

Some Questions for the Equal Weight View

Nat Tabris

Abstract

Assume that application of ‘equal weight’ rule is necessary for justification after peer disagreement. Either is it sufficient, or not. If it is sufficient, then we get swamping (which is bad). If it is not sufficient, then either it is insufficient in cases where the peers have equal evidence, or in cases where the peers have nearly (but not quite) equal evidence. If equal evidence, then we have a reason for denying Uniqueness, and if Uniqueness is false, we have a reason for denying Equal Weight View. If not equal evidence, then we need a principled explanation of why not. But we don’t have such a principled explanation. So, there is no form of the Equal Weight View which is satisfactory.

There is widespread disagreement about how you ought to respond when you find yourself in a case of peer disagreement. One plausible suggestion is that you ought to give ‘equal weight’ to your peer’s judgment as you do give to your own judgment. My goal in this paper is to make the Equal Weight View less plausible.¹

The form of the Equal Weight View which we shall consider intends to provide a *general* constraint on rational belief for epistemic agents in a case of peer disagreement. There is a more restricted view which claims that in at least some but not all cases of peer disagreement, one is rationally required to give one’s peer equal weight—this is not the view which we shall be considering. The scope of the Equal Weight View can also be restricted by providing restrictions on what counts as a case of peer disagreement—the questions we shall consider do apply to such a view, as long as the ‘equal weight’ requirement is still held to apply generally to all peer disagreement cases (whatever they might be).

Many of the worries which I shall press upon the Equal Weight View in this paper have already been raised by Thomas Kelly in his paper “Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence.” My contribution is to clarify some of his objections to the Equal Weight View, and to show how they fit together to pose a dilemma for the Equal Weight View. In section 1, I shall try to state the target view more precisely. The first dilemma is then introduced with this question: Does the Equal Weight View provide a sufficient (as well as necessary) condition for justification? In section 2, I shall note the problem of answering in the affirmative. In section 3, I shall consider the negative answer and pose another dilemma: After disclosure of peer disagreement, do the epistemic agents (ever) have the same evidence? In section 4, I shall argue that if you said ‘no’ to the first question, you should not say ‘yes’ to this question—if peer disagreement is not

¹Throughout this paper, I’ll refer to ‘the Equal Weight View’. As shall quickly become apparent, this name is not accurate for various reasons. What I shall be considering is a family of Conciliatory views which would require you to *strongly* temper your beliefs in the light of peer disagreement.

a sufficient condition for justification in cases when peers have equal evidence, then Uniqueness is false. But I shall argue that if Uniqueness is false, then the general form of the Equal Weight View is false as well. In section 5, I shall consider a form of the Equal Weight View that applies only to cases in which peers do not have identical evidence. While this position is perhaps tenable, I shall argue that it depends on an *ad hoc* move regarding what counts as evidence.

1 The Equal Weight View

Every form of the Equal Weight View which we shall consider is minimally committed to the following claims:

PEER DISAGREEMENT: There are situations in which (i) each of two parties justifiably believes (or knows) that the other party is an ‘*epistemic peer*’ regarding *p* and (ii) the parties *disagree* about *p*.

EQUAL WEIGHT: In every case of PEER DISAGREEMENT, after becoming aware of this disagreement, each party *ought* to give *no more weight* to his own judgment about *p* than he gives to the judgment of the other party.

Our aim in this paper is to examine these minimal, core claims in light of further, more specific claims that a proponent of the Equal Weight View may accept or reject. But before that, some clarifications and comments about this minimal formulation of the Equal Weight View.

First, how we specify the requirements for being ‘epistemic peers’ is crucial in determining the cases to which the Equal Weight claim applies. Peerage has been defined in various ways. Kelly says that “two individuals are epistemic peers with respect to some question if and only if... (i) they are equals with respect to their familiarity with

the evidence and arguments which bear on that question, and (ii) they are equals with respect to general epistemic virtues such as intelligence, thoughtfulness, and freedom from bias,” while also noting that “the standards that we employ in assessing intelligence or thoughtfulness... are sufficiently liberal to allow individuals to qualify as equal along the relevant dimensions.”² Christensen speaks of “cases of disagreement in which it’s as clear as possible that my friend and I have the same evidence and that we’re in general, equally good at responding to that sort of evidence,” while also claiming that in cases where “I have good reason to believe that my friend’s evidence, though different from mine, is just as good” the same epistemic obligation to “regard our opinions as equally like to be accurate” holds.³ Elga takes a somewhat different approach, focussing on the conditions under which you *regard* someone as a peer. On Elga’s use, you regard someone as a peer if “you think that, conditional on a disagreement arising, the two of you are equally likely to be mistaken”⁴—this leaves open whether or not you must believe that the other party has the same evidence, equally good evidence, or perhaps merely that you regard the other party as having some balance of evidence, acumen, luck (and whatever other qualities are relevant for forming reliable judgments) which on the whole matches your own.

