

Uniqueness and Equal Weight

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February 2009

Two theses are central to recent work on the epistemology of disagreement:

Equal Weight ('EW'): In cases of epistemic peer disagreement, one should give equal weight to the attitude of a peer and to one's own attitude.¹

Uniqueness ('U'): For any given proposition and total body of evidence, some doxastic attitude is the one the evidence makes rational (justifies) toward that proposition.

A version of EW for all-or-nothing belief is defended by Richard Feldman [2003, 2006, 2007], while versions applicable to degreed belief are championed by David Christensen [2007] and Adam Elga [2007]. Roger White [2005] and Feldman [2003, 2007] offer arguments for U.

We shall focus initially on U: endorsing it, we'll argue, commits one to the thesis that *whatever determines justification is also a determinant of evidence*. That is a significant result in itself, for this thesis about the relationship between the supervenience bases of justification and evidence is (to put it mildly) unobvious. Indeed, we think that this consequence of U makes more trouble for its proponents than do the main worries about U expressed by Gideon Rosen [2001: 71-72] and Thomas Kelly [forthcoming: 10], and we run with that consequence, using it in an argument against U. But there is more: by amplifying a recent suggestion that EW "carries with it a commitment to" U (Kelly [forthcoming: 11]), we confirm that our argument against U bears importantly on EW. So, to the extent that one doubts the aforementioned thesis about the relationship between said supervenience bases, one should also doubt EW.²

1. Uniqueness, Evidence, and Rationality

¹ A case of 'epistemic peer disagreement' is one in which (roughly) you think that your attitude toward a proposition p conflicts with the attitude taken by someone who has the same relevant evidence and degree of reliability as you. See Kelly [forthcoming].

² David Christensen [2007: 211] considers a case in which someone who knows U to be false disagrees with a peer. Christensen argues that the subject cannot "safely ignore" the fact that her peer takes a different attitude toward the relevant proposition (her knowledge of U's falsity notwithstanding). Christensen concludes that "[U's truth] is not necessary in order for known disagreement to provide reason for change of belief" [2007: 211]. If Christensen is right, then U's falsity is compatible with the following view: in cases of epistemic peer disagreement, you should give *some* weight to your peer's attitude. But the view just mentioned is *weaker* than EW. So the (putative) fact that U's falsity is compatible with that weaker view doesn't entail that U's falsity is compatible with the *stronger* EW.

U is a thesis about the relationship between rationality (justification³) and evidence. Given that our purposes with respect to U are largely critical, we'll focus on what's arguably the most tenable version of it (cf. Kelly [forthcoming: 10])—viz., one that involves the all-or-nothing attitudes of belief, disbelief, and withholding. While we expect our results also apply to a version that invokes more fine-grained doxastic attitudes, we leave such application of our arguments for elsewhere. Following others, we take rationality (justification) as a primitive.

An important clarification. The expression 'total body of evidence' in U is ambiguous between a "type" reading and a "token" reading. That term may refer *either* to something that can't be shared across thinkers (a certain *token* body of evidence) *or* to something that can be shared across thinkers (having a certain *type* of body of evidence, being in a certain *type* of "total evidential situation"). Recent discussion of U makes clear that U invokes the "type" reading of 'total body of evidence': according to U, for any given proposition and *type* of "total evidential situation", some attitude is the one the evidence makes rational toward that proposition. As friends of U have noted, U should be understood so as to *exclude* the possibility of rational disagreement between thinkers who have the same total evidence (equivalently: ...who have tokens of the same *type* of total evidential situation). According to White, one way to reject U is to endorse the view that two thinkers who have the same evidence yet disagree "needn't display any failure of rationality" [2005: 446]. So, the possibility of rational disagreement between thinkers who have the same evidence conflicts with U: U rules out the possibility of rational disagreement between such thinkers. Feldman is even more explicit about this consequence of U: "If the Uniqueness Thesis is correct, then there cannot be any reasonable disagreements in cases in which two people have exactly the same evidence" [2007: 205]. Obviously, U has this implication only if we give 'total body of evidence' the "type" reading rather than the "token" reading. Consider it done.

