemic courage enables us to "hold our ground when we are challenged." He utilizes Baehr's definition of intellectual courage: "Intellectual courage is a disposition to persist in or with a state or course of action aimed at an epistemically good end despite the fact that doing so involves an apparent threat to one's own well-being" (Baehr 2011, 177). While epistemic courage certainly is important for disagreements, the language of "apparent threat to one's own well-being" does not seem to fit many philosophical disagreements. Certainly, across the world there are cases of religious disagreement such that an individual puts herself in harm's way by maintaining her religious beliefs. However, in the cases of disagreement often described in analytic philosophy, it is more likely there is no harm done to a person's well-being as a result of her remaining steadfast in her beliefs. Yet, there still is a need, as Vainio suggests, to hold one's ground when one is challenged. Accordingly, intellectual fortitude is more relevant to the majority of cases of disagreement.

Vainio defines tolerance as having three coexisting components:

> T1 Genuine disagreement
> T2 The power to hinder the conduct of the other
> T3 Deliberate refraining from hindering (Vainio 2017,170)[14]

Although tolerance is often respected by philosophers,[15] Vainio must argue against many who claim that tolerance is not a virtue per se. Such critics include Alasdair MacIntyre, who suggests, “Toleration ... is not in itself a virtue and too inclusive a toleration is a vice” (MacIntyre 2006, 223).[16] To aid his effort to prove tolerance is virtuous, Vainio introduces two other necessary components:

> T4 Maintaining a critical attitude in public conversation
> T5 Conversation and dialogue has to express intellectual virtues
> (Vainio 2017, 172)

By adding these two additional components, Vainio believes he is able to solve the concerns usually leveled against tolerance, such as those that say tolerance contains an implicit endorsement of harmful beliefs.

It is unclear, however, why Vainio needs to introduce tolerance at all, let alone name it as one of the most central virtues for disagreement, given that he has already included open-mindedness. By introducing tolerance, it appears that Vainio is attempting to solve the problem of disagreeing with someone whose ideas you strongly dislike or even hate. While there is no shortage of examples of this type of disagreement in contemporary American politics, it seems that the virtue of open-mindedness should be better able to assist us even on very divisive issues. Both Vainio and I utilize Baehr's definition of open-mindedness as a willingness to transcend one's own default cognitive standpoint to take seriously the merits of another (Baehr 2011, 152). If an agent has this virtue, she will have a disposition that makes her willing to leave her own point of view to take another's seriously. To limit open-mindedness so that it excludes cases where the agent strongly dislikes the position of the other person weakens this virtue to near uselessness. Moreover, if Vainio were to rely on open-mindedness, rather than the open-mindedness/tolerance duo that he uses, he would not have as much difficulty determining where to draw the line for tolerance. As his account stands, Vainio attempts to prevent tolerance from causing harm by adding the fifth component, which demands that tolerance must be a conversation that expresses virtues (Vainio 2017, 173). But open-mindedness is better positioned here, as it allows an agent to take seriously the merits of another's position. If a position is without merits, this determination could be made by the individual with open-mindedness. Additionally, the intellectual virtue of open-mindedness is more than sufficient to prevent the specific case which Vainio worries about where one agent finds the beliefs of the other offensive or unacceptable for some non-virtuous reason.

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[14] Vainio takes this initial definition from John Horton, who suggests that tolerance is “the deliberate decision to refrain from prohibiting, hindering, or otherwise coercively interfering with conduct that one disapproves, although one has the power to do so” (Horton 1998, 862).

[15] Vainio considers six uses of tolerance, including self-congratulation, relativism, vice, approval, negligence, and virtue. He finds that the five other than virtue do not sufficiently describe all three components of tolerance. See Vainio 2017, 170-171.

[16] Vainio mentions this quote en route to his argument for tolerance as a virtue (Vainio 2017, 172).

While I find it puzzling that Vainio included tolerance in his list of virtues necessary for disagreement given the inclusion of open-mindedness, there is a further concern about tolerance that is significantly more important. From Vainio's description, it is not clear that tolerance *counts* as an intellectual virtue because it is unclear how successful it would be at helping an agent arrive at epistemic goods. As they did for open-mindedness, the examples raised by Carter and Gordon also apply here to reveal that tolerance does not necessarily enable an individual to reliably achieve true beliefs.[17] The closest language that Vainio uses to describe tolerance which might be counted as an epistemic good is that tolerance "exposes the false view that the world is simple" (Vainio 2017,176). This point could be considered a kind of wisdom, perhaps, but the connection between this point and wisdom is nebulous at best. Vainio does not explicitly describe tolerance as an intellectual virtue, leaving open the possibility that he means it as a *moral* virtue. But if he intends it simply as a moral virtue, then its ability to reliably achieve epistemic goods is even more problematic. Vainio might aim to facilitate global religious disagreement by encouraging agents to have tolerance for beliefs they disagree with, but this is not a solution to the *epistemic* concerns that arise from disagreement. Rather, this resolution appears to dodge true beliefs in favor of frail approval, which cannot be an extended solution. Consequently, both because open-mindedness sufficiently deals with the same issues as tolerance and because tolerance does not reliably lead to true beliefs, I do not include tolerance in my list of virtues important to disagreement.