In this paper, we’ll consider the more restricted notion of peerage, following Kelly more closely than Christensen or Elga. While Equal Weight may apply to cases of peer disagreement where peerage is construed more liberally, it is most plausibly taken to apply to cases where there is equal intelligence and equal or nearly equal evidence.

Second, we should consider what counts as disagreement. Again, there are more and less restricted notions of disagreement. Here we’ll consider the less restricted, more liberal notion: disagreement includes cases where two parties disagree about the

²Kelly (2005), p. 175.

³Christensen (2007), pp. 192, 211–2.

⁴Elga (2007), p. 487.

degree to which their evidence provides epistemic support p rather than $\sim p$. Thus, if I think that p is certain and you think that p is merely (epistemically) likely (relative to our body of evidence), then we will count this as a case of disagreement about p . Again following Kelly, we will “adopt the standard Bayesian convention according to which the credence which one invests in a given proposition is assigned a numerical value between 0 and 1 inclusive, where 1 represents maximal confidence that the proposition is true, 0 represents maximal confidence that the proposition is false, .5 represents a state of perfect agnosticism as to the truth of the proposition, and so on.”⁵

Third, the Equal Weight View we shall consider makes a *normative* claim about rational belief. It is plausible to take this constraint on rationality as a constraint upon *justification*: you would not be justified to give p the same credence as you gave it before you became aware that you were in a peer disagreement case. We’ll further assume that Equal Weight is an *internally accessibly* requirement on justification—that is why it says what you ought to do after you become aware of the peer disagreement (alternately, there could be a rule about how *undisclosed* peer disagreement cases affect what it is rational to believe, but this is not our concern).

Finally, the name ‘Equal Weight’ implies that you must give your peer’s judgment exactly *equal* weight as you give to your own. Why call something an ‘Equal Weight View’ which requires only that you give *no more weight* to your own judgment? If we take Equal Weight as a necessary but not sufficient condition for justification, we can state it in this form: if (in a relevant sort of peer disagreement case) you do not do ϕ , then you are not justified. Since we want to consider views which claim that there may be some *additional* reason in particular cases to give further weight to the other party’s judgment, we need some ϕ that does not exclude such additional requirements. (This point will become more clear when we consider such a view, in section 5.)

⁵Kelly (2010), pp. 117–8.

With these clarifications, we can restate the core claims of the views we shall consider:

PEER DISAGREEMENT*: There are situations in which (i) each of two parties justifiably believes (or knows) that the other party has equal or nearly equal general epistemic virtues and evidence regarding p and (ii) the parties assign different credences to p on the basis of this evidence.

EQUAL WEIGHT*: In every case of **PEER DISAGREEMENT***, after becoming aware of this disagreement, if a party does not give no more weight to his own judgment about p than he gives to the judgment of the other party, then that party is not epistemically justified in assigning the credence he assigns to p .

The remainder of this paper will be devoted to arguing against the combination of **PEER DISAGREEMENT*** and **EQUAL WEIGHT VIEW***.

2 Sufficiency and Swamping

According to the Equal Weight View, giving your peer ‘equal weight’ is a necessary condition for having justification for your belief about p . Is it also a sufficient condition?

Suppose that you and I are epistemic peers with the same (or nearly the same) body of evidence e . At time t_0 I evaluate e and come to believe p on the basis of e with a credence of .8, while you come to believe p on the basis of e with a credence of .2. Further, suppose that e supports p to .2—your degree of belief is justified by the evidence, but mine is not. At time t_1 we become aware of our peer disagreement.⁶ We now have

⁶This is Case 4 from Kelly (2010), p. 122.

additional evidence: $e^* = e \cup \{\text{The fact that: I believe } p \text{ on the basis of } e \text{ with a credence of .8, The fact that: you believe } p \text{ on the basis of } e \text{ with a credence of .2}\}$.

