11 How Rational Level-Splitting Beliefs Can Help You Respond to Moral Disagreement

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1 Introduction

The problem of disagreement between epistemic peers, individuals who are roughly each other's intellectual equals with respect to the proposition under disagreement, has been the subject of much philosophical discussion and contention (Christensen 2007; Elgin 2018; Kelly 2010; Lackey 2010).[1] Much of this literature has centered on whether rationality requires us to adjust our doxastic attitudes towards a proposition when we learn that an epistemic peer holds a different attitude towards that proposition.[2] Non-conciliatory views of peer disagreement, including Jennifer Lackey's justificationism and Tom Kelly's total evidence views, hold that it can sometimes be rational to maintain the original attitude that you held before you learned that you disagree with a peer. Conciliatory views of peer disagreement, including David Christensen's (2007) and Adam Elga's (2007) conciliatory views, require individuals to adjust their doxastic attitudes towards a proposition in response to learning of peer disagreement about that proposition.

Relatedly, epistemologists have also invested in recent efforts in understanding the relationship between one's higher-order evidence, one's evidence about one's evidence, and one's first-order evidence, one's evidence that bears directly on the truth of a proposition (Christensen 2010). Peer disagreement provides us one type of higher-order evidence as it shows us that the first-order evidence which we originally took to support our attitude towards some proposition may not support that attitude, since our peer takes it to support some other doxastic attitude.[3] Within the broader literature on the relationship between first-order evidence and higher-order evidence, Richard Feldman (2005), Michael Huemer (2011), Sophie Horowitz (2014), and others have argued that beliefs of the form "p, but my evidence does not support p" are irrational. On the face of it, it seems that they're right; these level-splitting beliefs appear to be irrational since they involve believing p when our higher-order evidence indicates that our first-order evidence fails to support p. This holding onto belief in p might seem dogmatic and, in Feldmanian terms, an epistemic act of disrespecting our (higher-order) evidence rather than respecting it.

Similarly, non-conciliatory views of peer disagreement are sometimes understood as dogmatic since they involve holding onto one's views even after learning that those views are not shared by those who resemble us in our abilities to reason well (Elgin 2018, 17). In this chapter, we will attempt to address this dogmatism problem for non-conciliationism by showing how non-conciliationists can adopt rational level-splitting beliefs which allow them to exemplify intellectual humility.

Many discussions of moral disagreement assume that non-conciliatory views of disagreement are false and that conciliatory views of disagreement are true (see, e.g., Klenk 2018). We will take the opposite tack. We will assume a non-conciliatory view of disagreement, argue that a peculiar type of level-splitting belief can be rational, and then show that when non-conciliationists adopt these level-splitting beliefs, they can demonstrate intellectual humility. By showing how non-conciliatory views of disagreement and level-splitting beliefs can be combined, we will provide an indirect argument in support of non-conciliationism, demonstrating that non-conciliatory views of disagreement need not be dogmatic.

In the second section, we identify a specific type of moral disagreement between peers. In the third section, we argue that when non-conciliationists find themselves in this type of moral disagreement, they can rationally adopt level-splitting beliefs. In the fourth section, we show how these level-splitting beliefs in response to moral disagreement allow those who hold them to exemplify intellectual humility rather than dogmatism. We conclude in the fifth section.

2 Divergence Moral Disagreements

Consider the following case of moral disagreement:

> **Veganism**: Peyton and Brenna are careful ethical reasoners. They reflect on potential actions and on whether those actions are morally permissible before acting and are concerned to make sure that their actions are deemed permissible by their particular moral viewpoints. Since they have discussed ethical issues at great length over time, Peyton and Brenna view each other as peers about ethical matters, as roughly each other's intellectual equals when it comes to moral issues. One day, Peyton and Brenna find that they disagree about the ethics of eating nonhuman animals. Brenna believes that Act V, *eating nonhuman animals*, is morally permissible, and Peyton believes that Act V is not morally permissible.[4] But there is a further complication. Brenna and Peyton have been aware of the fact that although they view each other as equally careful, capable, and effective moral reasoners, Brenna is a cultural relativist and Peyton is an objectivist about morality – that is, Peyton thinks that the truths about morality do not constitutively depend on any

> cultural practices. As a consequence, Brenna and Peyton discover after extended discussion about V that Brenna takes their shared culture's practices (S) to bear on the moral permissibility of V and Peyton rejects their culture's practices as bearing on V. As Brenna describes her moral reasoning to Peyton, Peyton learns that Brenna takes the widespread acceptability of eating meat in their culture as a portion of the reasoning that leads her to view V as permissible. Peyton, meanwhile, holds that eating nonhuman animals is morally impermissible regardless and in spite of S. While Brenna takes S to bear on the permissibility of V, Peyton denies that S bears on V's permissibility.