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[17] Carter and Gordon argue against the reliability of open-mindedness for achieving true beliefs as follows: for someone who already has true beliefs, open-mindedness is not useful, and open-mindedness's conduciveness to forming new true beliefs depends on the epistemic environment (Carter & Gordon 2014, 208). Similarly, it seems that in the case of tolerance, for a person who already has true beliefs, there is no epistemic good gained from the virtue of tolerance. In the case of forming new beliefs, it seems that tolerance would be even less truth conducive than open-mindedness, depending, again, on the epistemic environment.

Having introduced and defended the three virtues most significant to disagreement, it is now time to turn to how they more accurately account for the nuances of disagreement than extant solutions in the literature. At this point, Vainio argues in favor of the unity of virtues as an approach to disagreement (Vainio 2017, 148-149). Although tolerance plays a key role for him, he does not want to elevate any one virtue over another. His reasoning makes sense, given the concern that focusing on one particular virtue over and above another would cause an imbalance in responding to disagreements. But although I agree with Vainio's intuition, I do not think the appropriate response to disagreement is simply to keep in mind all of the virtues at the same time in order to respond virtuously. Not only is this idea impractical, but it does not take seriously times when these virtues appear to conflict with each other.[18] Even in the case of the three virtues which I have singled out as useful for disagreement, it is not altogether clear that they will dispose an agent to the same solution in a case of disagreement. For example, as I briefly mentioned previously in this chapter, it seems that the virtue of intellectual humility not only supports but perhaps even strengthens the Conciliationist's position that the appropriate response to disagreement would be to vary one's confidence in accordance with one's peer's confidence. However, intellectual fortitude shares similarities with arguments made by philosophers who maintain the Steadfast View. Thus, in cases where the virtues seem to be in conflict—*e.g.*, where one might be intellectually humble by varying one's confidence but at the expense of intellectual fortitude, and *vice versa*—what we need is not simply another intervening virtue but, rather, some means by which to rank them. In order to rank these virtues appropriately, the agent needs to determine which situations require the use of which particular virtues. In the next section I will introduce the solution to this problem.

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[18] To be clear here, by saying that the virtues "appear in conflict," I am attempting to bypass a debate about the unity of virtues, so that no matter what position a virtue epistemologist takes on this issue, she or he might still be willing to engage with my project here.

II. Intellectual *Phronesis*

Because of cases of disagreement where the three virtues of intellectual humility, intellectual fortitude, and open-mindedness might appear to be in conflict with each other, I propose to introduce a fourth which is able to perform as a unifying virtue, providing an agent with the proper sensitivity to disagreement, and helping her determine which of the other virtues ought to be privileged in an apparent conflict. The virtue capable of doing this is intellectual *phronesis*, or practical wisdom.[19] Although in contemporary contexts practical wisdom and prudence have been relegated to dealing with problems of common sense like those found in *Dear Abby* columns, *phronesis* has much to offer us in this contemporary situation. In order to show the relevance of

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[19] *Phronesis* [φρόνησις] is from the Greek word *phronéō* [φρονέω], meaning "to think." *Phroneo* comes from *phrḗn* [φρήν] "mind." The Latin equivalent is *prudentia*, contracted from providential meaning "seeing ahead, sagacity." In English "prudence" and "practical wisdom" are seen as synonyms, except in cases where an author distinguishes between the two. Although I will mainly be referring to intellectual *phronesis*, I might at times also reference intellectual prudence. I mean these words to be interchangeable.

phronesis for disagreement theory, I will first briefly sketch the pertinent history of *phronesis* in order to show how my account relates to past interpretations. [20]

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*,[21] Aristotle discusses two kinds of virtue: those that pertain to the part of the soul that engages in reasoning and those that pertain to the part of the soul that cannot itself reason but is capable of following reason (*NE* I.13, 1103a1-10). As you might guess, those that pertain to reasoning are the intellectual virtues. Within the intellectual virtues, Aristotle conceives again of two categories: those pertaining to theoretical reasoning and those to practical thinking (*NE* VI.1, 1139a3-8). Within those virtues pertaining to practical thinking is *phronesis*, translated as practical wisdom or prudence. From the beginning of Aristotle's interpretation, *phronesis* occupies a hybrid space between the intellectual and the ethical, as it is the "intellectual dimension of the moral virtue" (*NE* VI.13, 1144b14-17). For Aristotle, *phronesis* is both the power to deliberate, that is, the power to judge what the particularity of a situation calls for, and the power of perception, or the ability to see the particulars of a situation for what they really are (*NE* VI.5, 1140b20-30). According to MacIntyre, *phronesis* for Aristotle connects an agent's goals with her perceived judgement of what the occasion requires so that she can act appropriately (MacIntyre 2010, 161-162).