Suppose that each party, in accordance with the Equal Weight View, adjusts his credence to .5. Are both parties justified in believing p with a credence of .5 on the basis of e^* ?

If you say ‘yes’ here (and say the same about all other peer disagreement cases), then you are committed to something like

EQUAL WEIGHT BICONDITIONAL: In every case of PEER DISAGREEMENT*, after becoming aware of this disagreement, each party is epistemically justified in assigning the credence he assigns to p if and only if that party gives no more weight to his own judgment about p than he gives to the judgment of the other party.

Here’s the problem put forward by Thomas Kelly for a view like EQUAL WEIGHT BICONDITIONAL: Suppose that you and I are both justified in believing p with a credence of .5 on the basis of e^* . What is it about e^* that justifies a credence of .5? Presumably not e , since we said in this case that e justifies someone to believe p with a credence of .2. Consider another case: instead of having e we both have some other body of evidence e_1 which supported a credence for p of .9. If you and I were epistemic peers regarding p in the first case, then we would qualify as peers in this case as well. If splitting the difference is both necessary and sufficient for having a justified credence in p , then again we’re justified in having a credence of .5. Thus, we can see that the original body of evidence e and the degree to which e supports p is irrelevant. So why are you and I justified in having a credence of .5? The only thing left is the evidence in e^* which wasn’t in e —namely, the facts about what credences you and I initially assigned to p . As Kelly puts it, e “gets completely swamped by purely psychological facts about what

you and I believe.”⁷

Two clarifications.

First, how you responded to e before you became aware of the disagreement does play a role in determining the credence which is justified after you become aware of the disagreement. So in a manner of speaking, e does play a role in determining the final justified credence, since presumably e had some influence on you and on me when we assigned credences to p . But if giving equal weight to your peer’s judgment is sufficient for justification—and this is the form of the Equal Weight View which we are now considering—then as long as you and I initially assigned a credence to p on the basis of e , the epistemic support which e actually provides for p does not play a role in determining whether or not we are justified after becoming aware of the disagreement. And this is clearly wrong!

Second, you might think that this sort of case is not possible, and in that way try to get out of this undesired consequence of treating ‘equal weight’ as sufficient for justification. How would such a response go? You might say that applying ‘equal weight’ is only sufficient if your initial belief was justified. There are two ways to state this view. The most obvious way is to deny that applying the ‘equal weight’ rule is, by itself, sufficient. We’ll consider this view in the next section. Alternately, you might say that applying ‘equal weight’ is sufficient, but applies only in cases in which the initial beliefs are justified. This amounts to accepting

JUSTIFIED PEER DISAGREEMENT: There are situations in which (i) each of two parties justifiably believes (or knows) that the other party has equal or nearly equal evidence regarding p and (ii) the parties assign *and are both justified in assigning* different credences to p on the basis of this evidence.

⁷Kelly (2010), p. 124.

JUSTIFIED EQUAL WEIGHT: In every case of JUSTIFIED PEER DISAGREEMENT, after becoming aware of this disagreement, if a party does not give no more weight to his own judgment about p than he gives to the judgment of the other party, then that party is not epistemically justified in assigning the credence he assigns to p .

Is this plausible? I think not, but we'll wait till section 4 to see why.

Now we'll consider the dilemma for the view that applying the 'equal weight' rule is necessary but not sufficient for justification after peer disagreement.

3 Required, but when?

If you hold EQUAL WEIGHT* and reject EQUAL WEIGHT BICONDITIONAL—namely, you believe that giving your peer equal weight is necessary but not sufficient—then presumably you would accept

UNJUSTIFIED PEERS: There are cases of peer disagreement in which both peers have followed the 'equal weight' rule, and in which it is not the case that each peer is justified in assigned the credence which that peer assigns to p .

(since otherwise, following the 'equal weight' rule would be sufficient for justification in all actual cases).

Before we consider the dilemma for forms of the Equal Weight View which uphold UNJUSTIFIED PEERS, we should make a further clarification in the Equal Weight View. In PEER DISAGREEMENT* and EQUAL WEIGHT* we allowed the Equal Weight View to apply to cases where peers have 'equal or nearly equal evidence'. We can thus divide

Equal Weight into two more precise views, depending on whether it requires equal evidence (EE) or allows nearly equal evidence (NE):

EE PEER DISAGREEMENT: Out of the cases which satisfy UNJUSTIFIED PEERS, there are situations in which (i) each of two parties justifiably believes (or knows) that the other party has *equal* evidence regarding p and (ii) the parties assign different credences to p on the basis of this evidence.