To review, Brenna views V (eating nonhuman animals) as permissible and takes S (their shared culture's practices) to bear on the permissibility of V, while Peyton believes V is impermissible and denies that S bears on V. Initially, when Brenna learns that she disagrees with Peyton about the permissibility of V, she receives what we'll call opposition evidence.

> **Opposition evidence:** Evidence that an agent whom I regard as my epistemic peer with respect to p holds an opposing doxastic attitude to my attitude towards p.[5]

As we've noted, epistemologists have argued about what the rational response to opposition evidence is. Some have defended conciliatory views of the rational response to disagreement provided opposition evidence. If you hold a conciliatory view of disagreement, you think the rational response to opposition evidence is to adjust your original doxastic attitude towards the proposition under disagreement.[6] On the other hand, if you hold a non-conciliatory view of disagreement, you think that in some cases, you can receive opposition evidence and maintain the original attitude that you held towards the disputed proposition.

But in **Veganism**, Peyton doesn't merely receive opposition evidence. After discussing their disagreement, she learns from Brenna that Brenna not only disagrees with her about the permissibility of V but also disagrees with her about which considerations make V (im)permissible. We'll call considerations that individuals take to make some act, A, (im)permissible **A-bearing considerations**. While Peyton does not view S as bearing on V, Brenna understands S as a V-bearing consideration. Let's call the additional evidence that Peyton receives from Brenna when she learns that Peyton does not take the same considerations as bearing on V, moral divergence evidence.

> **Moral divergence evidence:** Evidence that an agent whom I regard as my epistemic peer with respect to moral considerations about some act, A, takes a different set of considerations to be bearing on A.

Note that moral divergence evidence is higher-order evidence. It is evidence about my evidence, because it gives me reason to think that I may have failed to rationally select the considerations that make it more or less likely that A is permissible when forming my attitude concerning A's permissibility.

Moral divergence evidence has two possible roles. First, it can give me reason to think that the considerations that I took to bear on the permissibility of A do not tell the whole story. Call this the incompleteness role of moral divergence evidence. Moral divergence evidence in its incompleteness role suggests that the set of considerations that I presently take to bear on the permissibility of a specific action may be incomplete in an important way when I learn that my peer takes some consideration to bear on that action's permissibility that I do not. In **Veganism**, Peyton receives moral divergence evidence in its incompleteness role from Brenna. Second, moral divergence evidence can tell me that some consideration that I originally took to bear on the permissibility of an action may not bear on that action if I learn that a peer does not take that consideration to bear on the permissibility of the action under disagreement. Call this the extraneous evidence role of moral divergence evidence. In **Veganism**, Brenna receives moral divergence evidence in its extraneous evidence role. For purposes of concision, we will focus on examining the rationality of holding level-splitting beliefs in response to receiving divergence evidence in its incompleteness role, as Peyton does in **Veganism**.[7]

In **Veganism**, we've seen that peers disagree both about the permissibility of an action and about the considerations that bear on the permissibility of that action. In the following section, we'll consider how those who hold non-conciliatory views of disagreement might rationally hold level-splitting beliefs in response to situations where they receive both opposition evidence and moral divergence evidence in its incompleteness role.

3 In Defense of Level-Splitting Beliefs

Before defending level-splitting beliefs in the contexts of disagreements like **Veganism**, we should consider what kind of level-splitting belief Peyton might adopt in response to discovering her double disagreement with Brenna about the permissibility of Act V and about what considerations bear on V. In particular, we should consider what kind of level-splitting belief Peyton might adopt in response to **Veganism** if she is a non-conciliationist about peer disagreement, in keeping with the focus of this chapter. In discussing Peyton's post-**Veganism** beliefs, we'll use proposition v: *eating nonhuman animals is permissible*. We will also assume that Peyton is in the kind of context in **Veganism** in which her non-conciliationism indicates that it is rational for her to maintain her belief that ~v even after learning that her peer, Brenna, believes v.

While previous discussions of level-splitting beliefs have focused on beliefs of the form "p, but my evidence does not support p," we can translate this belief into a form relevant to moral disagreement: "Act A is (im)permissible, but the considerations I take to be A-bearing do not support A's (im)permissibility." In **Veganism**, however, let's consider how Peyton's non-conciliationism could affect her understanding of the considerations that could possibly bear on Act V's permissibility.

