

A Patchwork Epistemology of Disagreement?

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1 Epistemic Peers

All epistemic peers are equal—but some are more equal than others.¹ The literature on the epistemology of disagreement centers on “the” case of peer disagreement.² But various philosophers have various notions of epistemic peerage, and the differences among these notions are substantial. According to any such notion, epistemic peers have substantial epistemic similarities (otherwise they could not be peers). And according to any such notion, epistemic peers have some epistemic differences (otherwise they could not disagree). Epistemic peers are always understood to be identical in some regards and merely analogous in other regards—but which regards are which vary from paper to paper.³

The most prominent notions of epistemic peerage can be divided into two types: those according to which epistemic peers have identical underlying epistemic sensibilities and analogous evidence, and those according to which epistemic peers have analogous epistemic sensibilities and identical evidence. Cases of peer disagreement about vision⁴, memory⁵, or thermometer-readings⁶ presuppose the first type of epistemic peerage, while cases of peer

¹Paraphrased from Orwell (1945).

²Peer disagreement is important in its own right, and is also liable to bear on other sorts of disagreement—disagreements with those an agent views as epistemic superiors (but whose opinions should not simply be adopted) and those an agent views as epistemic inferiors (but whose opinions should not simply be ignored). Of course, there’s no guarantee that epistemic standing falls in a total order, so it’s also possible that an agent could disagree with someone he views as epistemically incomparable to himself.

³And sometimes even vary within a paper. More on this sort of confusion shortly.

⁴See Kelly (2010).

⁵See Lackey (2008).

⁶See White (2009).

disagreement about evidential support relations⁷, prior probabilities⁸, and the epistemology of disagreement itself⁹ presuppose the second type of epistemic peerage.¹⁰

These two types of epistemic peerage are dramatically different. There is no reason to assume that the correct approach for the first type of peer disagreement will also be the correct approach for the second type of peer disagreement. Answers about the first type of peer disagreement need not apply to the second type of peer disagreement. Confusion between the two types of peerage is troublesome, and such confusion is rife.¹¹

This paper will mainly consider the first sort of peer disagreement, disagreement between peers with identical underlying epistemic sensibilities and analogous evidence. This is the easier sort of peer disagreement to analyze, but there are still some surprises regarding it. Moreover, a firm grasp on the easier sort of peer disagreement gives some purchase on the harder sort of peer disagreement, disagreement between peers with analogous underlying

⁷See Weatherston (MS).

⁸See Christensen (2007).

⁹See Elga (2010).

¹⁰It is not entirely clear what type of epistemic peerage is presupposed by some cases of peer disagreement. For example, the status of disagreements about mathematics will depend on whether or not agents can have evidence that is relevant to mathematics. For a case of mathematical disagreement, see Christensen (2009). For a treatment of the evidential status of mathematics, see Garber (1983).

¹¹For example, here is a case from Kelly (2010):

You and I, two equally attentive and well-sighted individuals, stand side-by-side at the finish line of a horse race. The race is extremely close. At time t_0 , just as the first horses cross the finish line, it looks to me as though Horse A has won the race in virtue of finishing slightly ahead of Horse B; on the other hand, it looks to you as though Horse B has won in virtue of finishing slightly ahead of Horse A. At time 1, an instant later, we discover that we disagree about which horse has won the race. How, if at all, should we revise our original judgments on the basis of this new information?

Kelly frames this case as one in which

despite being peers... you and I arrive at different views about the question on the basis of our common evidence

but this frame is inaccurate. When two people have different visual experiences, they thereby have different evidence. The disagreement is thus not predicated on common evidence, and the case Kelly describes is therefore not an instance of peer disagreement as Kelly defines it.

epistemic sensibilities and identical evidence.