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[20] For this chapter, I have mainly focused on Aristotle and Aquinas given their closeness to my project. Aquinas and Albert Magnus utilize a Greek understanding of human nature, and they believe the will is naturally inclined towards the good. Later medieval thinkers, such as Scotus and Ockham, place more insistence upon volitional freedom, while still believing that the will was naturally inclined towards the good, and specifically, towards God. A later scholar of practical wisdom, Kant, believed that following the one's inclinations would lead to moral errors as often as morally right decisions. For Kant the objective of moral philosophy is not to determine the actions and conditions of willing, but the principles that would constitute as pure a concept of will as possible.

[21] Presenting a definite interpretation of Aristotle's ethics is a delicate task. While the Nicomachean ethics is the focus of this chapter, it is also important to note that Aristotle's account of virtues looks different in the Eudemian ethics. Nevertheless, I will focus my interests on what Aristotle writes in the Nicomachean for time and clarity's sake.

While Aristotle is most often interpreted as equating practical wisdom with prudence, Thomas Aquinas posits a clear distinction between practical wisdom, *ratio practica,* and prudence, *prudentia* (Celano 2018). Practical reasoning's first precept is that the "good is that which all things seek after … [and] all other precepts of the natural law are based on this," with the aim that we may do the good and avoid the bad (*S. th.* I–II, 94, 2). Thus, mimicking theoretical reasoning, practical wisdom refers to a type of human knowledge. Prudence, however, "represents the agent's ability to deliberate, decide, and properly to order the process of practical reason to action" (Westberg 1994, 187). While Albertus Magnus suggests that divine law as well as natural law govern prudence (*Super ethica* VI, 4), for Aquinas prudence is the cardinal virtue that, as later interpreters would put it, "enables us to see in any given juncture of human affairs what is virtuous and what is not, and how to come at the one and avoid the other" (Westberg 1994, 187). Although Aquinas distinguishes thus between prudence and practical wisdom, Thomistic *prudentia* is closer to the sort of *phronesis* we have in mind, as opposed to Thomistic *ratio practica*.

All the same, for both Aristotle and Aquinas, *phronesis* is an intellectual virtue governing the moral realm. This might lead one to think that a *phronesis*-based approach to disagreement would emphasize compromise rather than true belief. Agents can have many goals for "solving" disagreement: that those in disagreement would tolerate each other, that they might “play nicely” together, or that the individuals would come to have true beliefs. Someone could suggest that tolerance and “playing nicely” are more important for the general well-being of an individual. But virtue epistemology argues that for an individual to seek the epistemic good of true beliefs will be conducive to her flourishing (Roberts and Wood 2007). Compromise in itself cannot be the emphasis of an approach steeped in virtue epistemology. As Zagzebski notes, in cases of compromise, usually each side has a principled argument for its belief (Zagzebski 2012, 206-207). But there often is not a principled argument for the compromise. To put this situation in terms of self-trust, I have principled arguments for counting the belief-forming powers of my peers as equal to my own trustworthiness (Zagzebski 2012, 206-207). But I do not have an argument for counting my peer’s belief-forming powers as halfway equal, which is what happens in compromises (Zagzebski 2012, 206-207).

In cases of disagreement in which one must discern between intellectual virtues, what one needs is an intellectual *phronesis*. Consistent with the ability of *phronesis* generally to enable one to see what is virtuous and what is not in a situation, as well as how to do the virtuous thing, intellectual *phronesis* enables an agent to see what virtues are aimed at true belief in an epistemic situation, and to determine which intellectual virtues are necessary to achieving this end. In this way, intellectual *phronesis* acts as a unifying virtue because it includes both the ability to perceive and to deliberate. But what makes this account of *phronesis* particularly intellectual is not only its ability to weigh intellectual virtues, but also its ability to relieve some of the tension particular to the self in disagreement, given the fact that my beliefs are grounded in the same faculties as yours. To only take seriously my own beliefs in a situation of disagreement would be just as problematic as only taking yours seriously. Intellectual fortitude reinforces the intuition that an individual has to trust herself. Similarly, intellectual humility bolsters the awareness that an individual's interlocutor is as trustworthy as herself. Both of these virtues together with open-mindedness highlight the epistemic tension generated in cases of disagreement. But intellectual *phronesis* allows one to perceive what is virtuous—that is, what is aimed at knowledge—in an epistemic situation and discerns which intellectual virtues are necessary to achieve it. Accordingly, intellectual *phronesis* empowers an agent to discern whether trust in herself or trust in her peers is stronger.[22] This ability of *phronesis* to range over all the practices of intellectual life leads Roberts and Wood themselves to compare *phronesis* to love of wisdom—their cardinal intellectual virtue (Roberts and Wood 2007, 323-24). At the end of their collaborative work on intellectual virtues, Roberts and Wood suggest that their whole project was in fact an attempt to formulate intellectual practical wisdom (Roberts and Wood 2007, 323-24). It is easy to see the connection between this attempt and their interest in regulative epistemology, according to which the goal of epistemology is to generate guidance for epistemic practice. If ever there were a need for regulative epistemology in our present moment, it would concern how to be epistemically virtuous in situations of disagreement.

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[22] See Zagzebski 2012. She suggests that an individual ought to weigh whether their trustworthiness and belief outweighs the principle of epistemic trust in others. In many ways, my argument attempts to refine how to resolve the conflict between the tensions she notes.