In light of this point about U, we can now see how U is logically stronger than what's often called *Evidentialism* about epistemic rationality:

Doxastic attitude *D* toward proposition *p* is epistemically justified for *S* at *t* if and only if having *D* toward *p* fits the evidence *S* has at *t*. [Feldman & Conee 1985: 15]

Evidentialism is compatible with

Relative Fit ("RF"): For some proposition *p* and type of total evidential situation *E*, *p* fits *E* relative to one thinker but not some other thinker.⁴

Granting that RF is true, two thinkers could have the very same evidence yet differ with respect to which propositions they are rational to believe—that is, some proposition fits the evidence relative to one thinker but not the other. In short, RF allows for the possibility of

³ We follow Feldman [2006: 220], White [2005: 445], and Kelly [forthcoming] in using the terms "rational" and "justified" interchangeably.

⁴ For an argument that RF is (at least) metaphysically possible, see Bergmann [2004, 2006]. Notably, whoever explains what's involved in a proposition's fitting a body of evidence in terms of reliable indication of truth (Dretske [1981]) or proper function of cognitive faculties (Bergmann [2004, 2006]) or conceptual sophistication (Conee & Feldman [2008]) is committed to the possibility of RF.

thinkers who are “evidentially identical” yet “rationally different”. Clearly, then, RF allows for reasonable disagreement between thinkers who have the same evidence. So, Evidentialism is compatible with something inconsistent with U—viz., reasonable disagreement between “evidential twins”. Evidentialism therefore does not entail U. Arguably, though, U entails Evidentialism.⁵ Thus, U is logically stronger than Evidentialism.

Why think U is true? What reasons have been given in its favour? The main case for U is due to White [2005], with support from Feldman [2006 and 2007].⁶ Denying U, White argues, accrues high costs that pressure us to accept U. White highlights these costs by exploiting an apparent conflict between *rational belief* and *arbitrariness*.⁷ Briefly consider White’s argumentative strategy. Suppose you deny U by claiming that given your total evidence, it’s rational to either believe p or deny p . As it happens, you believe p rather than deny p . White’s question: why believe p rather than deny p ? Given the way you deny U, it can’t be that the evidence better supports one attitude over the other; but then it doesn’t seem as though there is a good (epistemic) reason to believe p rather than deny it. Absent good reason to take one attitude rather than the other, your attitude ends up looking arbitrary—and not obviously different from an attitude based on a coin flip. But an attitude based on a coin flip isn’t rational. So why think your attitude is rational, given your denial of U?

White’s case for U, as we’ve mentioned, is the strongest extant argument for U, the main target of this paper. In what follows, we shall argue that accepting U comes with significant costs of its own [§2]. Then we will show how our argument *against* U yields a reply to White’s argument *for* U [§3]. Finally, we’ll convert our objection to U into an argument against EW by showing that EW “depends dialectically” on U.

Here is a quick sketch of our main argument against U; we develop it below. If U is true, then your simply possessing a particular body of evidence completely determines what you’re justified in believing. So, “propositional justification” facts supervene entirely on “evidence possession” facts: anything that helps determine what you have justification to believe also helps determine what evidence you have. But this supervenience thesis forecloses numerous approaches to evidence and rationality. Thus, the plausibility of U is inversely proportional to the plausibility of a disjunction of multiple broad approaches to evidence and rationality.

2. Against U

Now for a detailed statement of our argument. Suppose that you endorse U. You then wish to pick out theories of evidence and rationality; you want one of each. Browsing the journals

⁵ To see why, suppose you’re rational in taking attitude A toward proposition p . By U, A is the only attitude toward p justified by your evidential situation. So, taking A toward p would be a (indeed, *the*) fitting response to your evidence. U entails the left-to-right direction of Evidentialism. Now suppose that taking A toward p would be a fitting response to your evidence. By U, your evidential situation makes rational only one attitude toward p . Since (by hypothesis) taking A toward p would be a fitting response to your evidence, A must be *the* attitude toward p that your evidence makes rational. So, U entails the right-to-left direction of Evidentialism.

⁶ Cf. Kelly [unpublished].

⁷ Cf. Feldman [2006: 226].

and talking to your colleagues, you meet with a plethora of theories—you're inclined to call it a "blooming, buzzing confusion". The theories on offer may be sorted as follows:

Evidence Internalism: internal duplicates *can't* differ with respect to their evidence.

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Let's suppose you pick out an evidence-rationality bundle. It will be one from among the following combinations: (a) evidence internalism and rationality externalism; (b) evidence externalism and rationality internalism; (c) evidence internalism and rationality internalism; or (d) evidence externalism and rationality externalism. Our argument assesses the prospects for each of (a)-(d), given your supposition of U.

