

# Faith and Liberalism

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Let *rationalism* name the view that no doxastic attitude is epistemically permissible unless based on reasons. Let *liberalism* name the view that when different people embrace a plurality of incompatible worldviews, their adherents should be allowed to maintain their commitments to their own worldviews, but also required to be tolerant of the commitments of others, in other words, as Rawls writes in *Political Liberalism*, we should recognize and tolerate “a plurality of reasonable yet incompatible comprehensive [moral and philosophical] doctrines.”<sup>1</sup> The explicit epistemological content of liberalism can be captured by the following claim (hereafter ‘liberalism’): that it is possible for two people, who have the same evidence, where one who believes  $p$ , and the other  $\sim p$ , to recognize each other as rational in their respective beliefs (as well as in the genesis of their beliefs). The (tentative) thesis of this paper is that rationalism and epistemic liberalism are incompatible.<sup>2</sup>

This is because there is a *prima facie* tension in liberalism. In the sort of case that liberalism says is possible, there is both a *requirement of tolerance*: to recognize the other party as rational in her belief (and its genesis), as well as a *requirement of conviction*: to maintain your own belief. But at first glance these appear to be impossible to fulfill at once; if I believe  $p$ , then how can I avoid thinking that those who believe  $\sim p$ , and who have the same evidence that I have, are *irrational*, with respect of their belief that  $\sim p$ ? My options seem to be intolerance or suspension of judgment. Richard Feldman has recently revived a Pyhrronian argument against liberalism which embraces this second option.<sup>3</sup> The argument is unsound, so I shall argue, but its basic idea still presents a compelling

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<sup>1</sup> Rawls 1996 p. xviii; I follow Charles Larmore in distinguishing *pluralism* (the view that there are multiple, and potentially conflicting, sources of value) and liberalism; see Chapter 7 of Larmore 1996. Liberalism is a (first-order) view about what people ought to do and think. Pluralism is a view about the sources of normativity.

<sup>2</sup> I don’t mean logically incompatible. What I mean is: there is no plausible way of defending them both.

<sup>3</sup> See Feldman 2005, 2006, and forthcoming.

challenge for the liberal: how can I recognize you as being *rational* in your belief that  $\sim p$ , when I believe  $p$ , and we have the same evidence? This will be §1.

One way – and what I will argue is the only plausible way – to make sense of this possibility is to reject rationalism, and maintain that some beliefs may be permissible even though not based on reasons. In particular, we can vindicate liberalism if we accept a class of groundless beliefs that serve as principles of evidence – i.e. which in part determine the rational response to the evidence, for a person. Beliefs of this kind will be, in a sense significant for liberalism, outside of the space of rational inquiry and criticism. But given their role as principles of evidence, recognition of a difference in these *basic convictions* makes possible cases of disagreement in which there is mutual recognition of rationality. This will be §2.

Is there any other way to vindicate liberalism? I present some reasons to doubt that there is. I then argue that Thomas Kelly’s alternative (rationalist) account of the epistemic significance of disagreement can’t do the job. I conclude, tentatively, that only the anti-rationalist view described in §2 can do the job, and therefore that liberalism and rationalism are incompatible. This will be §3.

## **1. Liberalism: an argument against it, and a challenge**

The idea that mutually recognized rational disagreement is impossible goes back at least as far as Sextus Empiricus, who wrote:

According to the mode deriving from dispute, we find that undecidable dissension about the matter proposed has come about both in ordinary life and among philosophers. Because of this we are not able either to choose or to rule out anything, and we end up with suspension of judgment.<sup>4</sup>

Richard Feldman offers a more explicit formulation of (something like) this line of reasoning in his recent papers on disagreement. I’m going to set out the argument in my own terms, and a bit more explicitly than Feldman does. First

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<sup>4</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism* Book I, §165

some terminology. I will say that a proposition is *disputed* when there exist two people, who are (roughly) equally rational and who have (roughly) the same relevant evidence, where one believes  $p$  and the other believes  $\sim p$ . These people are each *a party to a dispute over  $p$* . The best version of Feldman's argument goes like this.<sup>5</sup> Suppose you believe  $p$ , and learn that you are party to a dispute over  $p$ . This should make you doubtful that your belief that  $p$  is justified. If you are an evidentialist, this is so because you should be doubtful that, in this case, it is *you* (and not the other party) who has assessed the evidence correctly. If you are a reliabilist, this is so because you should be doubtful that it is you (and not the other party) whose faculties are, in this case, functioning properly. In general, your thought should be: it's either me or the other party who is making a mistake in believing that  $p$  (or  $\sim p$ ). I don't have any way of knowing which one of us it is. So I shall suspend judgment about which one of us is justified in her belief that  $p$  (or  $\sim p$ ).