Intellectual *phronesis* seems an ideal tool for addressing disagreement, not only because of the need we have to distinguish between seemingly competing virtues, but also on account of intellectual *phronesis*'s unique capability to judge specific situations. As Roberts and Wood note, "actions are always particulars, performed in particular situations with particular features that distinguish them from similar situations; practical wisdom is the power to judge particulars" (Roberts and Wood 2007, 306). Because of *phronesis*'s ability to draw generalizations from particulars of situations, it is daunting to actually generalize about how intellectual *phronesis* would discern between intellectual virtues in practice. Nevertheless, we can identify three steps to approaching any disagreement with *phronesis*.

1. Given a case of disagreement, it is necessary to have an awareness of the intellectual virtues present in the case. This attentiveness entails not only making explicit what virtues are at stake in the disagreement but also what authorities one should trust. Furthermore, this is one's opportunity to perceive all the particular nuances of the case. After establishing what virtues are present, we need to become aware of the apparent competing demands made by these virtues.

This phase is part of what Aristotle claimed was the first ability of *phronesis*: to perceive. While this was only one step for Aristotle, here it is broken down into two steps. The first is to make clear all the virtues, values, and authorities present in a case of disagreement. While most definitions of epistemic peerhood entail that we both—you and I—use the same sources and are *equally* unbiased, this is rarely the case in actual disagreements. This step is the moment to make plain any biases that *do* exist. These biases could include, but are not limited to, hermeneutical injustices against sources that should be taken as authorities, as well as epistemic vices. While I have pointed to intellectual fortitude, humility, and open-mindedness as the crucial virtues related to disagreement, they will not be the only virtues present.

To see how this step might work, let’s briefly revisit the Facebook example from Chapter Three: you and I come to disagree about the Republican tax bill and whether it includes a tax on graduate students’ tuition waivers. You believe that the Republican tax bill does not include a tax on graduate students while I think it does. A person with the virtue of intellectual *phronesis* would, first, have an awareness of the particularities of the case and the intellectual virtues that appear to be in conflict. She would be aware of her limitations, which could include that she is not a tax lawyer and thus is relying on others for her information, or her tendency to get into Facebook arguments about politics without having read sufficient articles. She would also make certain that she has taken seriously the merits of the other point of view rather than straw-manning the position. The agent with intellectual *phronesis* should also look at the authorities she is utilizing in order to ensure she has not allowed any intellectual vices to intrude on her thoughts. Another aspect of perceiving would be to be aware of the competing virtues in a situation.

2. After establishing what values and evidences are present, one must become aware of the apparent competing demands made by the virtues and values established in step 1.

This step is the second part of perception as Aristotle understands it. In it, an agent looks at the areas of seeming conflict between virtues or epistemic values. Each virtue will provide a different demand for how that agent should respond to the disagreement. Making oneself aware of these demands helps an agent perceive what values are at stake in the case. It should not be assumed that epistemic interlocutors maintain the same values, although it is more likely that they might agree as to what the values *are* but disagree on how to rank them.[23] In the Facebook example, the agent's intellectual fortitude might dispose her to stand firm in her beliefs despite the initial appearance of evidence to the contrary in the form of a disagreement. Yet the agent's intellectual humility might, at the same time, dispose her to be aware of her past mistakes in similar situations as well as other limitations that would prevent her from arriving at a true belief.

3. Finally, after discerning conflicts, an intellectually prudent discernment is made, weighing the virtues in order to determine which ones need to take priority given the particularities of the case.

Although we seek true belief, depending on the topic of debate, other epistemic values will appear. As Roberts and Wood note:

> We tend to be more conservative about the more foundational parts of our epistemic establishment (what we have called the goods with more load-bearing significance), and the ones in which we are more personally invested (ones that strike us as more worthy). (Roberts & Wood 2007, 183-184)

If the topic of disagreement is religion or morality, topics that an agent is more invested in, she will weigh her current belief more heavily. Accordingly, each person will have different values, which will impact what her intellectual *phronesis* will determine. So long as the individual's fortitude is not founded upon epistemic vices like biases or laziness,

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[23] This point references one made in Wood 1998, 46-47, namely that different cultures have different epistemic values. Analytic philosophy might think it is valuable to riotously test a theory, whereas another culture (Wood suggests Zen Buddhism) might find this epistemically vicious.

"practical wisdom may dictate that one person hold on where another, because of his placement in the intellectual history or community, should forfeit" (Roberts & Wood 2007, 183-184). Our Facebook debater would be inclined to flex her fortitude muscles in this situation, and stand firm in her belief about the Republican tax bill. But this is not the end of her deliberations because the majority of the arguments in this case relate not only to how the government defines scholarship and tuition, but essentially depend on how a university defines their graduate students in these terms. Although an agent with *phronesis* would maintain her belief about the Republican Tax bill, she would exercise her intellectual humility so as not to presume that she knows the situation that all other graduate students might be in with regards to this bill. When one utilizes intellectual *phronesis*, the problem of disagreement begins to become multiple problems. In some situations, it is possible that one might maintain a belief personally but not express it publicly, if she feels that the situation calls for a certain level of intellectual humility, at least in public.