Since Peyton's non-conciliationism can allow her to maintain that ~v in response to learning that Brenna believes v, it seems plausible that her non-conciliationism will also apply to her understanding of which considerations bear on Act V's permissibility. Peyton does not take S, the shared cultural practices, as bearing on V, whereas Brenna takes S to be bearing on V. Peyton's non-conciliationism should apply equally to this disagreement about whether S is bearing on V as it does to the disagreement about v. In other words, thanks to her non-conciliationism, Peyton may rationally maintain that the set of considerations that bear on V does not include S. So Peyton may, in the aftermath of **Veganism**, rationally believe "~v, and the considerations I take to bear on v support ~v," by the lights of non-conciliationism.[8]

But how might Peyton then hold a level-splitting belief if she can rationally believe that ~v and that the considerations that she takes to bear on V support her belief that ~v? In the spirit of intellectual humility and in recognition of her peerhood with Brenna, Peyton may reflect and realize that were she to take S to bear on V as Brenna does, this new set of V-bearing considerations (S + Peyton's original set of V-bearing considerations) would support a different attitude towards v.

If an agent takes certain shared cultural practices to be relevant to the permissibility of eating nonhuman animals, then it seems likely that they will conclude that it is permissible to eat nonhuman animals, at least in light of the assumption that this agent is a member of many contemporary cultures. In many contemporary cultures, human beings have eaten nonhuman animals freely and have even viewed meat from nonhuman animals as culturally significant (e.g. barbecue, in its various forms). Peyton and Brenna's shared cultures' general approval of eating nonhuman animals, if it bears on V, implies that Act V is permissible. So if Peyton at some point changes her mind and decides to take S to bear on V, she could conceivably come to believe v, *eating nonhuman animals is permissible*, rather than her original view of ~v.

This possibility shows us how Peyton might adopt a distinct and previously overlooked form of level-splitting belief, which we'll call a moral divergence belief.

> **Moral divergence belief:** A belief of the form of A is (im)permissible, but the set of A-bearing considerations as understood by my peer does not support the view that A is (im)permissible.

As we have just explicated, Peyton could easily find herself holding a moral divergence belief. She could hold the belief "~v, but the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by my peer Brenna does not support ~v." And if Peyton is in the particular epistemic context in which it's rational for her as a non-conciliationist to go on maintaining that ~v and that S does not bear on V, as we've assumed, then it seems that at first blush, it could be rational and even an act of admirable epistemic humility for her to hold such a moral divergence belief. While rationality may not require that Peyton adopt a level-splitting belief, we will argue for the rest of the chapter that it is rationally open for Peyton to adopt a moral divergence belief in response to **Veganism** and, further, that this response to **Veganism** should be attractive to her because it exemplifies intellectual humility.

To show that it is rationally permissible for Peyton to hold a moral divergence belief in response to **Veganism**, we'll now respond to two objections to level-splitting beliefs from Sophie Horowitz (2014) and will show that moral divergence beliefs can be defended from these objections in a way that previously discussed sorts of level-splitting beliefs cannot.

Call Horowitz's first objection the lucky belief objection to beliefs of the form "p, but my evidence does not support p." According to Horowitz, if I hold a level-splitting belief, then I will "naturally wonder how [I] came to have this particular true belief" (Horowitz 2014, 725). She notes that "usually, we come to have true beliefs by correctly evaluating our evidence" but that when we hold level-splitting beliefs, we believe that our "evidence doesn't support P. So perhaps [we] should just think that [we] got lucky" (Horowitz 2014, 725). If my evidence does not support p and yet I still believe p, then Horowitz argues that I'm committed to thinking that I arrived at my true belief in p via luck or chance since I can't maintain that I got it by assessing the evidence correctly. This consequence also seems to suggest that level-splitting beliefs are often unjustified, since many epistemologists are hesitant to award justification to beliefs that are true only by virtue of luck or chance. But the lucky belief objection does not show that true moral divergence beliefs are necessarily arrived at via luck or chance.

When Peyton holds a moral divergence belief of the kind we've discussed, she believes that the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by her peer does not support ~v. We have not argued that it would be rational for her to believe that the considerations that she does take to bear on Act V's (im)permissibility do not support ~v while she continues to believe ~v. Instead, in holding a moral divergence belief of the kind we've discussed, she may believe that the set of V-bearing considerations according to Brenna does not support ~v in the aftermath of receiving divergence evidence that tells her that her epistemic peer has assessed the possible V-bearing considerations available to her differently than she

has. But this divergence evidence does not give Peyton any special reason to think that considerations that she has taken as bearing on V fail to indicate that ~v.

Those who rationally hold moral divergence beliefs on our account are in the contexts in which their non-conciliationist views of disagreement indicate that they have good reason to believe the following:

(1) They have correctly selected the considerations that bear on the (im)permissibility of the act in question.
(2) This set of considerations supports the view of that act's (im)permissibility that they originally held.