This, Feldman argues, should make you doubtful about  $p$  – in other words, you should suspend judgment with respect of  $p$  – for to maintain your belief that  $p$  at that point would require you to believe the following: “I believe  $p$ , but I suspend judgment about whether my belief that  $p$  is justified.” And that is “surely very odd.”<sup>6</sup> Feldman concludes that when you are party to a dispute over  $p$ , you must suspend judgment with respect of  $p$ . Here is a more exact formulation of the argument:

- (1) If you are a party to a dispute over  $p$ , you ought to suspend judgment with respect of the proposition that you are justified in your belief that  $p$ . Call this the **Humility Principle (HP)**.
- (2) If you suspend judgment with respect of the proposition that you are justified in your belief that  $p$ , you ought to suspend judgment with respect of  $p$ .

*Therefore:*

- (3) If you are a party to a dispute over  $p$ , you ought to suspend judgment with respect of  $p$ .

The first premise is appealing. Consider the fact that someone who takes herself to be justified in her belief that  $p$  will invariably be someone who takes herself to

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<sup>5</sup> See Feldman 2005, pp. 108-10, and 2006, pp. 232-3

<sup>6</sup> Feldman 2006, p. 233, see also 2005, p. 105 and pp. 108-110

*know* that  $p$  is true. I think it is hard to deny that it is illegitimate to take yourself to *know* that you are right, and that the other party is wrong, even though you recognize that you are no more rational than her, and have no evidence that she lacks. Anyone who knows she is party to a dispute over  $p$  should on that basis be uncertain whether she really is justified in her belief that  $p$ . In other words, HP is true.

Feldman's argument is clearly valid. And (2) *appears* to be a consequence of the following plausible principle:

**Anti-Dogmatism Principle (ADP):** If your belief that  $p$  is unjustified, then you ought not believe  $p$ .

However, (2) is not equivalent to this principle. We can interpret ADP in either of two ways: as prescriptive (as a guide for belief formation) or as descriptive (as telling us under what conditions someone has violated her epistemic responsibilities). Compare another principle: 'If someone needs your help, then you ought to help her.' On a descriptive interpretation, this says: 'You have done something you ought not to have done if you fail to help someone who needs you help, *regardless of whether you were aware of the fact that she needed your help, i.e. regardless of whether you believed that she needed your help.*' On a prescriptive interpretation, it says: 'You have done something you ought not to have done if you *knowingly* fail to help someone who needs your help, *i.e. if you believed that she needed your help, and didn't do anything.*' We should interpret ADP in this second, prescriptive way, as saying that you have done something wrong if you believe  $p$  and believe that your belief that  $p$  is unjustified. But ADP does not say that you have done something wrong if you merely believe  $p$  while not believing that your belief that  $p$  is justified. The proper interpretation of ADP, in other words, is not (2), but:

(2\*) If you believe your belief that  $p$  is unjustified, then you ought not believe  $p$ .

Or, as Chisholm puts it:

One may object, "But it is unreasonable to proceed if you do not think you are justified in proceeding!" The answer is, of course, that *that* is not unreasonable. What *is* unreasonable is to proceed

when you think that you are *not* justified in proceeding. And from the fact that you do *not* think you *are* justified, it does not follow that you do think that you are not justified.<sup>7</sup>

Once we see that (2\*) is the proper reading of ADP, we are free to reject (2). And the skeptical argument is invalid if (2) is replaced by (2\*). Disagreement gives me reason to suspend judgment with respect of whether my belief that *p* is justified, not reason to think that my belief is unjustified. Feldman's argument, therefore, is unsound.

But this will not buy us much, when it comes to vindicating liberalism. Recall the two liberal requirements of tolerance and conviction. Chisholm's point saves the requirement of conviction, against Feldman's argument in favor of suspension of judgment. But we have conceded a claim that seems to spell doom for the requirement of tolerance – that when you are party to a dispute over *p*, you should suspend judgment about whether your belief that *p* is justified. Presumably, we should say the same about your attitude towards the other party's belief that  $\sim p$ ; you should suspend judgment about whether her belief is justified, too. Isn't this incompatible with the possibility of the case we set out to defend the possibility of, in which both parties recognize each other as rational in their respective beliefs?

It isn't. We need to distinguish between a belief's being *rational* and its being *justified*. Rationality is a matter of believing (and being disposed to believe) in ways that are appropriate for you, given your evidence, i.e. it is a matter of properly responding to reasons. The *rational response to the evidence, for S*, is the appropriate doxastic attitude for S to take, given her evidence. Responding rationally involves both basing one's beliefs properly and being sensitive to defeating evidence. *S's doxastic attitude with respect of p is rational* iff her attitude is the rational response to the evidence, for her, and is properly based on her evidence.<sup>8</sup> *S's belief that p is irrational* iff the rational response to the

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<sup>7</sup> Chisholm 1989, p. []. See also Harman's distinction between the 'Principle of Positive Undermining' and the 'Principle of Negative Undermining', Harman 1986, pp. 38-40. Harman appeals to the distinction for quite different reasons than those that motivate Chisholm and myself.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the notion of well-foundedness explicated in Feldman and Conee 2004

evidence for S is belief that  $\sim p$ . Above I spoke of the *genesis* of a person's belief being rational (or not). In the case of a belief based on other beliefs (and this will be the only kind of case that concerns us here), a *belief has a rational genesis* iff the beliefs on which it is based are rational.