III. How to Cultivate the Virtue of Intellectual *Phronesis*

Even having sketched out these crucial steps in making a discernment with intellectual *phronesis*, one is left wanting a more concrete answer to the problem of disagreement. Compared to the uncomplicated steps of both the Conciliatory and Steadfast views, this view does not offer a simple formula for every disagreement. But both the Conciliatory and Steadfast views are unable to illuminate the various values present in disagreements. In addition, these accounts do not offer agents epistemological insight. Instead, they focus on disagreement for the sake of knowledge and belief. Because *phronesis* is a virtue, it allows individuals to model their actions after exemplars in order to cultivate virtuous dispositions. However, given *phronesis*'s ability to discern particulars, exemplars cannot be copied. This means that instead of copying the actions of an exemplar, agents can copy methods of weighing virtues and apply these methods to their own circumstances. Accordingly, the most helpful tool to epistemic agents who want to be epistemically virtuous in disagreements is numerous examples of how intellectual *phronesis* would guide someone through a disagreement so that the agent can see the methods that exemplars use to arrive at prudent solutions to disagreements. This final section of the chapter will focus on two different cases of disagreement, and how a person with intellectual *phronesis* would respond.

Consider first an historical example: in 1532 Nicolaus Copernicus disagreed with his friends about whether to publish his completed manuscript, in which he argued that the earth is not the center of the universe. While we now know that Copernicus is correct, at least in part, that the earth is not the center of the universe, Copernicus and his friends did not know whether he was correct or not. At the time, Copernicus believed it would be best not to publish his manuscript because of the possible reaction he might incur (Rabin 2004). His friends, however, thought that he ought to publish his manuscript.

The first step of perception requires an agent to make clear what virtues, values, and authorities are at play in the disagreement and what their competing demands are. As this is a historical example, it is challenging to determine intellectual virtues without knowing the actual motivation of the individuals in question. Nevertheless, history scholars have done the work of speculating, and I will borrow their ideas for the sake of the example. If Copernicus were to change his belief about publishing the manuscript and conciliate to his friend's desire to publish it, he would be demonstrating intellectual humility in terms of the disagreement; however, he would also be demonstrating intellectual fortitude in terms of the theory itself, especially given the fact that his initial resistance to publishing was at least in part due to his fear that he would be scorned because of the novelty of his idea. However, if Copernicus were to stand firm in his belief that he should not publish his manuscript, then, although he could be said to show intellectual fortitude in this disagreement, it is less clear that he could be said to be intellectually humble about the issue itself. Depending on his motives, this action could be an example of the vice of intellectual cowardice. Each of these small details would change what the outcome should be in an intellectually prudent account. The final step in arriving at a prudent solution would be to make a judgment about the virtues, determining which takes priority in this case. As the case stands, it could well be intellectually prudent for Copernicus to modify to his peers' belief: that it would be best to publish his manuscript.

Conciliatory claims of Copernicus would require him to be less confident in his belief in relation to his peers. Similarly, though, Conciliationists would also require his peers to be less certain of their beliefs as well. The Steadfast View would necessitate that Copernicus and his friends maintain their beliefs. Yet neither view can account for the motives present in this case. Suppose for a moment that Copernicus's belief that he should not publish his manuscript stemmed from an intellectual virtue. It is possible to conceive that Copernicus believed he ought not publish his manuscript immediately out of awareness of his limitations and a desire to more thoroughly assess his theories. Likewise, assume his peers' belief originated in an intellectual virtue of fortitude, as they believed in the truth of Copernicus's manuscript. It is possible in this case that Copernicus *would* be intellectually prudent to believe he should not publish his manuscript immediately.[24] In such a case, Copernicus might have values so foundational to his epistemic being that they cause his belief that he should wait to publish his manuscript to align with *phronesis*. These values may be less important to his friends, such that if his friends were in his place their belief that it should be published would also be intellectually prudent.

Historical examples can be helpful because they provide current readers with the benefit of hindsight, but at the same time, because we can only speculate about the motivations for each individual, they can be problematic. In order to have the most complete understanding of the method used to solve disagreements using *phronesis*, let us also consider a contemporary political-ethical issue.

The United States is divided on racial, political, moral, and religious issues, and these disagreements are extreme. Talk-show hosts speak mostly to those with whom they agree, and our country becomes more polarized. Consequently, let's turn to a topic always at the center of public debate for politics, morality, and religion: abortion. As noted previously, intellectual *phronesis* governs particulars, so it will not have much to say with regards to abortion in general. Intellectual *phronesis* still has implications for those disagreeing about abortion; however, these implications are less expansive then one might hope. Because intellectual *phronesis* deals only in the particular, it does not lead to overarching claims about what an individual ought to believe in all cases. Accordingly, it would be as fruitful to ask what intellectual prudence says about abortion as it would be to ask for intellectual *phronesis* to determine the truth about God or socialism. But however limited in scope intellectual *phronesis*'s claims are, they are not trivial. Another necessary point about abortion is that intellectual *phronesis* does not act to tell an agent what is the ethical response to the situation. Accordingly, intellectual *phronesis* cannot answer questions such as "Is abortion moral?" or "Should abortion be legal in the United States?" Rather, intellectual *phronesis* will dispose an agent to recognize and judge in order to achieve their epistemic goal of true belief. The questions then need to be shifted to questions of true belief, such as "Does personhood begin at conception?" However, it seems apparent that once an agent has an answer to these types of questions, it should be much easier to determine what the ethical response is.[25]

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[24] While it might have been intellectually prudent in this case for Copernicus to have refrained from publishing his manuscript, this determination does not say anything about the truth of the manuscript itself—only whether it should have been published in 1532.