Peyton can maintain that she has arrived at a true belief that ~v by correctly evaluating the considerations that she takes to bear on V's (im) permissibility while holding the moral divergence belief "~v, but the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by my peer does not support ~v." So the lucky belief objection fails to show that true moral divergence beliefs must be arrived at via luck or chance.

We'll call Horowitz's second objection the better belief objection. First, Horowitz argues that level splitting allows level-splitting believers to conclude that their evidence, which they believe does not support p when they believe "p, but my evidence does not support p," is misleading. Horowitz claims that epistemically akratic believers can reason as follows: "P is true. But all of my evidence [E] relevant to P does not support it. It supports low confidence in a true proposition, P, and therefore high confidence in a false proposition, ~P. So E is misleading" (Horowitz 2014, 726). Horowitz goes on to admit that while "it can even be rational, in some cases, to conclude that your total evidence is misleading," epistemically akratic believers should not simply conclude that their evidence is misleading when they "can avoid being misled" (Horowitz 2014, 727). To avoid being misled, they "can point to a particular belief of [theirs] that is, [they think], unsupported by [their] total evidence" and then adjust that belief (Horowitz 2014, 727). When I believe "p, but my evidence does not support p," Horowitz argues that I should not simply conclude that my evidence is misleading and believe akratically. Instead, I should follow where my evidence leads and adopt a better belief by either suspending judgment in p or believing ~p.

Applied to our argument here, the better belief objection as we understand it results in the consequence that if Peyton holds a moral divergence belief and recognizes that the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by her peer does not support ~v, then she should avoid level splitting entirely and suspend judgement in v as well or even believe v if that's what's indicated by the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by Brenna. The better belief is to suspend judgement in v or believe v

when the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by her peer does not other support ~v. In other words, she is required to abstain from holding a moral divergence belief.

In keeping with the focus of this project, we'll provide reasons from a non-conciliatory view of disagreement for refraining from following the dictates of the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by one's peer or suspending judgment in v when it's unclear whose set of V-bearing considerations we should take as bearing on V.

Recall that the non-conciliationist who rationally holds a moral divergence belief in **Veganism** possesses the right sort of justification for maintaining their original doxastic attitude towards v, even in the face of opposition evidence. So by the lights of their view of disagreement, the non-conciliationist holds the view of v that they ought to hold. To ask Peyton to suspend judgement in v in **Veganism** is to ask her to suspend judgement in a belief for which she believes she has justification and which she takes to be supported by the considerations that she understands as bearing on V. Even if the option to follow the dictates of the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by Brenna is perhaps rationally open to Peyton if she wishes to avoid level splitting, we will need an additional argument to show the non-conciliationist that she is rationally required to do so. Again, the better belief objection falls short when applied to the divergence beliefs of concern to the present project.

But consider a pertinent objection, inspired by Horowitz's objections, to the preceding argument. It seems that in some cases of disagreement that involve divergence evidence in its incompleteness role, the agent receiving the divergence evidence may be dogmatic if they don't take the considerations that their peer takes as bearing on V as bearing on V themselves. Perhaps now that Peyton is aware that Brenna takes S to bear on V, she should take S as part of the total considerations that she takes to be bearing on V. To put the point more clearly, imagine a different version of **Veganism** in which Brenna is an expert on alimentary ethics and Peyton is not. If Peyton holds a moral divergence belief in this version of **Veganism**, it seems that she is likely believing irrationally. Brenna is an expert on ethical issues pertaining to food, so Peyton should likely privilege Brenna's assessment of which considerations bear on V over her own and should potentially take S as bearing on V since Brenna, the expert, does. To fail to do so would be apparently irrational of Peyton, not unlike a citizen who refuses to update their beliefs in response to the information provided to them about climate change from scientific experts.

When we reduce Brenna's epistemic standing back to peerhood with Peyton, we might have a similar intuition. Perhaps since Peyton considers Brenna to be roughly her epistemic equal, her peer with respect to v, she should take S as bearing on V in order to be undogmatic in the face of their disagreement. This objection is worth listening to. Importantly,

there may be cases in which Peyton, within her non-conciliationism, is led away from a moral divergence belief and towards taking S, the relevant shared cultural practices, to bear on v: *eating nonhuman animals is morally permissible*.