NE PEER DISAGREEMENT: Out of the cases which satisfy UNJUSTIFIED PEERS, there are situations in which (i) each of two parties justifiably believes (or knows) that the other party has *nearly equal* evidence regarding p and (ii) the parties assign different credences to p on the basis of this evidence.

Likewise we divide EQUAL WEIGHT* into EE EQUAL WEIGHT and NE EQUAL WEIGHT. We'll refer to the view which is committed to UNJUSTIFIED PEERS, EE PEER DISAGREEMENT and EE EQUAL WEIGHT as the 'EE VIEW'; and we'll define the 'NE VIEW' similarly. Note that these views are independent: you can hold the EE VIEW with or without holding the NE VIEW, and you can hold the NE VIEW with or without holding the EE VIEW.

Here's the dilemma: Do you hold only the EE VIEW, or do you hold the NE VIEW?

We'll consider the first option in section 4, and the second in section 5.

4 Equal Evidence and Uniqueness

If you hold the EE VIEW and not the NE VIEW, then you claim that in every case of peer disagreement, the peers have equal evidence. And since the EE VIEW includes the UNJUSTIFIED PEERS thesis (remember, we're now considering the second horn of the

‘Is it sufficient?’ dilemma), you cannot deny that there are cases in which both peers follow the ‘equal weight’ rule but only one peer ends up being justified.⁸ Thus, there are cases in which two parties each have the same evidence e^* , each assign the same credence to p on the basis of e^* , and yet one party is justified and the other party is not.

Explaining why this is a problem for the Equal Weight View will take some work. In brief: Uniqueness is the thesis that—for any total body of evidence, epistemic agent, and proposition—“Given one’s total evidence, there is a unique rational doxastic attitude that one can take to any proposition.”⁹ As Kelly argues, if Uniqueness is false, then the EQUAL WEIGHT family of theses is false. White presents a persuasive set of arguments against the denial of Uniqueness. But if there are cases in which two parties both base their beliefs on the same evidence yet do not have the same epistemic status with respect to justification (as we must say if we accept the EE VIEW is true while denying the NE VIEW), then the best reasons for accepting Uniqueness are undermined. Which means that if the EE VIEW is true and the NE VIEW is not, then EQUAL WEIGHT is on shaky ground. Now for the details.

Suppose Uniqueness is false. Then there is some case in which a given body of evidence e justifies a credence of x and a credence of y (where $x \neq y$) for a proposition p on the basis of e . Now, suppose that we are epistemic peers regarding p , and that prior to learning of our disagreement, I assign a credence of x to p on the basis of e , and you assign a credence of y to p on the basis of e . When we learn of our disagreement, how ought we to respond?

⁸Well, you *could* deny this, but I don’t think you should. UNJUSTIFIED PEERS allows that neither peer ends up justified—but if, for every case of peer disagreement in which both peers follow the ‘equal weight’ rule, neither peer ends up justified, what normative epistemic value does the ‘equal weight’ view provide? It seems to me that if the Equal Weight View is true, it shouldn’t always cause epistemic harm.

⁹White (2005), p. 445. When introducing Uniqueness, White isn’t explicit about the quantifiers, but when introducing Extreme Permissivism—which denies Uniqueness—he uses an existential quantifier over cases (p. 447). Since $\lceil \exists \alpha \Phi_\alpha \rceil$ contradicts $\lceil \forall \alpha \sim \Phi_\alpha \rceil$ but not $\lceil \exists \alpha \sim \Phi_\alpha \rceil$, we must interpret Uniqueness as having a universal quantifier over all cases in order to make it incompatible with Permissivism.

There are two worries here for the Equal Weight View. The first worry, raised by Kelly, applies if it is possible for us to know that e supports both credences x and y for p . In a case where we both are aware that the other party is being rational, why would we be compelled to adjust our credences after learning of the disagreement? Put another way, if I believe that we're both epistemically okay regarding p , why should your belief about p make me give up mine? As Kelly says, it "seems wrong" to say that "you are rationally required to [move] your credence" in this case—but that is what the Equal Weight View says.¹⁰

The second worry applies more generally, even if we never can know *when* we are in a permissive case where the evidence potentially justifies distinct credences. If it is a fact about the world that there are cases in which two epistemic agents can both be justified on the basis of the same evidence in taking different doxastic attitudes toward some proposition, then it would be odd if there were a normative fact that required parties to always act as if they were not in such a case. Yet this is exactly what the Equal Weight View would require, for if you were to act as if you were in a permissive case, then you would see no reason to give up your credence just because some other credence might be justified. Thus, it seems to me that if there are permissive cases, then it is most plausible to give up the Equal Weight View and adopt a view which requires 'equal weight' in a more limited range of cases.¹¹ (Likewise, now we can see the problem for the Equal Weight View with JUSTIFIED PEER DISAGREEMENT, which would require giving 'equal weight' in permissive cases.)