Advocates for both sides might immediately object to the claim that *phronesis* speaks only to specifics, because this implies that the intellectually prudent response to a disagreement could change in various circumstances. They might argue that they can always know the truth about abortion without getting into specific cases. “Abortion is always murder,” pro-lifers might argue, while those who are pro-choice might declare, “Personhood always begins at birth.” From either point of view, to move from general to specific cases unnecessarily limits the scope of the disagreement. Moreover, this objection also suggests that by limiting the scope of intellectual prudence, one is taking too seriously the other side’s argument. Accordingly, they might accuse me of compromising, which is the very thing I argue that intellectual *phronesis* does not require. Take, for example, a pro-life individual who believes personhood begins at conception. From her perspective, this is always the case, no matter the specifics of the situation. Suggesting to this person that rather than speaking broadly about abortion she ought to speak to individual situations of it, we might cause this person to feel she is being asked to betray her beliefs by requiring a compromise.

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[25] It is not clear that having a truthful belief about the status of personhood will dispose someone to arrive at an ethical response to abortion within her or his own framework or values. It is possible, for various reasons, for people to have the same belief about the origins of personhood but to disagree about whether this makes abortion a moral action, not to mention one that ought to be legal. An example of this might be found Judith Jarvis Thomson's "A Defense of Abortion," where she argues that a woman has a right to an abortion even if a fetus is considered to be a person. See Thomson 1971.

But speaking about particulars is not an act of compromise, because compromising often means that one arrives at a conclusion that had no epistemic merits on its own (Zagzebski 2012, 207-210). In this case, compromise might look like suggesting that personhood begins at day 17.5, something that as far as I know, no one has put forward as an actual position. But considering abortion in terms of specifics is not compromising; rather, it ensures that an agent acts with open-mindedness, intellectual humility, and intellectual fortitude. As we suggested previously in this chapter, open-mindedness entails taking seriously the merits of another’s position (Baehr 2011, 152). Viewing another position in its most generalized form does not do justice to the merits of that position, because in generalized cases the epistemic virtues and vices of all the various cases become conflated. In the previous example of a pro-lifer who thinks that personhood always begins at conception, she might be inclined to assign epistemic vices to someone who is pro-choice, suggesting that all pro-choicers are guilty of negligence, when in fact it is possible that negligence is only the case in some disagreements about abortion.[26] Accordingly, *phronesis* is not able to discern the truth about this case because the other's point of view is intentionally viewed in the least flattering light.

Furthermore, not considering specifics might cause an agent to not act with intellectual humility, as she assumes that she is able to know the epistemic virtues and vices at play in all disagreements about abortion. If an agent does not pay proper attention to her intellectual limitations while pursuing an epistemic good, then she cannot be said to be acting with intellectual humility (Whitcomb et al. 2017, 520). If the pro-lifer believes that she can have adequate information about the epistemic virtues and vices of all individuals involved in disagreements about abortions, she does not consider her own limitations. Rather, she might be acting with intellectual negligence herself, as she ignores relevant information about her limitations in this situation.

But there is a further concern which makes it important for intellectual prudence to look to the specifics of cases: intellectual fortitude. Just as it would be inappropriate for an agent to discuss abortion without looking at specifics (because without it she would not be acting with intellectual humility or open-mindedness), it would also be inappropriate because the agent would be less inclined to act with intellectual fortitude. This requires an agent to hold onto her belief for the appropriate amount of time in a situation. But considering all configurations of abortion disagreements together, an agent on either side of the argument might be inclined to weigh too heavily the epistemic virtues of the opposing position, thus causing her to let go of her intellectually prudent belief too early. It would not be intellectually prudent for either party to only consider one instantiation of the problem of abortion because they might conflate all the specifics of each particular disagreement. By considering only one problem of abortion without looking at the specifics of the agents in the disagreement, an agent will not know the intellectual virtues at play in each case, so her intellectual *phronesis* will not be able to judge accurately.

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[26] Negligence is one of the epistemic vices considered by Cassum 2016.