2 Conciliationist and Steadfast Views of Peer Disagreement

There are two main views of peer disagreement: conciliationist and steadfast. According to the conciliationist view, disagreement with an epistemic peer mandates a doxastic change regarding the disputed matter. In the simplest cases, peer disagreement mandates that the two peers each change their doxastic states equally, and meet in the middle.¹² According to the steadfast view, disagreement with an epistemic peer does not mandate a doxastic change regarding the disputed matter.¹³ In the simplest cases, peer disagreement mandates nothing at all, and any view about the disputed matter that was reasonable before the disagreement remains reasonable after the disagreement.

The conciliationist and steadfast views can be articulated in various ways. There are various possible conceptions of evidence. There are various possible conceptions of doxastic states. There are various possible ways to deal with disagreements involving more than two epistemic peers. And so on.

Both conciliationist and steadfast views have been refined and qualified. Unrefined and unqualified versions of the views have already been subjected to counterexample.¹⁴ I shall show that both views are subject to the same counterexample. But my goal is not to add more counterexamples against theories that have already been falsified. Neither is my goal to impel conciliationist and steadfast views to further lengths of refinement and qualification. Instead, my goal is to suggest that the basic sensibilities of the conciliationist and steadfast views are inappropriate for peer disagreements occasioned by the acquisition of new evidence. My counterexample reveals that this sort of peer disagreement has a structure which is alien to both conciliationist and steadfast theories.

¹²Whether or not there is a doxastic state in the middle will depend on the peers' initial doxastic states.

¹³Change could, of course, be required for other reasons.

¹⁴For an overview of such counterexamples and the refinements and qualifications they occasioned, see Christensen (2011).

3 A Counterexample to Both Conciliationist and Steadfast Views

There are many ways to think of disagreement between peers with identical epistemic sensibilities and analogous evidence. There are thus many definitions of this sort of epistemic peerage, and I don't wish to confine my analysis to any of them. Instead, I will describe a case in enough detail that the agents in it should count as epistemic peers according to any such definition of epistemic peerage. Here goes:

Bob and Rob are identical twins, and they've led virtually identical lives. They spend all their time together; they eat the same food and they listen to the same music. When they race it's always close, and they each win around half the time. Their track records regarding eyesight, memory, mathematical calculation, and everything else are all closely comparable. Bob and Rob have the same dispositions. Bob and Rob also agree about pretty much everything—they find the same things plausible, and to exactly the same extent. Moreover, Bob and Rob are completely certain that they have all these characteristics in common. Bob and Rob are closer to exact peerage than any other pair of people.¹⁵

What should Bob do when he discovers himself in one of his rare disagreements with Rob? Bob knows that in past disagreements Rob's beliefs were right about as often as his beliefs were right. Bob fully expects that in future disagreements Rob's beliefs will be right about as often as his beliefs will be right. Bob knows that in past disagreements Rob's credences were more accurate than his about as often as his credences were more accurate than Rob's. Bob fully expects that in future disagreements Rob's credences will be more accurate than his about as often as his credences will be more accurate than Rob's.

What should Rob do when he discovers himself in one of his rare disagreements with Bob? Rob knows that in past disagreements Bob's beliefs were right about as often as his beliefs were right. Rob fully expects that in future disagreements Bob's beliefs will be right about as often as his beliefs will be right. Rob knows that in past disagreements Bob's credences were more accurate than his about as often as his credences were more accurate than Bob's. Rob fully expects that in future disagreements Bob's credences

¹⁵Epistemic peerage is often domain-relative. But Bob and Rob are so similar that they're peers regarding everything.

will be more accurate than his about as often as his credences will be more accurate than Bob's.

One might think that in light of these symmetries, Bob and Rob should conciliate when they disagree. One might think that despite these symmetries, Bob and Rob should remain steadfast when they disagree. Both of these views are wrong. There is no general answer regarding what Bob and Rob should do when they disagree. Bob and Rob—for all their similarities—can have myriad sorts of disagreements, and different sorts of disagreements call for different responses.