We'll use Jennifer Lackey's justificationist non-conciliatory view to provide some suggestions about when non-conciliationists who receive divergence evidence in its incompleteness role should hold a moral divergence belief. According to Lackey's view, I can permissibly maintain the original doxastic attitude that I held towards p when we disagree about p if my "belief that p enjoys a very high degree of justified confidence" and if I have "a relevant symmetry breaker" that allows me to privilege my doxastic attitude over yours (Lackey 2010, 319). Lackey is most interested in the "relevant symmetry breakers" that she terms *personal information*: "information about myself that I lack with respect to you" (Lackey 2010, 309–10). According to Lackey,

> personal information is information that one has about the normal functioning of one's own cognitive faculties. I may, for instance, know about myself that I am not currently suffering from depression, or not experiencing side effects from prescribed medication, . . . whereas I may not know that all of this is true of you.
>
> (Lackey 2010, 310)

A high degree of justified confidence in my belief that p plus my access to personal information about my reasoning about p makes it rational for me to maintain my belief that p even when I learn that you, my peer, believe ~p. On the other hand, according to Lackey's view, if my "belief that p enjoys a relatively low degree of justified confidence," I am "rationally required to substantially revise the degree to which [I hold] the belief that p" (Lackey 2010, 319).

We'll use the proposition b, *S bears on V*, in our discussions of possible responses to **Veganism**. If we are non-conciliatory justificationists like Lackey, we will now have two propositions in **Veganism** whose degrees of justified confidence we must assess in determining how we will respond to **Veganism**. Since we are assuming that those who hold divergence beliefs are convinced non-conciliationists in the right contexts to hold onto their original beliefs, we will assume that Peyton has access to personal information about her cognitive processes that she lacks with respect to Brenna.

Peyton, we saw, believes ~v and ~b in **Veganism**. But her degree of justified confidence in one of these propositions may be higher or lower than her degree of justified confidence in the other. Further, she may have a high degree of justified confidence in one that under Lackey's view could permit her to maintain her original doxastic attitude towards that proposition and a lower degree of justified confidence in the other that

would require her to adjust her credence in that proposition, presumably in the direction of her peer's credence. Noticing this possibility can help us to understand when Peyton can rationally hold a divergence belief consistent with non-conciliationism and when she cannot.

First, consider the possibility that Peyton has a high degree of justified confidence in ~v but a low degree of justified confidence in ~b. If this is the case, she will not be able to rationally hold a moral divergence belief, even apart from worries about level-splitting beliefs. Her justificationist non-conciliationism will require her to adjust her credence in ~b, similar to a conciliatory response to disagreement about b, potentially even requiring her to take S as bearing on V. If her adjustment in her credence in b causes her to take S as bearing on V, then her degree of justified confidence in her belief that ~v could conceivably decrease, especially if she also believes that S does not support ~v, as we've suggested she easily could. So being a consistent justificationist in response to **Veganism** will likely require her to refrain from maintaining that ~v if she holds merely a low degree of justified confidence in ~b.

Next, consider the possibility that Peyton has a low degree of justified confidence in ~v but a high degree of justified confidence in ~b. If she is a faithful justificationist, she will adjust her credence in ~v and will by no means find herself continuing to believe ~v. So her high degree of justified confidence in ~b, for the purposes of moral divergence beliefs, will be superfluous. She cannot rationally hold a moral divergence belief in this context, again merely given the strictures of her non-conciliationist justificationism.

Finally, consider the possibility that Peyton has a high degree of justified confidence in ~v and a high degree of justified confidence in ~b. In this case, Peyton can rationally hold a moral divergence belief according to the defense we've given here, coupled with Lackey's justificationist non-conciliatory view. Lackey's justificationist view as we've interpreted it licenses her to maintain that her original selection of evidence was not incomplete by allowing her to maintain her high degree of justified confidence that ~b and will also allow her to maintain her high degree of justified confidence in ~v. Maintaining these high degrees of confidence in response to **Veganism**, however, will not prevent her from recognizing that the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by Brenna does not support ~v. By adopting a moral divergence belief, Peyton can acknowledge that if she were to gain future evidence that reduced her high degree of justified confidence in ~b, the new set of considerations that she took to bear on V, now including S, may not support ~v. So Peyton can rationally believe "~v, but the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by my peer does not support ~v."

While this explication may appear to be just a mere restatement of the non-conciliationist requirements for holding rational beliefs, we think it can help us to better see how we can know when we can rationally

hold moral divergence beliefs, in light of the defense of moral divergence beliefs given in this section. To avoid the lucky belief objection, we need agents who are justified in believing that the considerations that they take to bear on V support ~v. Having a high justified degree of confidence that ~v plausibly indicates that Peyton is justified in believing that the set of considerations she takes to bear on V supports ~v. To avoid the better belief objection, we need agents who are justified in believing that the set of considerations they take to bear on V is not incomplete. Having a high degree of justified confidence that ~b similarly seems to indicate that Peyton is justified in maintaining that the set of considerations she takes to bear on V is not incomplete, contra Brenna.