Rather than a weakness, I think this is one of the biggest lessons we can learn from intellectual *phronesis*: that any disagreement that involves generalizations about nuanced topics will not be epistemically virtuous because of the possibility that there are epistemic virtues and vices at play only in particular instances of this disagreement.[27] One final point in response to the concern that intellectual *phronesis* is too limited is that although it is not intellectually prudent to conflate all possible cases of disagreements, it is possible that in each specific situation an individual acting with intellectual *phronesis* will arrive at the same belief with which she began. Therefore, there is a possibility that the pro-lifer ends up maintaining her original belief: that personhood begins at conception, or the pro-choicer ends up maintaining her original belief: that personhood begins at birth. But she cannot know if she is acting with intellectual prudence without looking at each particular case.

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[27] Zagzebski helpfully suggests in her forthcoming book, *The Two Greatest Ideas*, that the American inclination to speak about abortion in terms of “rights” language has exacerbated the adversarial nature of this debate in excess of how a virtuous person might act. I agree with her observation about the harm that much of the rights discourse has had on our ability to virtuously disagree, especially as concerns an individual’s ability to be open-minded about a peer’s belief. Furthermore, I find that the “rights” language also encourages individuals to not consider particular instantiations of the problem but to generalize about the problem on the whole.

As it is not an act of compromise to consider the particularities of cases with regards to abortion, it is important for agents in this disagreement to do so. Consider the following case of disagreement: Suppose that I am arguing about whether personhood begins at conception with a friend of mine who is a psychology professor. I think that personhood begins at conception, whereas the psychology professor believes that personhood begins sometime after the week of viability, which is considered to be 24 weeks. Both he and I have no personal connection to the topic, as neither of us have children, nieces, or nephews, and none of us have friends who have experienced an abortion. We are discussing whether or not abortion at 12 weeks results in “killing a child.”

The first step in this process is making clear the virtues at play in this specific case for both myself and my friend. In my case it seems that intellectual fortitude might incline me to maintain my belief, even in the case of this disagreement, because of particular values that I have. Religious values often have a role in beliefs about abortion, and if, for example, I believe that each person is created in the image of God, this would make me especially cautious about situations where it is possible that a person might exist. But there is always the possibility that my professor friend also has particular values that impact the importance of his belief in this case. These values might include libertarian values of privacy, which hold that the government should not overstep its reach into an individual's life. Accordingly, even if he thinks that personhood begins before 12 weeks, it is possible that he will still think abortion should be legal.

In this case it is important for us both to be very aware of our intellectual limitations: both in the sense that we have no connection to babies or abortions and about the specific question of when personhood begins. I will also need to consider whether or not his job as a psychology professor impacts my trust in him in this situation. In his case, he will have to consider if the fact that I have not studied psychology in over ten years should impact whether he considers me trustworthy on this topic. In both cases, it is the particularities of the situation that show the importance of these points. Whether he specializes in child development or positive psychology will influence the amount of trust I have in him. Furthermore, he might know that I have not studied psychology in years, but he may also think that my philosophical and theological knowledge is just as relevant, if not more so, to determining when personhood begins. It is important to note that the key question is not so much how we are epistemically positioned relative to one another as it would be if we were concerned primarily with epistemic peerhood. Rather, the question is which one of us is more likely to get to the truth, and that requires a prudential comparison of our epistemic virtues and vices.

Suppose for a moment that his studies directly impact his knowledge of the development of newborns and that I do not have a philosophical, theological, or biology background. If someone tried to respond to this situation with a Conciliatory View, it would be recommended that both persons become less certain of their original beliefs. Likewise, the Steadfast response would be that both persons can maintain their prior beliefs and act rationally. But they are not able to consider the possibility that prudence might require a different response from each of the two persons in the disagreement. In addition, Conciliationism and Steadfast views would find this case *less* epistemically significant overall because they would not consider my friend and I to be epistemic peers. But as I showed in the previous chapter, whether we are epistemic peers does not ensure that either one of us is acting with intellectual *phronesis*. In this case, since my friend's work as a psychology professor has a direct impact on his knowledge of the origins of life, and I have no added expertise, it is possible that when I am balancing the virtues and values at stake, intellectual *phronesis* would require me to lean into my intellectual humility and take into account my intellectual limitations in this situation. However, he might be acting with intellectual prudence if he maintains his belief in the face of our disagreement. In this case, intellectual *phronesis* might require different responses to the situation from the two of us, something which the Steadfast and Conciliatory views cannot endorse because they are too rigid.

Now suppose instead that my professor friend is an expert on positive psychology and does not have any particular expertise related to newborn development. Similarly, I too have no expertise particularly related to this conversation. While he and I may not need to consider the portion of the intellectual limitation equation related to expertise, there are still other reasons why intellectual prudence would require us both to act with intellectual humility. If both of us not only have no related expertise, but also are not particularly well informed about the arguments for either belief, it is irrelevant how we should respond in relation to the other. What matters instead is that we both act epistemically virtuously, which could mean that we both ought to withhold belief on this subject until we have done further research. While in this situation intellectual *phronesis* has the same practical response as Conciliatory views, the reasons that intellectual *phronesis* suggests this could not be further from those of Conciliatory positions. Conciliationism only considers the problem of disagreement that lies in peerhood, so for Conciliationists, all that matters is my response to you as my peer. Because both Steadfast and Conciliatory views focus on rationality in response to *peers*, at times they forget to ask whether either person's belief is true.