If Uniqueness is false, then the Equal Weight View is at least much less plausible than it would be were Uniqueness true. So what should we think about Uniqueness?

¹⁰Kelly (2010), p. 119

¹¹For instance, if both parties are justified in believing that they are not in a permissive case, and all the other conditions of peer disagreement obtain, then they might be required to give 'equal weight'. Nevertheless, this is not the Equal Weight View, which requires 'equal weight' in all cases of peer disagreement.

Roger White notes in his article “Epistemic Permissiveness” that Uniqueness has been rejected by many philosophers, and cites the views of Bas van Fraassen, Gilbert Harman, William Lycan, Richard Foley, Rawls, Goodman, and Gideon Rosen. Surely, it would not be irrational to defer to such a distinguished group of philosophers, would it? Nonetheless, White puts forth a family of puzzles for any view which rejects Uniqueness. First, I want to outline his worry for Uniqueness. Then, I want to show what bearing the EE VIEW has on his worry.

Suppose some body of total evidence e makes two distinct doxastic attitudes toward p justified. Then there’s no epistemic reason to prefer one attitude over the other, so you might as well arbitrarily choose which attitude to hold—White suggests that you take one of the “magical belief-inducing pills” which give (depending on which pill you happen to swallow) a true belief or a false belief about p .¹² If evaluating e correctly makes you no more justified than taking a magical pill, and we grant that taking a random pill from a collection of truth-pills and falsity-pills is not a proper epistemic practice for forming a justified belief, then it seems that forming a belief on the basis of e in a permissive case would not make your belief justified. But this contradicts our assumption that e in fact can justify two distinct doxastic attitudes. Therefore, by *reductio*, Uniqueness holds.

White pushes this argument from the first person perspective:

But if I really do judge that believing P in this situation would be rational, as would believing not-P, then there should be nothing wrong with my bringing it about that I have some belief or other on the matter. But then it surely cannot matter how I go about choosing which belief to hold, whether by choosing a belief that I’d like to hold, or flipping a coin, or whatever.¹³

¹²White (2005), pp. 447–8.

¹³White (2005), p. 449.

He goes on to grant that this argument is compatible with the possibility that there are permissive cases, “but that these are very rare, and one cannot tell, for any case, that it is a permissive one.”¹⁴ This position White rejects on the grounds that “it is hard to see what could motivate it.”¹⁵ If we have reason to think that it is not the case that many cases are permissive, then we have reason to act as if no cases are permissive.

Conversely, if we do have reason to grant the possibility of permissive cases, then this calls into question White’s argument against the coherence of more widespread permissive cases. And this is how the EE VIEW puts pressure on White’s argument.

Remember that according to UNJUSTIFIED PEERS, there are cases in which both parties assign the same credence to some proposition, but at least one party is not justified. Presumably, there are some cases in which exactly one party is justified (see footnote 8). And if you hold the EE VIEW and deny the NE VIEW, then you must say that the peers base their beliefs in such cases on the same evidence. Thus, your justification does not supervene upon your doxastic attitude toward *p*, your evidence regarding *p*, and the fact that you based your attitude on your evidence.

This failure of supervenience is enough to call into question the crucial move in White’s argument. If justification does not supervene upon attitude, evidence, and basing, then there must be some other feature which is needed to distinguish justified from unjustified doxastic attitudes. What? I’m not sure what; but it isn’t necessary to say what this other feature is in order to see a problem with White’s claim that popping a pill is no better than forming a belief on the evaluation of evidence in a permissive case. Whatever additional feature is required for justified belief is not preserved by pill popping, but (plausibly) can be possessed by epistemic agents who properly evaluating evidence. Thus, either historical features—beyond mere basing—of your doxastic at-

¹⁴White (2005), p. 450.

¹⁵White (2005), p. 451.

titude are relevant to determining whether or not you are justified, or the appropriate attitude fails to supervene on total evidence.