Notably, it is sometimes plainly irrational for Bob to conciliate with Rob and also plainly irrational for Rob to remain steadfast against Bob. This counterexample to both conciliationist and steadfast views can be articulated in the coarse-grained terms of outright beliefs or the fine-grained terms of degrees of belief. The counterexample is most easily articulated in coarse-grained terms, but is most easily understood in fine-grained terms. I will therefore present both versions.

Lighthouse Case: Coarse-Grained Version

From their room, Bob and Rob can see a lighthouse in the hazy distance. Bob and Rob know that the operator of this lighthouse flips a fair coin every night to determine whether or not to turn on the lighthouse's main light. Bob and Rob also know that their visual faculties are equally reliable regarding whether the light is off or on. Specifically, they know that if the light is off the lighthouse will look dim 90% of the time and bright 10% of the time, and that if the light is on the lighthouse will look bright 100% of the time.

Given this backdrop, a dim experience will lead either Bob or Rob to believe that the light is off, and a bright experience will lead either Bob or Rob to believe that the light is on. Bob and Rob have common knowledge that this is how they will form their beliefs.

On this occasion, Bob has a dim experience and Rob has a bright experience. Thus Bob initially believes that the light is off and Rob initially believes that the light is on

Should Bob's belief be undermined by Rob's disagreement? Should Bob conciliate and suspend judgment? *Not at all.* Bob knows that his belief

that the light is off guarantees that the light is off. Bob and Rob only ever believe the light is off when the light is off. Bob and Rob disagree, but that disagreement is conclusive evidence that the light is off—Bob and Rob only disagree when the light is off. There is no call whatsoever for Bob to alter his belief in the face of his peer’s disagreement. Thus the conciliationist view of peer disagreement is false.

Should Rob’s belief be remain firm in the face of Bob’s disagreement? Should Rob hold steadfast and continue to believe that the light is on? *Not at all*. Rob knows that Bob’s belief that the light is off guarantees that the light is off. Bob and Rob only ever believe the light is off when the light is off. Bob and Rob disagree, but that disagreement is conclusive evidence that the light is off—Bob and Rob only disagree when the light is off. It would be totally unreasonable for Rob to leave his belief unaltered in the face of his peer’s disagreement. Thus the steadfast view of peer disagreement is false.

Lighthouse Case: Fine-Grained Version

From their room, Bob and Rob can see a lighthouse in the hazy distance. Bob and Rob know that the operator of this lighthouse flips a fair coin every night to determine whether or not to turn on the lighthouse’s main light. Bob and Rob also know that their visual faculties are equally reliable regarding whether the light is off or on. Specifically, they know that if the light is off the lighthouse will look dim 90% of the time and bright 10% of the time, and that if the light is on the lighthouse will look bright 100% of the time.

Given this backdrop, Bob and Rob will update their prior credences by conditionalizing on their experiences. Bob and Rob have common knowledge that this is how they will update their credences.

On this occasion, Bob has a dim experience and Rob has a bright experience. Thus Bob’s initial credence that the light is off is 1, and Rob’s initial credence that the light is off is $\frac{1}{11}$.

Should Bob’s degree of belief be affected when he learns that Rob has adopted a different degree of belief? Should Bob conciliate, and adopt a credence of $\frac{6}{11}$? *Not at all*. Bob knows that his dim experience guarantees that the light is off. Bob and Rob only ever have dim experiences when the

light is off. Bob and Rob adopted different credences, but that divergence is conclusive evidence that the light is off—Bob and Rob only diverge when the light is off. There is no call whatsoever for Bob to alter his credence in the face of his peer’s disagreement. Thus the conciliationist view of peer disagreement is false.

Should Rob’s degree of belief remain unaffected when he learns that Bob adopted a different degree of belief? Should Rob hold steadfast and continue to have credence of $\frac{1}{11}$? *Not at all*. Rob knows that Bob’s dim experience guarantees that the light is off. Bob and Rob only ever have dim experiences when the light is off. Bob and Rob adopted different credences, but that divergence is conclusive evidence that the light is off—Bob and Rob only diverge when the light is off. It would be totally unreasonable for Rob to leave his credences unaltered in the face of his peer’s disagreement. Thus the steadfast view of peer disagreement is false.