If U is true, no bundle that joins any version of evidence internalism with a version of rationality externalism, that is (a), can be true. All such bundles are off limits. You can't, for example, take one popular sort of bundle: a 'phenomenal' conception of evidence (on which your evidence is, roughly, your current experiences and beliefs) (e.g., Lewis [1996: 553] and Conee & Feldman [2008]) plus some form of externalism about rationality (e.g., Sosa [1980], Goldman [1986], Bergmann [2006], Gibbons [2007]). In short, no bundle of evidence internalism and rationality externalism is available to you.

Why exactly does U entail the falsity of evidence internalism together with rationality externalism? According to U, your evidence makes rational precisely one attitude toward proposition *p*. The idea is that your evidence fixes the rational attitude to *p*. In other words, the rational attitude for you to take toward *p* supervenes on (is determined by) your evidence. But supervenience is *transitive*: if *A*-properties supervene on *B*-properties and *B*-properties supervene on *C*-properties, then *A*-properties supervene on *C*-properties. By transitivity of supervenience, since rationality supervenes on evidence, whatever determines evidence also determines rationality.

Now assume that evidence internalism—internal duplicates can't differ with respect to their evidence—is true. Then the facts that determine what one's evidence is will be "internal" facts (i.e., facts with respect to which internal duplicates can't differ). And by transitivity of supervenience, those very same internal facts will also determine what attitude is rational for one. Thus, if U is true, then evidence internalism entails rationality internalism. But then, given U, it is not possible that evidence internalism plus rationality externalism—internal duplicates can differ with respect to their rational attitudes—is true.

Do things look any better for other evidence-rationality bundles? Not really. Given U, *many* bundles taken from the remaining classes aren't available: (b) evidence externalism and rationality internalism, (c) evidence internalism and rationality internalism, and (d) evidence externalism and rationality externalism. The upshot is that slim pickings remain for the friend of U—a limited selection of bundles from classes (b) through (d), many of which are unattractive. We'll now discuss each class.

Suppose you accept U and are looking for a bundle from (*b*), that is, the class of externalist theories of evidence and internalist theories of rationality. It turns out that the only bundles from (*b*) available to you are ones with relatively weak and implausible species of evidence externalism. As we observed earlier, U entails that rationality supervenes on evidence. Now suppose that rationality internalism is true. Then if two thinkers, T1 and T2, rationally take different attitudes toward a proposition, T1 and T2 must (*i*) differ with respect to evidence (by U) and (*ii*) differ internally (by rationality internalism). So, given U and rationality internalism, if T1 and T2 differ with respect to rationality due to an evidential difference, then they'll also differ internally. In short: any rationality difference due to an evidential difference will be accompanied by an internal difference.

Assuming U and rationality internalism, then, there can't be a "rationally significant" evidential difference without an internal difference: fixing your internal facts suffices to fix all the features of your evidence *save only those irrelevant to what's rational for you to believe*. If you endorse U and rationality internalism, the only species of evidence *externalism* available to you are ones on which all the "rationally significant" features of your evidence supervene on your *internal* features. But any such species of evidence externalism would be relatively weak and implausible,⁸ and so the only bundles from class (*b*) available to a proponent of U include that relatively weak and implausible sort of evidence externalism.

Unlike class (*b*), classes (*c*) and (*d*) contain some potentially suitable bundles that are available to you as an advocate of U. The trouble, we will argue, is that the *vast majority* of bundles in (*c*) and (*d*) are inaccessible given your commitment to U. Here is a way to think about what's available and what's not. U entails that, for every proposition *p*, the *type* of total body of evidence you have (alternatively: the *type* of total evidential situation you're in) completely determines the single attitude you could rationally take toward *p*. Supposing that *types* of evidential situation are individuated by their content, U entails that, for any *p*, the content of your evidential situation alone fixes completely the one attitude you could rationally take toward *p*. So, U commits its proponent to one of the strongest possible forms of Evidentialism about rationality. Again, it is this: for any *p*, the content of your total evidential situation *entirely, and by itself, fixes* your one rational attitude to *p*. That is stiff drink indeed—call it *Strong Evidentialism*. It is critical to appreciate that any bundles from classes (*c*) and (*d*) that conflict with Strong Evidentialism are unavailable to U's proponent.⁹

So long—but *only* so long—as the proponent of U affirms Strong Evidentialism, all is well. As we see it, this result is troubling, for the *vast majority* of popular evidence-rationality bundles in (*c*) and (*d*) conflict with Strong Evidentialism. A bundle conflicts with Strong Evidentialism if it allows, for some proposition *p*, that the content of your evidential situation taken all by itself fails to single out an attitude as *the one* you could rationally take toward *p*. Bundles that conflict with Strong Evidentialism come in two general varieties: *Evidentialist* and *Nonevidentialist*. We'll treat each in order.