Conversely, if you think that White's argument against permissivism is still plausible, then you must think that evaluating evidence in a permissive case is just as good as pill popping. Why? Presumably, the reason has something to do with the fact that for all you know, these methods are equally likely to lead you to the truth. But the Equal Weight View is no better on this point: giving 'equal weight' makes you no more likely—for all you know—to be justified than you were before you became aware of the peer disagreement. So wouldn't it be just as good an epistemic practice to avoid discovering what other people believe?

In review: Accepting the EE VIEW while denying the NE VIEW makes it likely that there are cases in which two epistemic peers with the same evidence both follow the 'equal weight' rule after becoming aware of their disagreement, but only one of the peers ends up being justified. This shows that justification does not supervene on doxastic attitude, evidence, and basing, which casts doubt upon the reasons for holding Uniqueness. So we have no reason to think that Uniqueness is plausible. But if Uniqueness is false, then it's implausible that the Equal Weight View holds. So the form of the Equal Weight View which is committed to the EE VIEW and not the NE VIEW is not very plausible.

5 Different Evidence

Can we get out of the problems raised for the EE VIEW in the last section by holding both the EE VIEW and the NE VIEW? Maybe, but I don't think so. As long as you think that there are some cases in which two peers with the same evidence appropriately follow the 'equal weight' rule but only one of them ends up being justified, then

Uniqueness is not very plausible. But if Uniqueness is false, then there cases which call the Equal Weight View into question. Thus, if you accept just that much of the EE VIEW (whether or not you also accept the NE VIEW), the plausibility of the Equal Weight View goes down.

This leaves us with one last form of the Equal Weight View to consider: the NE VIEW taken together with the denial of the EE VIEW. The primary challenge for someone who holds the NE VIEW but rejects the EE VIEW is to explain why peers would be required to give ‘equal weight’ in cases where they have nearly equal evidence, but not in cases where they have the same evidence. Normally, we think that the more closely matched in evidence and intelligence another person is to us, the more weight we ought to give their opinion relative to our own. If someone is ignorant or incompetent, we feel unmoved by the judgments of this person. If someone knows something and has some intellectual ability, we give them more weight. And more to the point, the more your knowledge and intellect match mine, the more nearly I give your judgment as much weight as I give mine own. Why then would it be the case that I should give you equal weight only when we have *nearly* equal evidence? It seems to me that the only plausible reason to hold the NE VIEW and not the EE VIEW is if you also hold that in every case of peer disagreement, the peers do not have equal evidence after they become aware of their disagreement. If you reject the EE VIEW while holding the NE VIEW, you should reject the EE VIEW by rejecting EE PEER DISAGREEMENT.

This is the approach taken by Christensen in “Disagreement, Question-Begging and Epistemic Self-Criticism.”¹⁶ Consider again $e^* = e \cup \{\text{The fact that: I believe } p \text{ on the basis of } e \text{ with a credence of } .8, \text{ The fact that: you believe } p \text{ on the basis of } e \text{ with a credence of } .2\}$. For me, the fact that I believe that p with a certain credence does not play the same evidential role as the fact that you believe p ; likewise for you, the fact

¹⁶Christensen (2011).

that you believe that p does not play the same role as the fact that I believe that p . As Christensen puts it, “There is a sense, then, in which [we] have difference evidence to react to.”¹⁷ Christensen uses this to explain how the party who correctly assessed the original evidence is justified, but the party who assessed the evidence incorrectly is not justified. The ‘right’ party ought to give equal weight, but the ‘wrong’ party ought to give whatever credence was correct based on the original evidence.

Christensen isn’t clear about whether he wants to say that after we learn of our disagreement, you and I have different evidence or that we have the same evidence with different “rational import” for each of us.¹⁸ Since we’ve already considered and rejected the EE VIEW, let’s treat Christensen as if he were committed to saying that we always have different evidence, and see where that takes us.¹⁹

How might we defend the claim that in cases of peer disagreement, facts about my doxastic attitude with respect to p are not evidence for me regarding p , but are evidence for you? It seems to me that we want some principled, non-*ad hoc*, way of explaining why the first-person fact does not count as evidence, and there are a couple of ways this could be done. First, one could claim that facts about one’s own doxastic attitudes simply are not evidence. Alternately, one could claim that we should stop thinking of a person’s evidence as a single body of facts, but instead think of evidence always with respect to some proposition. Thus, the fact that I assign a certain credence to p could

¹⁷Christensen (2011), p. 7.