How did an asymmetry develop between Bob and Rob in the coarse-grained case? The processes through which Bob and Rob formed their beliefs were equally good. But that doesn’t entail that the *beliefs* they formed were equally good. Bob and Rob sometimes mistakenly believe that the light is on, but they never mistakenly believe that the light is off. The belief that the light is off is more reliable than the belief that the light is on. There is thus an asymmetry in the beliefs of the two epistemic peers.

How did an asymmetry develop between Bob and Rob in the fine-grained case? Bob and Rob started out with the same credences, and they each updated correctly on their new evidence. But Bob’s experiential evidence that the light is off is not comparable to Rob’s experiential evidence that the light is on. Bob’s evidence is much better evidence than Rob’s evidence is. Thus Bob was initially more confident that the light was off than Rob was initially confident that the light was on. Rob’s evidence merely confirmed the hypothesis that the light was on, but Bob’s evidence conclusively proved that the light was off. There is thus an asymmetry in the credences of the two epistemic peers.

The lighthouse case described above is simple because a dim experience conclusively proves that the light is off. But more realistic cases can easily have the same basic structure. Small deviations in the structure of the case would produce, at most, small deviations in what would be rationally required of Bob and Rob; the entailments of the lighthouse case are convenient,

but inessential.¹⁶ Any case in which it's easier to mistake off for on than on for off will provide an asymmetry which mandates an asymmetric response. There are surely cases in which misleading evidence is more likely to arise in some circumstances than in others. Both conciliationist and steadfast views of peer disagreement are therefore untenable for this sort of disagreement.

4 Why the Conciliationist View is Wrong

A major motivation for the conciliationist view of peer disagreement comes from a misunderstanding of the symmetry between epistemic peers. Consider the following arguments which favor conciliating:

Coarse-Grained Version:

- (1.) If Bob and Rob disagree, then Bob's belief has a 50% probability of being right.
- (2.) In the lighthouse case Bob and Rob disagree, and Bob's belief is that the light is off.
- (3.) Therefore there is a 50% probability that the light is off.

Fine-Grained Version:

- (1.) If either Bob or Rob gets misleading evidence, then Bob's evidence has a 50% probability of being misleading.
- (2.) In the lighthouse case, either Bob or Rob get misleading evidence, and Bob's evidence suggests that the light is off.
- (3.) Therefore there is a 50% probability that evidence that the light is off is misleading.¹⁷

These arguments share a basic problem: they are invalid. There is no legitimate way to infer their conclusions from their premises, and there are a number of ways to see why this is the case.

¹⁶In particular, cases in which it is arbitrarily hard to mistakenly believe that the light is off can be arbitrarily similar to the case in which it is impossible to mistakenly believe that the light is off.

¹⁷This argument would support credence $\frac{1}{2}$ that the light is off, not credence $\frac{6}{11}$.

Most simply, the problem is that there's an equivocation in each argument.¹⁸ In each argument, the probability function at stake in (1.) is not the same as the probability function at stake in (2.). In each argument, the probability function in (1.) has not yet been conditioned on all the evidence at stake in (2.). Probabilistic reasoning is non-monotonic; new evidence changes probabilities. This sort of fallacious reasoning can be made very plain. Consider the following parody argument:

Parody Argument:

- (1.) If a fair coin is tossed, the outcome of that coin toss has a 50% probability of being Heads.
- (2.) In this parodic hypothetical, a fair coin is tossed, and the outcome of that coin toss is Tails.
- (3.) Therefore Tails has a 50% probability of being Heads.

It's obvious that two different probability functions are at play. The general probability that a fair coin will land Heads is not the same thing as the probability that a specific, observed outcome of a fair coin toss is Heads. (Knowing what the outcome of a coin toss is obviously affects the probabilities about the outcome of that coin toss!) Similarly, the general probability that Bob will be right when Rob disagrees with him is not the same thing as the probability that a specific, occurrent belief of Bob's is right when Rob disagrees with that belief.