4 Intellectual Humility and Divergence Beliefs

If what we've argued is correct, then if you hold a non-conciliatory view of disagreement, a new response to disagreement is now available to you. You can hold a moral divergence belief that allows you to stick to your non-conciliatory guns while admitting that if you understood the relevant A-bearing considerations the way your peer does, you would be led to a different belief. We've argued that it's rationally open for non-conciliationist agents like Peyton to adopt moral divergence beliefs by defending them from some criticisms of level-splitting beliefs from Horowitz. We will now show why adopting a moral divergence belief should be attractive to non-conciliationists. More precisely, we will argue that moral divergence beliefs allow non-conciliationists to dispel some of the dogmatic appearance of their view and to exemplify intellectual humility instead. Moral divergence beliefs provide non-conciliationists with a unique way to exemplify intellectual humility in the face of peer disagreement without giving up their beliefs in the disputed propositions. In this section, we'll outline a few thoughts about intellectual humility and then show how moral divergence beliefs exemplify intellectual humility.

We begin by noting the obvious fact that intellectual humility is a virtue. Thus, it lies, as many virtues do, in a mean between two vices. In this case, the vices on either side of intellectual humility are intellectual arrogance and intellectual servility.[9]

The intellectually arrogant person characteristically overrates their intellectual abilities relative to others and is insufficiently sensitive to their own intellectual limitations.[10] For example, as an undergraduate, one of the authors of this chapter wrote a paper arguing that all philosophical disputes are the product of imprecision in language. If philosophers would just get clear about the meanings of their terms, I thought, all philosophical problems would dissolve. I was able to see this fundamental problem plaguing philosophy. The professional philosophers had missed it. But fear not: I was going to set things straight in my five-page paper. Upon reflection, this strikes us as a paradigm case of intellectual

arrogance. I (vastly) overrated my own intellectual abilities and was insufficiently sensitive to my own intellectual limitations.[11] That's one extreme.

The intellectually servile, by contrast, characteristically underrate their intellectual abilities and are often so sensitive to their intellectual limitations that they defer too quickly, or too much, to their intellectual inferiors and peers. Take for example, the straight-A philosophy student, who despite constant praise from their professors for their excellence in philosophy are still reluctant to raise their hand in class for fear that their ideas are not up to snuff for an undergraduate philosophy discussion. This student thinks that they have nothing interesting to offer despite plenty of evidence to the contrary. Now surely this student is correct that they have much to learn about philosophy (don't we all?) and that nothing they say will decisively settle the philosophical matter under consideration. But they are also mistaken, and surely underrating their abilities relative to their peers, if they think that they have nothing worthwhile to contribute to a casual philosophy discussion between fellow students. Even if we sympathize with this student and would prefer to be them rather than their intellectually arrogant counterpart described earlier, they are not intellectually humble. They're intellectually servile. This is the other extreme. We want to hit the mean between these two.

One way to do this in the context of moral disagreement, a way that doesn't involve giving up one's belief in the controversial proposition, is to conciliate to some degree at the level of one's credence without conciliating at the level of one's belief. For example, when Peyton disagrees with Brenna about both v and b, she may exemplify epistemic humility by decreasing, to some degree, her credence in ~v and ~b (as Lackey's and Kelly's respective non-conciliatory views allow) while retaining her all-or-nothing belief in these propositions. On the dualist view about the relation between beliefs and credences, this possibility exists since credences are those more-fine-grained doxastic attitudes that we have that can change even as our all-or-nothing beliefs may not.[12] In decreasing her credences in the disputed propositions, Peyton can show respect for Brenna's intellectual excellence (as intellectual humility plausibly requires) while maintaining her controversial moral belief. To fail to change her doxastic states at all would plausibly constitute intellectual arrogance on Peyton's part, but to fully conciliate at the level of both belief and credence would plausibly constitute intellectual servility. Peyton regards Brenna as an intellectual equal and therefore ought to take Brenna's views into some consideration, but Peyton must also respect her own opinion. After all, Peyton is no fool. She's smart, careful, and otherwise intellectually virtuous too. Thus, Peyton should not easily give up on her own views, which she has formed virtuously (even if not infallibly), as we've assumed.