According to Evidentialist bundles, though what is rational for you to believe supervenes on the content of your evidential situation, there is at least one proposition *p* such that your evidence makes rational each of *multiple* (i.e., at least two) attitudes toward *p*.

⁸ Indeed, we know of no proponent of this sort of evidence externalism.

⁹ It's doubtful whether Conee & Feldman [2008] can plausibly endorse what we've called Strong Evidentialism. For the details, see our [removed]. The upshot is that Strong Evidentialism may have fewer proponents than initially appears. We think this point helps underscore the cost of a commitment to U.

Included here are Evidentialist bundles that feature a typical coherence theory of rationality (cf. White [2005: 446]). On coherentism, there can be thinker-proposition pairs such that multiple attitudes toward p cohere with that thinker's evidence. So, a standard coherence theory of rationality allows cases in which a thinker's evidence makes rational multiple attitudes to p . And then there are bundles with theories of rationality that imply some form of conservatism. These also conflict with Strong Evidentialism (cf. White [2005: 446]). According to conservatism, if it seems to you that p , you thereby have some degree of justification for believing p (Huemer [2001] and [2007]; Lycan [1988]). Since we can imagine cases in which you're justified in suspending judgment with respect to p even though it seems to you that p , conservatism allows that your evidence could make rational multiple attitudes toward p . Finally, there are views on which belief is sometimes too coarsely grained to mirror exactly the degree to which your evidence supports p . These sorts of views readily admit cases in which your evidence makes rational multiple attitudes toward a proposition.

By contrast, Nonevidentialist evidence-rationality bundles imply that which attitudes are rational for you is determined—at least partly—by something other than the content of your evidential situation. There are many such bundles. For example, take any bundle whose constituent theory of rationality allows that rationality is at least partly a matter of reliability factors (Goldman [1979]); deontological factors (construed internally or externally); proper function factors (Bergmann [2006]); virtue factors; or pragmatic-theoretical factors (à la Quine and Harman). All of these count as Nonevidentialist bundles and thus conflict with Strong Evidentialism.

Let's take stock. We have just argued that the vast majority of bundles in classes (c) and (d) will be off limits to the proponent of U. Earlier, we argued that the friend of U cannot endorse any plausible forms of either (a) evidence internalism plus rationality externalism or (b) evidence externalism and rationality internalism. Thus, it follows that U's plausibility is inversely proportional to the plausibility of a disjunction of multiple approaches to evidence and rationality—some of which are quite plausible. We think this result makes U look doubtful.

And that's not all: as we'll explain next, the result undermines the main case *for* U, the one developed by White [2005].

3. Against White's Argument for U

White's case for U is one of the most interesting arguments in recent epistemology. We liken it to an onion. Peel off the outer layers and you will find further layers still. As you dig in, you'll meet intriguing claims about the relations among familiar concepts—evidence, rationality, truth, arbitrariness. But it is also an argument that is, we shall recommend, fatally circular.

White argues for U by “displaying...difficulties we get into by denying [U]” [2005: 447]. We've seen that there are many different ways to deny U. In White's terminology, views about evidence and rationality that deny U are *permissive*: they “entail that epistemic rationality permits a range of alternative doxastic attitudes” [2005: 445]. The first step of White's case for U is an objection to one sort of permissive view:

Extreme Permissivism ('EP'): Possibly, thinker T has exactly the same total evidence as thinker T* yet proposition p is rational for T whereas not- p is rational for T*.¹⁰

Let's say that a belief in proposition p on evidence E is *formed in permissive conditions* iff someone could rationally believe p on E *and* someone could rationally believe not- p on E. Here's our reconstruction of White's argument against EP (where B is some or other rational belief based on evidence E):

(1) If you come to believe that B was formed in permissive conditions, then you are committed to thinking B irrational.

In White's words: "[I]f you believe P but maintain that you could have rationally believed not-P on the same evidence, then you should take the means by which you arrived at your belief in P to be no better than [say] arbitrarily popping a belief-inducing pill" [2005: 451].