Note that the notion of rational belief is defined relative to a person. In general the rational response to my evidence depends on what I already believe. The sound of rustling in the bushes outside my window may bring me to believe that a burglar is trying to break into the house, if earlier I saw a suspicious man, wearing a ski mask, peering at my house through binoculars from across the street. The same sound may bring me to believe that my gardener is trimming the verge, if I know that this is the day and time of day that he usually works in my yard.

So the rational response to the evidence, for me, is determined, in part, by my other beliefs. At least in some cases, this is the case regardless of the epistemic status of my other beliefs. Imagine that, as a boy, I came to believe that the battle of Midway took place in 1941, because I knew my grandfather was fighting in the Pacific in 1941 and I romanticized the battle of Midway. But over a period of time I stop romanticizing the battle, and learn that my grandfather never fought in the Pacific; I even forget that I ever romanticized the battle, and that I ever thought that my grandfather fought in the Pacific. I still believe that the battle took place in 1941. I don't have any evidence against this, and (like most of my beliefs about such matters) I don't know where I got the information. Then one day I read in a history book that one of the planes used in the battle was the Grumman Wildcat, and from this that the Grumman Wildcat was active in 1941. My belief is rational, given what I already believe.<sup>9</sup> But intuitively, it is not epistemically justified, given its vicious origin. What this shows is that we must distinguish between rational belief, on the one hand, and epistemically justified belief, on the other. My belief in this case is rational, but it is not epistemically

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Harman 1986, pp. 33-35

justified. It does not amount to knowledge, even if it turns out to be true, and *justified belief* is belief that amounts to knowledge, if true.<sup>10</sup>

For the moment our question is this: given the notions of rational belief and justified belief offered here, on what conception of epistemic justification is the distinction between rational belief and justified belief *not* warranted?

It would not be warranted on *evidentialism*: the view that S's belief that *p* is epistemically justified iff S's belief that *p* is based on evidence that makes belief that *p* appropriate, i.e. justified iff rational. But it is not obvious what someone committed to evidentialism would have to say about the story above. Intuitively, there is *something* defective about my belief. If the evidentialist wishes to say that my belief that the Wildcat was active in 1941 is justified, then she should accordingly present us with *some* evaluative epistemic concept on which my belief gets a negative evaluation. If, on the other hand, she wishes to say that my belief is unjustified, she will have to say that I was wrong to characterize my belief as the rational response to my evidence, and since there is intuitively something *right* about my belief, in this case, she will owe us some evaluative epistemic concept on which my beliefs gets a *positive* evaluation. The upshot here is that *some* distinction is going to be needed, even if it is not the distinction I prefer – between rational and justified belief. It seems to me, however, that a *non-evidentialist* theory of justification can offer a perspicuous account of the case: my belief is unjustified, given its origin, but rational, given my evidence (and what I already believe).

So even if I must suspend judgment about whether your belief is justified, when we are party to a dispute, it remains possible that I might recognize your belief as rational, for you. We are left, therefore, with a challenge for liberalism: how can two people, who have the same evidence, where one person believes *p* and the other  $\sim p$ , be rational in their respective beliefs? And how might they coherently recognize this?

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<sup>10</sup> Orthodoxy holds that Gettier cases are cases of justified true belief that does not amount to knowledge. For a critique of that view, see Weatherson 2003.

## 2. Faith: a foundation for tolerant disagreement

In this section I'm going to describe an epistemological view, and then argue that *if* this view is correct, we can vindicate the requirement of tolerance – and therefore liberalism. The view I have in mind was first proposed by Reid, importantly amended by Wittgenstein, developed further by Crispin Wright, and defended by me elsewhere. In the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785) Reid enumerates a set of “first principles,” propositions such as: that everything of which I am conscious exists, that memory is reliable, that sense perception is reliable, that human beings have “some degree of power over our actions, and the determinations of our will,”<sup>11</sup> and that “certain features of the countenance, sounds of the voice, and gestures of the body, indicate certain thoughts and dispositions of mind.”<sup>12</sup> In most disputes, “the process by which the truth of a proposition is discovered, or its falsehood detected, is, by shewing its necessary connection with first principles, or its repugnancy to them.”<sup>13</sup> First principles, then, serve as a kind of standard in reasoning about the truth and falsity of propositions that are not first principles – conformity with first principles is a reason in favor of a proposition; incompatibility a reason against. It is clear from Reid's discussion of first principles that they are not, for a typical person, based on reasons.<sup>14</sup> On the contrary, our commitment to first principles provides a normative framework for our reasoning, as “it is in vain to reason with a man who denies the first principles upon which the reasoning is grounded.”<sup>15</sup>