But some still worry that when an agent retains belief in the face of disagreement with a peer, they are thereby committed to thinking that

they are, or their view is, better, in some sense, than their dissenting interlocutor or their view. But this is also mistaken. Most non-conciliationists about disagreement think that it's possible that both parties to a peer disagreement are fully rational – that neither has made a mistake in assessing the evidence for the disputed proposition. This is because, for all we've said, permissivism may be true (see, e.g., Schoenfield 2014). It may be that, given a proposition, two agents, and a body of evidence, there is more than one permissible doxastic state concerning that proposition for the agents. Thus, it may be that two peers have diverging beliefs without either being guilty of irrationality. Given this possibility, an agent could disagree with a peer and hold onto their belief while also thinking that their peer is rational. They need not think that their own view is uniquely rational. (However, obviously, they must believe that their own view is uniquely true. That just follows from the nature of belief. Believing that p is believing that p is true and ~p is false.) Thus, they need not think that they are a better inquirer than their peer or that their view is rationally better than their peer's. So they may, without arrogance or servility, retain their belief in the face of controversy. This is especially true on the level-splitting view that we've outlined in this chapter, since it is part of our level-splitting story that the agent retaining their belief in the face of controversy recognizes that the considerations as their interlocutor sees them support the view that their interlocutor actually holds.

Finally, let us remember that virtues constrain one another. To see this, consider the moral virtues. It's not benevolent to cut up one innocent person to distribute their organs to three sick people. It's unjust. Justice constrains benevolence. It's not humble for a soldier defending their homeland against a modest force of unjust invaders to drop their weapons and surrender when their side is equally strong or stronger. It's cowardly. Courage constrains humility. It's not compassionate for a doctor to tell a terminally ill patient they're in perfect health to spare them from the unpleasant news. It's dishonest. Honesty constrains compassion.

It is the same with the intellectual virtues. It's not intellectually humble, we suggest, to become agnostic about value, meaning, justice, and the great questions of the moral life simply because there are smart folks out there who disagree.[13] It's (at least potentially) intellectually cowardly. Some moral propositions are worth taking an intellectual risk for. They're worth the risk of believing falsely, or being duped (as William James famously put it)[14] or being mistaken.

Intellectual courage thus permits (or even requires) holding some views about morality in the face of disagreement, which is admittedly intellectually risky. This does not entail, of course, that anything goes – that one can just believe as one pleases. There is such a thing as being intellectually rash too – that is, taking intellectual risks when the risk of being wrong is too great. For example, being exceedingly confident that satisficing-hedonistic-rule utilitarianism (a highly specific form of utilitarianism)

is correct may well be irrational in the face of so much disagreement about it from excellent philosophers. But plausibly it is not irrational to think that some version of consequentialism or some version of non-consequentialism is correct. In any case, our suggestion that intellectual courage permits even humble belief in the face of controversy does not entail that one can believe whatever one pleases and call it intellectual courage. Some moral beliefs in the face of controversy may well be intellectually rash. But not all of them are.

With these thoughts about intellectual humility in mind, let's consider how moral divergence beliefs can help non-conciliationists to exemplify intellectual humility. First, moral divergence beliefs allow non-conciliationists like Peyton to occupy the mean between intellectual arrogance and intellectual humility. In holding the moral divergence belief "~v, but the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by my peer does not support ~v," Peyton avoids the intellectual arrogance and dogmatism often attributed to non-conciliationist views. Peyton is not merely believing ~v, as most non-conciliatory views of disagreement would suggest she do. Including "but the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by my peer does not support ~v," the level-splitting portion of her belief allows her to explicitly call to attention her recognizing some broad overall uncertainty about which considerations bear on V. This recognition of overall uncertainty about the considerations that bear on V (and about the beliefs that stem from these considerations) seems to run counter to charges of dogmatism. And maintaining her belief that ~v in response to learning what Brenna believes allows her to avoid total intellectual servility. It seems that this moral divergence belief thus allows Peyton to occupy the narrow territory of humility, between servility and arrogance.

Further, this moral divergence belief is consistent with both Peyton and Brenna holding rational doxastic attitudes towards v and rational assessments of which considerations bear on V. In holding the belief "~v, but the set of V-bearing considerations as understood by my peer does not support ~v," Peyton is not in any way implying that Brenna's beliefs and assessment of which considerations bear on V are less than fully rational or that Peyton's belief is more or less rational than Brenna's. Finally, we have not argued that it is always rational or in keeping with intellectual humility for non-conciliationists to hold moral divergence beliefs. Sometimes we will find that intellectual courage and humility are overruled by concerns about intellectual rashness, and it will no longer be intellectually virtuous for us to maintain our assessment of the moral (im)permissiblity of an act and the considerations that determine that (im)permissibility. But a similar provision is already present, as we have noted in the previous section, within non-conciliatory views. Non-conciliatory views hold only that it is sometimes rational for individuals to hold onto belief in response to peer disagreement. Similarly, we argue that it is sometimes rational and intellectually virtuous for non-conciliationists to hold moral divergence beliefs in response to peer disagreements like **Veganism**.