(2) If you are committed to thinking B irrational, then B is irrational.

Writes White: "[Suppose] I can recall that my belief [that Smith is guilty] was...the result of an arbitrarily chosen [belief-inducing] pill. If I am rational, recognition of this fact should surely undermine my conviction in Smith's guilt" [2005: 448]. (Cf. Bergmann [2006]) Therefore:

(C) If you come to believe that B was formed in permissive conditions, then B is irrational—in White's words: "[T]he knowledge that [EP] applies in a particular case is self-undermining" [2005: 450].

That's the heart of White's anti-EP argument, which continues as follows. According to White, if believing *a particular claim about what your evidence supports* defeats previously rational beliefs based on that evidence, then that very claim is false.¹¹ Combined with (C) above, this implies that your rational belief B was not in fact formed in permissive conditions. And that generalizes to the thesis that there couldn't be a rational belief formed in permissive conditions. Since EP implies that there could be such beliefs, (1)-(C) yields reason to reject EP.

We will grant (2) of White's anti-EP argument. But (1) isn't obviously true on its face, and White accordingly provides a subargument to bolster it. Here is our reconstruction of that argument (see [2005: 448]):

¹⁰ White puts EP as follows [2005: 447]: "There are possible cases in which you rationally believe P, yet it is consistent with your being fully rational and possessing your current evidence that you believe not-P instead."

¹¹ White says: "...[I]t seems natural to suppose that a belief can always rationally survive learning the epistemic value of one's evidence. That is, if it is rational to believe P given evidence E, then it is rational to believe P given E and E', where E' correctly states what attitudes to P are rationally permissible given E" [2005: 450].

(3) If you come to believe that B was formed in permissive conditions, then you are committed to the possibility that someone rationally base the opposite (to B) belief on E.

(4) If you are committed to the possibility that someone rationally base the opposite (to B) belief on E, then you are committed to thinking B has no better a chance of being true than does an arbitrarily chosen belief.

(5) If you are committed to thinking B has no better a chance of being true than an arbitrarily chosen belief, then you are committed to thinking B irrational.

Taken together, (3)-(5) entails (1).

What to do with White's anti-EP argument? Pick on (4), we say. The trouble with (4), we shall argue, is that you will accept it without further support *only if* you think—along with friends of U—there's nothing more to rationality than evidence. Again: if you're not already convinced that evidence is all there is to rationality, then you'll need more support for (4) before accepting White's argument for U.

Seeing how White supports (4) will bear this out:

[Suppose] I believe that upon considering the evidence in court one could rationally conclude that Smith is guilty, but there is an alternative path that one's reasoning could take arriving instead at the rational conclusion that he is innocent. Supposing this is so, is there any advantage, from the point of view of pursuing the truth, in carefully weighing the evidence to draw a conclusion, rather than [say] just taking a belief-inducing pill? Surely I have no better chance of forming a true belief either way [2005: 448].

This is a critical passage in White's overall argument for U, but it is quite dense and tricky to interpret correctly. Allow us wide berth to reconstruct his thinking in detail.

The passage aims to secure the following conclusion: if you think beliefs can be formed in permissive conditions, you'll have to think basing a belief on evidence is *no better than* basing it on a coin flip. How does White reach this conclusion? Following White, suppose you think a belief can be formed in permissive conditions—that is, someone could rationally believe p on evidence E and someone could rationally believe not- p on E. That, White thinks, is tantamount to thinking that E indicates the truth of both p and not- p . But if E doesn't tell in favour of p over not- p (or vice versa), then E seems entirely unhelpful with respect to your goal of believing the truth about p . E doesn't tell you what to do. Given that p and not- p are equally indicated by E, you might as well use another method—a coin flip, say—to decide which one to believe.

In the above passage, and others,¹² White equates the following two claims:

- (a) E makes believing p rational (for T1) and makes believing not- p rational (for T2).

¹² For example, White writes [2005: 447]: “But it is incoherent to suppose that a whole body of evidence could count both for and against [p]. So then it is impossible that my examination of the evidence makes it rational for me to believe that [p] but also rational to believe instead that [not- p].”

- (b) E indicates the truth of p (for T1) and indicates the truth of not- p (for T2).