Now suppose for a moment that our situation is more complex, as life often is. My professor friend's studies directly impact his knowledge of development of newborns. But at the same time, I have a philosophical and theological background, which is relevant to the disagreement, as it means I have knowledge of historical arguments about when personhood begins. Both my friend and I have come to our beliefs by means of epistemic virtues. We each have both an awareness of our limitations of the subject (intellectual humility) and have held onto our beliefs for the appropriate amount of time, given our evidence (intellectual firmness). If we both are taking seriously each other's position, which includes both intellectual humility and intellectual firmness, we are also acting with open-mindedness. If neither of us have any epistemic vices which have impacted this belief, it is possible that intellectual *phronesis* would require both of us to maintain our belief even in the face of disagreement.

Although this situation comes to the same conclusion as would the Steadfast position, the method by which we arrived at the conclusion could not be more different. Steadfasters are concerned with acting rationality in the face of disagreement, whereas intellectual *phronesis* looks at the particularities of the situation to judge which virtue pertains most to this situation. *Phronesis*, therefore, provides practical advice on how to act as an epistemic agent when issues regarding self-trust arise from disagreement.

CONCLUSION

In cases where the virtues seem to be in conflict—*e.g.*, where one might act with humility by varying one's confidence but at the expense of intellectual fortitude, and *vice versa*—what we need is not simply another virtue, but rather some means by which to rank the virtues we employ in disagreement. Intellectual *phronesis* disposes an agent to do so, enabling proper sensitivity to a disagreement and helping her to determine which of the other virtues ought to be privileged in an apparent conflict. An intellectually prudent approach to disagreement is not to be taken as synonymous with compromise or with choosing what has the most practical consequences. Rather, given that it is an intellectual virtue, intellectual prudence is aimed at true belief. MacIntyre describes *phronesis* in the following terms:

> In practical reasoning the possession of this virtue is not manifest so much in the knowledge of a set of generalization or maxims which may provide our practical inferences with major premises; its presence or absence rather appears in the kind of capacity for judgement [sic] which the agent possesses in knowing how to select among the relevant stack of maxims and how to apply them in particular situations. (MacIntyre 2010, 223)

In the case of disagreements, intellectual *phronesis* allows the agent to judge between the virtues and values at play. This account not only solves the most epistemically significant issue of disagreement, how to have a consistent view of the self, but because it utilizes epistemic virtues, it practices regulative epistemology by valuing epistemic advice over theory.

CONCLUSION: The Value of Disagreement

Contemporary conversations about disagreement in analytic philosophy revolve around peerhood, making disagreement about responding "rationally" to someone rather than arriving at a true belief. The epistemic significance of disagreement is fundamentally not about how I should respond to disagreement, but about the issues that all disagreements raise for a person's ability to trust herself. Without self-trust, epistemology dissolves into skepticism. This is the reason that disagreements are so compelling to epistemologists, not because only certain types of disagreements shake our sense of trust, but because *any* disagreement if not addressed properly could undermine our epistemic worldview.

Virtue epistemology allows epistemologists to respond to disagreement in a regulative manner. Not only does the regulative nature provide practical advice for epistemic agents seeking epistemic goods, but it also helps to eliminate possible skepticism from impacting our sense of trust while interacting in the world. In particular, the virtues of open-mindedness, intellectual fortitude, and intellectual humility help to situate a regulative response to disagreement. Acting with the virtue of open-mindedness enables an agent to understand the merits of the other's position. An agent using intellectual fortitude will hold onto her belief for the appropriate amount of time, while intellectual humility enables an agent to have proper awareness of their limitations, allowing her to remove inappropriate self-trust.

Intellectual prudence governs these intellectual virtues, enabling an epistemic agent to discern the appropriate epistemic response to a situation. Each of the steps of acting with intellectual *phronesis*, recognizing what virtues and values are at stake in a situation and then understanding how they conflict and what this particular situation calls for, helps agents to balance the intellectual virtues related to disagreement, even when they appear to be in conflict. Although it might be useful for intellectual *phronesis* to provide a one-stop solution to disagreement, doing so would not necessarily seek true belief. Unlike the Conciliatory and Steadfast positions, with their rigid solutions, intellectual *phronesis* allows for the possibility that each agent ought to respond differently to a situation: it might require one to be less certain of her belief while the other maintains her belief as it is.

But there is another benefit of intellectual *phronesis*: it makes apparent that discussing disagreement *only* as a problem misses the point of how disagreement is epistemically significant. It is true that disagreement causes a problem for an individual's consistent view of herself. But disagreement also helps an agent to clarify their position on an issue. If the problem of disagreement is that it requires us to give a consistent account of our self, then the process of dealing with these problems allows us to better account for our beliefs. This in turn allows for a better understanding of the degree of self-trust we ought to have in our beliefs. Although disagreement can cause problems of epistemic significance, responding to disagreement with intellectual *phronesis* encourages agents to have a more accurate view of their beliefs and limitations. Thus, disagreement has even more epistemic significance, as it provides the opportunity for agents to evaluate their self-trust and trust in others so that they can act more epistemically virtuously.

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