5 Conclusion

Moral disagreement among both folk and moral philosophers is widespread and entrenched, and this isn't going to change any time soon. It sometimes appears that refusing to conciliate in response to this widespread disagreement is dogmatic. We think that this view is mistaken and have tried to show why. When agents disagree both about a moral question and the considerations that bear on that question (as often happens), they can rationally hold a kind of level-splitting belief in a way that permits non-conciliationists to humbly retain their beliefs in the controversial moral proposition. Indeed, if what we've argued is correct, retaining one's moral beliefs in the face of disagreement may, far from being intellectually vicious, exemplify moral courage, an oft-overlooked virtue of the mind needed in our current epistemic climate, where epistemic dangers – in the form of disagreement from excellent philosophers – lurk around every corner.

Notes

1. Thanks to Catherine Elgin, Branden Fitelson, Charity Anderson, Richard Atkins, the audience at the 2018 Significance of Higher-Order Evidence Conference in Cologne, Brian Barnett, and Michael Klenk for helpful comments and suggestions. Earlier versions of portions of this chapter appeared in Turnbull (2019, ch. 4).
2. We will use *attitude* or *doxastic attitude* to refer to the range of full or coarse-grained doxastic attitudes such as belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgement and to degreed attitudes, including credences.
3. This view that learning of peer disagreement provides one with higher-order evidence is widely accepted in related discussions. But see Risberg & Tersman (this volume) for an argument that disagreement provides one not with higher-order evidence but with an undercutting defeater.
4. We will use the capitalized *V* to refer to the act of eating nonhuman animals and the lowercase *v* later to refer to proposition v: *eating nonhuman animals is permissible*.
5. Although Elga's (2007, 493–4) account of peerhood will dismiss these individuals as epistemic peers, we are operating under a looser, non-idealized understanding of peerhood, on which peer disagreement is something that individuals encounter relatively frequently. As we understand the term, peers may not share the same evidence and identical reasoning powers, but it is nevertheless rational for them to view each other as roughly intellectual equals. Peers, on our account, share at least similar bodies of evidence and similar reasoning powers. This might seem to give us "non-conciliationism on the cheap," since by removing the requirement that individuals share all of the same evidence, we are allowing the possibility that individuals may disagree in part because they hold different bodies of evidence. But we are assuming, not arguing for non-conciliationism. If it turns out that most philosophers are non-conciliationists in non-idealized contexts in which agents do not hold identical sets of evidence, so much the better for the broader applicability of our argument that level-splitting beliefs can be useful to non-conciliationists. Thanks to Brian Barnett for helpful comments on this point.
6. Some philosophers, so-called moral testimony pessimists, have argued that there is something distinctively problematic, either morally or epistemically,

about deferring to the testimony of others on matters of morality. If this is correct, then perhaps one is not rationally required to revise one's doxastic attitudes in the face of moral disagreement – that is, conflicting moral testimony. We assume here, however, that pessimism is not correct. For a further exploration of this issue, see Lee, Sinclair, and Robson (this volume).

7. In addition, the possibility of rational level-splitting beliefs in response to receiving moral divergence evidence in its extraneous evidence role is less obvious, for various reasons that we don't have space here to detail.
8. Just when it will be rational for her to do so will depend on the particular non-conciliationist view she holds. For example, according to Lackey's (2010) justificationist view, she must have a high degree of justified confidence that ~v and that S does not bear on V as well as certain symmetry breakers that disrupt her perception of equality between her epistemic position with respect to v and Brenna's epistemic positions with respect to v.
9. For an excellent overview of the literature on intellectual humility, see Whitcomb et al. (2017).
10. We don't intend for this to be a definition, or an analysis, of intellectual humility. It's meant only as a rough characterization to help us get a grip on something that we hope we recognize pretheoretically.
11. It was Eric.
12. For more on belief-credence dualism and its applications in epistemology, see Jackson (2019).
13. And let's be clear: there are plenty of smart folks out there who disagree. There are excellent philosophers on almost all sides of almost all morally important questions. If you're thinking, "Yeah, but no one thinks slavery or wanton torture is permissible," that's no doubt true. But there are plenty who think that neither is wrong. They're called error theorists. And though they are not well represented in metaethics, they are much better represented among philosophers more generally. This is for the same reason that there are few atheists in philosophy of religion: if you think the whole enterprise is bunk, you're less likely to go into the field.
14. See James (1897 [1979]).

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