Everyone agrees that there's *some* kind of connection between epistemic rationality (justification) and truth. But (a) and (b) are equivalent only if rationality and truth are connected in just the following way: E's making p rational is *identical with* E's indicating p 's truth. Thus, insofar as you think rationality *might* involve something more than mere indication of truth by a body of evidence—for example, coherence, conservatism, reliability, proper function, virtue, epistemic duties, and so on—you'll doubt the proposed equation.

And that isn't good news for White's argument against EP. Large segments of White's target audience will think that rationality involves something more than mere indication of truth by a body of evidence—or they'll at least *be open* to such a view. Without additional support for the equivalence of (a) and (b), White's argument won't persuade such theorists. Indeed, it seems that most (if not all) of the theorists who would accept White's equation in the absence of further support already accept something quite like U, if not U itself. The upshot is that White's argument for U comes dangerously close to begging the question: on careful inspection, we discover it should convince only those theorists already inclined toward something quite like U.

So, White's anti-EP argument fails for reasons of dialectical ineffectiveness. Since White's argument is the first step of his overall case for U, the above criticism undermines that case. Therefore, we lack good reason to believe U and have good reason to reject it. On balance, accepting U is unreasonable.

So far, we've just picked on U. In the next section, we will consider consequences of our case against U upon EW.

4. Consequences for EW

If our argument against U is correct, it may bring important implications for another thesis: Equal Weight ('EW'). That thesis lies at the centre of recent debates over the significance of disagreement between "epistemic peers" (Feldman [2006 and 2007], Christensen [2007], Kelly [2005], Elga [2007]). According to EW, when you find yourself disagreeing with a peer, you should give equal weight to your attitude and your peer's.

Some philosophers argue for substantive logical or dialectical relations between U and EW. Thomas Kelly argues that EW "carries with it a commitment" to U [forthcoming: 11]. And White sketches an argument for the thesis that U entails EW [2005: 446].

Arguments like those are highly relevant to our main finding so far—namely, that U is unreasonable on balance. First off, if EW commits one to U, EW faces the very same trouble that U does. It isn't only U that requires a commitment to a limited class of evidence-rationality bundles—it's EW, too. And that would be significant: it would place a burden on the supporter of EW to defend the plausibility of at least one evidence-rationality bundle that's consistent with U (see [§2]); and it would demand that EW come packaged with a warning: this thesis *requires* some such bundle. As noted previously, many theorists will find those sorts of evidence-rationality bundles implausible. Additionally, if U entails EW, then one possible line of support for EW takes off from U [cf. White 2005: 446]. Assuming our main finding so far is correct, the envisaged U-based argument for EW fails, for its key premise is unreasonable on balance.

In what follows, we ask whether EW commits one to U, leaving shelved the question of whether U commits one to EW.¹³ We will endorse the claim that EW commits one to U after criticizing and repairing the main argument for this thesis (Kelly [forthcoming: 8-12]). The payoff will be clear: our case against U has multiple important consequences for the epistemology of disagreement.

Kelly offers an argument for the conclusion that “commitment to [EW] carries with it a commitment to [U]” [forthcoming: 11]. The argument turns on the following case (call it ‘Case’) [forthcoming: 8-9]:¹⁴

How things stand with thinker T:

At time t_0 , T’s total evidence with respect to some hypothesis H consists of E. T’s credence for H stands at .7. Given evidence E, this credence is perfectly reasonable. Moreover, if T was slightly less confident that H is true, T would also be perfectly reasonable. Indeed, T recognizes that this is so: if T met someone who shared T’s evidence but was slightly less confident that H was true, T would not consider that person unreasonable for believing as she does.

How things stand with thinker T:*

At time t_0 , T*’s total evidence with respect to H is also E. T*’s credence for H is slightly lower than .7. Given evidence E, this credence is perfectly reasonable. Moreover, T* recognizes that, if T*’s credence was slightly higher (say, .7), T* would still be perfectly reasonable. If T* met someone who shared T*’s evidence but was slightly more confident that H was true, T* would not consider that person unreasonable for believing as she does.

Here is why Case challenges EW. EW implies that, when T and T* learn about each other at t_1 , T is then rationally required to decrease T’s credence whereas T* is rationally required to increase T*’s credence. But, according to Kelly, that is mistaken: “[E]x hypothesi, the opinion that [T holds] about H is within the range of perfectly reasonable opinion, as is the opinion that [T* holds]. Moreover, [T and T*] have recognized this all along. Why then would [they] be rationally required to change?” [forthcoming: 9].