¹⁸See especially footnote 10, p. 7.

¹⁹But maybe you now think that we rejected the EE VIEW too quickly. You could hold that justification supervenes on doxastic attitude, evidence, basing, as well as who you are with respect to the evidence (this could be modeled as the set of propositions in e^* which are about your psychological states, or something like that), which would allow Uniqueness to be undisturbed by the EE VIEW if Uniqueness is restricted to cases where the total non-first-person evidence is the same (thus, not cases of peer disagreement). In response, it seems odd to me that the fact that you are you rather than me should make such a difference in whether or not you are justified, supposing that I am justified and that we have the same total evidence (and that the content of the belief isn’t about either of us, as it is in Perry’s ‘shabby pedagogue’ or shopper cases where my knowledge of who I am is clearly relevant for whether or not I am justified). This question is interesting and deserves more attention than I can give it here.

count as evidence with respect to q , but not count as evidence with respect to p .

The first approach—ruling out as evidence all facts about one's own doxastic attitudes—seems to me clearly wrong. For a certain range of questions, facts about one's own doxastic attitudes is crucial evidence. Suppose that I'm hungry, and you ask me what I'm going to do. I then ask myself how hungry I am, whether there's food in the fridge, if the sandwich meat is still good, etc. The doxastic attitudes which I take with respect to these questions bears upon what I think I'm going to do in the near future.

More to the matter at hand, facts about one's own doxastic attitudes toward p may be used as evidence when considering whether or not we are epistemic peers with respect to p . Consider this case: you're a skilled logician who wants to know if I am your logical peer. To help you, your friend Kurt has given you a logic test with logic questions of ascending difficulty—you're rightly quite confident that you can get the first question correct, but you suspect that only God knows the answer the last few questions. You and I take the test, and sit down to compare our results. Suppose that we disagree about one of the early questions. Then the fact that you are quite confident about your answer should count as evidence for you that I am wrong. Suppose that we agree up to some question around the middle of the test. It seems to me that you would be right to use your degree of confidence in your answer being right as evidence when determining if you should count me as a peer. So facts about your own doxastic attitudes are evidence.

Let q be the proposition that you assign a credence of x to p on the basis of e . Could you grant that q is evidence for something, but not for p ? We could define 'evidence' in this way: e is evidence regarding p if and only if e epistemically bears upon (or supports, or some such) p . Then, you could say that some proposition about your own doxastic attitude with respect to p is evidence for some r , but not for p itself.

The problem with this is that if we allow that evidence is relational in this way,

it seems to me that we should also say that it is closed under the *bearing upon* or the *supporting* relation. If e is evidence regarding r , and r bears upon p , then e is evidence regarding p . But as we saw, facts about your own doxastic attitudes can bear upon the question of whether some other party with whom you disagree is your peer. Facts about your peerage with respect to p play a role in determining the doxastic attitude you ought to take with respect to p , so facts about peerage count as part of your evidence regarding p . Thus, if we grant some sort of evidential closure, then facts about your own doxastic attitudes toward p can count as evidence which bears upon p .

Is there some other principled way of denying first-person-psychological evidence? None is apparent to me. You would have to reject either the bearing of first-person-psychological evidence upon the matter of peerage, or reject evidential closure, but both of these seem to me eminently plausible.

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Where does this leave us? We first asked whether or not giving ‘equal weight’ was necessary and sufficient for holding a justified belief in a case of peer disagreement. If it were sufficient, then the original evidence would be swamped by the psychological evidence, which doesn’t seem right. So then we supposed that giving ‘equal weight’ is not sufficient for holding a justified believe after each party becomes aware of the peer disagreement. If ‘equal weight’ is not sufficient for justification, then there should be cases where only one party is justified, even though both parties gave ‘equal weight’. If the Equal Weight View applies to cases where the peers have the same evidence, then we have to explain how it is possible for two parties to both assign the same credence to the same proposition and the basis of the same evidence, yet not be equally justified. This calls into question the Uniqueness thesis; but if Uniqueness is false, then the Equal

Weight View is implausible. So we then considered the possibility that peers never have the same evidence after they become aware of their disagreement. While this may be the best way for the Equal Weight View to go, it still leaves us without a good, non-*ad hoc* account of why peers' evidence is never equal. Thus it seems to me upon examination that the Equal Weight View is not as plausible as it may have first appeared.

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