In the case of an actual disagreement between Bob and Rob, Bob and Rob know more than the mere fact that they disagree. Bob and Rob also know what their beliefs are. The facts about what Bob believes and what Rob believes are of critical relevance to how Bob and Rob should assess their odds of being right in their disagreement. The importance of the facts about what Bob believes and what Rob believes derives from the facts about why Bob and Rob came to hold the beliefs they came to hold. The full underlying structure of the disagreement between Bob and Rob is relevant, not just the fact that Bob and Rob are peers and the facts about what they initially believed. The correct epistemology of disagreement must take all relevant information into account. The conciliationist view does not; it is

¹⁸For an alternative, more technical explanation of this sort of problem see Urbach and Howson (1993).

a sloppy, unwarranted methodology. There is no way to specify what post-disagreement doxastic states two epistemic peers should adopt given only the pre-disagreement doxastic states of those peers. In order to fix the epistemic significance of a peer disagreement, one must specify the underlying structure of that disagreement.

5 The Peerage of Processes

In peer disagreements occasioned by the acquisition of new evidence, there is no way to specify what post-disagreement doxastic states two epistemic peers should adopt given only the pre-disagreement doxastic states of those peers. There is thus no point to trying to articulate a general theory of peer disagreement at the level of doxastic states. The lighthouse case shows that purely conciliatory epistemologies of peer disagreement are wrong—Bob shouldn't change his view at all. The lighthouse case shows that purely steadfast epistemologies of peer disagreement are wrong—Rob shouldn't hold to his view at all. The problem with epistemologies of peer disagreement that operate at the level of the peers' doxastic states is that such epistemologies are blind to the underlying structures of particular peer disagreements, and those structures affect the epistemic significance of peer disagreements. The correct epistemology of peer disagreement will therefore need to address the specific possible grounds of peer disagreements.

The source of disagreement in the lighthouse case was the peers' sensory faculties. Sensory faculties are best thought of as stochastic processes, that is, as processes that operate probabilistically. So how should we think about the outcomes of equivalent stochastic processes?

In general, viewing two stochastic processes as equally good does not involve viewing the outcomes of those processes as equally good. Two 99% reliable pregnancy tests are equally good. But if both tests are administered to a man, and one test reads 'Pregnant' and the other test reads 'Not Pregnant', that is no grounds to think that 'Pregnant' and 'Not Pregnant' are equally plausible interpretations of that man's condition. Men cannot get pregnant, so you can be certain that the pregnancy test which read 'Pregnant' got it wrong.

Viewing two stochastic processes as equally good does not involve viewing the outcomes of those processes as equally good. What it does involve is viewing the outcomes of those two processes as *interchangeable*. If two

processes are equally reliable—as are two pregnancy tests from the same manufacturer, two thermometers of the same type, and the visual faculties of Bob and Rob—then the doxastic attitudes one adopts on the basis of the outcomes of those processes should not depend on which process yielded which outcome. One should have the same doxastic attitude towards the possibility that someone is pregnant if (1.) the first pregnancy test they take reads ‘Pregnant’ and the second test they take reads ‘Not Pregnant’, or if (2.) the first test they take reads ‘Not Pregnant’ and the second test they take reads ‘Pregnant’. One should have the same doxastic attitudes towards the various possibilities for the weather if (1.) the first thermometer one looks at reads ‘64 °F’ and the second thermometer one looks at reads ‘67 °F’, or if (2.) the the first thermometer one looks at reads ‘67 °F’ and the second thermometer one looks at reads ‘64 °F’. One should have the same doxastic attitude towards the possibility that the lighthouse light is on if (1.) the lighthouse looks dim to Bob and bright to Rob, or if (2.) the lighthouse looks bright to Bob and dim to Rob.¹⁹