How exactly does Case figure into an argument for Kelly’s claim that “commitment to [EW] carries with it a commitment to [U]”? Kelly is short on details, so we’ll elaborate and expand as needed.

The argument, in a nutshell, is this. One either accepts that Case is possible or denies it’s possible. For the friend of EW, *denying* that Case is possible is the only sensible option. *By accepting* that Case is impossible a proponent of EW is committed to U. That’s the sense in which EW carries with it a commitment to U.

Let’s dig into the details of the argument. Take first the option that Case is possible. This option won’t be warmly received by the defender of EW. Case has the makings of a counterexample to EW, as noted above. But if someone defending EW does accept that

¹³ We think that White [2005: 446], following a case due to Rosen [2001: 71], is essentially correct that U implies EW, though we say nothing more about it here.

¹⁴ Kelly presents Case with talk of ‘me’ and ‘you’. We’ve used thinkers T and T* instead, because there are two of us and thus, properly speaking, no ‘me’.

Case is possible while maintaining Case is *not* a counterexample, Kelly claims she would need to “heroically defend the idea that [T and T*] are rationally required to revise [their] original credences in these circumstances” [forthcoming: 9]. The “heroism” required for such a defence of EW involves a strong and implausible commitment. In the statement of Case, it is *plainly taken for granted* that T’s and T*’s credences are rational. So, mounting a “heroic” defence requires *denying* something like the following (trivial) truth: if a thinker knows her credence for p is rational, then it is at least (epistemically) permissible for that thinker to retain that credence for p . Saving EW by denying *that* is a non-starter.

The friend of EW shouldn’t accept that Case is possible. “[A] more promising line of resistance,” Kelly avers, “is to deny that [Case] is possible at all. That is, an adherent of [EW] should endorse [U]” [forthcoming: 9]. Kelly’s thought is that the proponent of EW should accept that Case is impossible, but doing so is tantamount to a commitment to U itself. Strictly speaking, that isn’t so.

To see why, take a close look at Case. The driving idea behind Case, we think, is the *Possible Recognition Thesis* (“PRT”): it’s possible that a thinker whose current credence for proposition p (given her evidence E) is rational *recognize* that a slightly different credence for p would also be rational (given E). Notice that PRT is logically stronger than the denial of U—PRT entails that U is false, but U’s falsity doesn’t entail PRT.

Somehow, the proponent of EW must find a way to deny PRT. Two main strategies are available. First, you can deny PRT *by affirming U*. Second, you can deny PRT *while embracing the denial of U*. The second strategy is problematic for the following reason: denying PRT while embracing U’s denial brings with it an untoward skepticism—what’s rational given your evidence is sometimes *unknowable*. If you deny PRT but accept U’s denial, you’re committed to there being a (potentially wide) class of cases where your evidence makes rational some attitudes, yet you must remain ignorant of it. For if you deny PRT and accept U’s denial, although you will think that your evidence sometimes makes rational each of p and not- p (by not-U), you could never know as much (by not-PRT). That skeptical implication will be unacceptable for anyone who thinks that we’re usually (perhaps nearly always) able to know whether our evidence bearing on p makes rational a particular credence in p .

At a minimum, then, the above argument shows that EW depends dialectically on the disjunction of U with the claim that there’s a (potentially wide) class of cases where we’re unable to know what our evidence makes rational. Since we judge U to be more plausible than the skepticism in question, we recommend that EW’s advocate choose U. Kelly was indeed on the right track: arguably, the most promising way for the proponent of EW to deny Case is possible (and thereby save her commitment to EW) is to embrace U. We conclude that EW depends dialectically on U. We are pleased to observe that the argument in [§2] challenges EW as well. That is no small result, for any defender of EW must make peace with our case against U. Again, what we’ve said about U has considerable consequences for the epistemology of disagreement.

5. Conclusion

If our arguments are correct, the proponent of U is bound by much more rigid theoretical constraints than a first glance reveals. Reflecting on these constraints, we’ve observed, serves to rebut U (see [§2]) and undermine White’s case for U (see [§3]). And given that EW arguably depends dialectically on U (see [§4]), our critical assessment of U—significant in itself, we reckon—is thus doubly important for the epistemology of disagreement: it defends

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the possibility of reasonable disagreement between evidential twins, and strongly suggests that you needn't always give equal weight to your epistemic peer's attitude when you two disagree.

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