What does it mean for two stochastic processes to be equivalent? Let’s think about thermometers. In order for two thermometers to be equivalent, it has to be the case that the thermometers can generate the same number of readings, and that for each reading in the first thermometer there is an equivalent reading in the second thermometer. Two thermometers from the same manufacturer have the same dispositions to produce the the same readings. The fact that the two thermometers produce the same readings is, however, unimportant. A Celcius thermometer and a Kelvin thermometer can easily be equivalent to one another. If the Celcius thermometer has the same dispositions to read ‘24 °C’ as the Kelvin thermometer has to read ‘297 °K’, then those two readings have the same evidential significance. Of course, $24\text{ °C} = 297\text{ °K}$, but that doesn’t matter. The specific characteristics of the stochastic processes’ outcomes are inessential; it’s the equivalence of their conditional probabilities that is important. A thermometer that outputs numbers and a thermometer that outputs colors can be equivalent so long as their outputs are produced with corresponding conditional probabilities.

What follows are the requirements for the peerage of two processes, Process A and Process B, regarding some question. Divide the possible answers

¹⁹The interchangeability of Bob’s and Rob’s visual experiences may plausibly be thought of as giving equal weight to their experiences. If the equal weight view is interpreted charitably, it should be understood as mandating this interchangeability. For more, see Elga (2007).

to that question into mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive possibilities. That is, let there be a partition over a state-space: $\{S_1, S_2, \dots S_n\}$.²⁰ These possibilities should be coarse enough to not include facts about the outcomes of the processes in question, and the processes should be probabilistically independent of one another.²¹ Divide the possible outcomes of Process A into mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive possibilities, and also divide the possible outcomes of Process B into into mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive possibilities. That is, let there be two partitions over two outcome spaces: $\{O_{A1}, O_{A2}, \dots O_{An}\}$ and $\{O_{B1}, O_{B2}, \dots O_{Bn}\}$. If Process A and Process B are peers with regard to a question, then it must be possible to order the two outcome spaces such that, conditional upon any element of the state space, the probability of the N th element of Process A's outcome space is equal to the probability of the N th element of Process B's outcome space.

Peerage:

Process A and Process B are peers iff for all $S \in \{S_1, S_2, \dots S_n\}$,
for all $O_A \in \{O_{A1}, O_{A2}, \dots O_{An}\}$, and for all $O_B \in \{O_{B1}, O_{B2}, \dots O_{Bn}\}$,
 $\Pr(O_A|S) = \Pr(O_B|S)$.

If the conditions of peerage are met, then the interchangeability constraint will hold. Peerage \Rightarrow Interchangeability.

Interchangeability:

The outcomes of Process A and Process B are interchangeable iff
for all $S \in \{S_1, S_2, \dots S_n\}$, for all $O_A \in \{O_{A1}, O_{A2}, \dots O_{An}\}$, and
for all $O_B \in \{O_{B1}, O_{B2}, \dots O_{Bn}\}$, $\Pr(S|O_{Ai} \wedge O_{Bj}) =$
 $\Pr(S|O_{Aj} \wedge O_{Bi})$.²²

²⁰For Example:

Question: Is this woman pregnant?

Possible Answers: Yes, No

Question: What is the temperature of this water?

Possible answers: 32 °F, 33 °F, ... 212 °F

Question: Is the lighthouse light on or off?

Possible Answers: On, Off

²¹Specifically, they should be independent of each other conditional on any answer to the question.

²²Note that while Interchangeability requires correspondence of conditional probabilities, it does not require correspondence of unconditional probabilities— $\Pr(O_{Ai})$ need not

Interchangeability is only a constraint. Interchangeability does not entail what one should think about any specific case involving the outcomes of peer stochastic processes. It entails that cases involving the outcomes of peer stochastic processes come in pairs, and that in each of the paired cases one should think the same thing. Other factors determine what one should make of contrary pregnancy test results, thermometer readings, or visual experiences. These other factors are of ineliminable relevance to the epistemology of disagreement. There's no avoiding thinking about everything.

6 Why the Steadfast View is Wrong

The steadfast view is starkly unsuitable for disagreements between peers with identical epistemic sensibilities and analogous evidence. The discovery of such a disagreement can easily reveal pertinent evidence, and pertinent evidence can easily mandate doxastic change.²³ The discovery of disagreement between Bob and Rob allows them to share their evidence, and while Bob's new evidence does not require a change in his doxastic state, Rob's new evidence does require a change in his doxastic state. It is, moreover, unavoidable that at least one of the twins will have to change his doxastic state. Because Bob and Rob only differ regarding their initial evidence, and because Bob and Rob can communicate their evidence to each other, protracted disagreement between them is impossible.²⁴

7 Disagreement Given Common Evidence

Both the conciliationist view of peer disagreement and the steadfast view of peer disagreement are untenable for disagreements between peers with identical underlying epistemic sensibilities and analogous evidence. This leaves

equal $\Pr(O_{Bi})$. The interchangeability constraint is therefore weaker than the famous exchangeability constraint for prior probabilities about Markov processes. For more, see Jeffrey (2004).

²³Such evidential significance is one of the central subjects of Christensen (2007).

²⁴For the seminal agreement theorem, see Aumann (1976). The assumptions underlying that result are extremely strong, however, and thus the result is somewhat delicate. See Lederman (2015) for a more accurate characterization of Aumann's result than Aumann provides. But generalizations of Aumann's result apply more comfortably. See Geanakoplos and Polemarchakis (1982) for more.

open the possibility that the conciliationist view or the steadfast view might be correct for disagreements between peers with analogous underlying epistemic sensibilities and identical evidence. The conciliationist and steadfast views would still be difficult to substantiate for such peer disagreements. In traditional epistemology, it is notoriously difficult to give exceptionless rules about what is evidence for what.²⁵ In formal epistemology, it is notoriously difficult to give rational constraints on prior probabilities.²⁶ To my mind it would be quite surprising if either the conciliationist view or the steadfast view held for any natural class of peer disagreements.²⁷ Still, perhaps—perhaps—one of the views is correct regarding disagreements between peers with analogous underlying epistemic sensibilities and identical evidence. But however the conciliationist and steadfast views fare regarding disagreements between peers with analogous underlying epistemic sensibilities and identical evidence, they should get no support from intuitions about cases involving disagreements between peers with identical underlying epistemic sensibilities and analogous evidence. Cases about vision, memory, thermometer-readings, *et cetera*²⁸ cannot favor either the conciliationist or the steadfast views; we know both views fail for those sorts of disagreements. Thus many cases that have featured prominently in the dialectic between conciliationist and steadfast epistemologies of disagreement turn out to be irrelevant to it.

8 Conclusion

Neither the conciliationist view nor the steadfast view is tenable for disagreements between peers with identical underlying epistemic sensibilities and analogous evidence. The lighthouse case shows that neither conciliating nor remaining steadfast is always correct. Are we then left with a patchwork epistemology of disagreement, one according to which one should sometimes conciliate and sometimes remain steadfast? I do not believe so. The lesson is not that we should sometimes conciliate and sometimes remain steadfast. The lesson is that it was already a mistake to conceptualize this aspect of the epistemology of disagreement in terms of the conciliationist and steadfast

²⁵Notably, even enumerative induction doesn't work as neatly as one might have initially suspected. See Goodman (1955) and Swinburne (2001) for more.

²⁶See White (2005).

²⁷See Lasonen-Aarnio (2013) for an analysis of the constraints imposed by such views.

²⁸These being disagreements produced by a divergence in stochastic processes.

views. One can tell a systematic story about how to deal with disagreements concerning visual experiences, memories, thermometer-readings, and so on. But that systematic story will not employ the ideology that has come to typify the epistemology of disagreement.²⁹

²⁹For helpful feedback, I am thankful to Adam Elga, John Hawthorne, Alan Hájek, and Thomas Kelly.

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