A similar position appears in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* (1969), where it is maintained that certainties such as ‘I have two hands’, ‘I have never been to the moon’, and ‘The future will resemble the past’ are to be distinguished from ordinary “empirical propositions.”<sup>16</sup> The aforementioned certainties are “exempt

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<sup>11</sup> Reid 1983, p. 273

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 279

<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that “there are certain ways of reasoning even about them, by which those that are just and solid may be confirmed.” (Ibid. p. 258)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 260

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 257

<sup>16</sup> Wittgenstein 1969.



from doubt,”<sup>17</sup> and play a special role in our system of believing, reasoning, and responding to evidence. These certainties “have a *peculiar logical role* in the system of our empirical propositions,”<sup>18</sup> constituting a “substratum for all my enquiring and asserting,”<sup>19</sup> an “inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false,”<sup>20</sup> a “frame of reference,”<sup>21</sup> or a “scaffolding” for my thoughts.<sup>22</sup> For Wittgenstein, as for Reid, these privileged certainties serve as principles of evidence:

It strikes me as if someone who doubts the existence of the earth at that time is impugning the nature of all historical evidence.<sup>23</sup>

If someone doubted whether the earth had existed a hundred years ago, I should not understand, for *this* reason: I would not know what such a person would still allow to be counted as evidence and what not.<sup>24</sup>

However, while Reid confesses a “hope” that the “honest part of mankind may be brought to unanimity when they happen to differ about first principles,” and claims that first principles tend to be universally believed, Wittgenstein was (in my estimation) more realistic – there may be intractable and widespread difference in “hinges.”<sup>25</sup> On the view I’m considering, I am blameless in maintaining certain of my beliefs – including beliefs in propositions which other reasonable people reject – because these beliefs count as “hinges” or “first principles.” I’ll call these *basic convictions*; S’s belief that *p* is a basic conviction iff (i) S’s belief that *p* is not based on reasons, and (ii) S believes *p* to at least as high a degree as any *q* which entails (or inductively supports) *p*.<sup>26</sup>

Are basic convictions ever epistemically permissible? (Obviously, in one sense, namely the evidentialist sense, they are never permissible.) The view I

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. §341

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. §136

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. §83

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. §94

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. §162

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. §211

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. §188

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. §231

<sup>25</sup> See Ibid. §92, §106, §239, §264, and §609-612

<sup>26</sup> See Ibid. §111, §307, and Moore 1993, p. 78

want to put on the table makes provision for a point about defeaters: no belief that  $p$  is permissible if the believer has defeating evidence that makes belief that  $p$  irrational for her. That view is:

**Permissible Basic Convictions (PBC):**  $S$ 's basic conviction that  $p$  is epistemically permissible iff  $S$  doesn't possess evidence that makes belief that  $p$  irrational for her.

There are a variety of views we might take concerning the genesis of basic convictions, and we might take a different view (or combination of views) of different convictions. Some may be 'hardwired' or 'innate', in other words, irresistible because of my human nature. Others may be the result of being raised a certain way; these beliefs are irresistible not because of natural 'hardwiring', but because of cultural or social 'softwiring', or perhaps the result of other contingencies that led (causally, not by some chain of reasoning) to their formation.

The claim I set out to defend was that if PBC is true, then we can meet the challenge to liberalism described in §1. How is this supposed to go? Imagine that you and I disagree about something – I think the tariff legislation should be adopted, you think it shouldn't. What would it take for this to be a case in which we disagree, but recognize each other as rational in our beliefs? Recall the point made above: the rational response to the evidence, for me, depends on what I already believe. In this respect a basic conviction is just like any other belief, only more so. Basic convictions stand apart from the rest of a person's beliefs in terms of both the way and the extent to which they determine the rational response to evidence, for her. First, since basic convictions are themselves not based on evidence, their role as principles of evidence is *fundamental* in a way that the role of other beliefs is not. Other firmly held beliefs of mine make a difference when it comes to how I ought to interpret my evidence, but because these other beliefs are themselves based on evidence, their status as difference-makers is importantly derivative. Second, since I believe the contents of my basic convictions with at least as high a level of confidence as I believe anything that might serve as a ground for them, their role as principles of evidence is *ultimate* in a way that the

role of other beliefs is not. (See my reply to Feldman's objection, below.) The key point, at present, is that a difference in basic convictions may make for a difference in the rational response to evidence.

Therefore, it will be possible that I can recognize our dispute as resulting from a difference in basic convictions. For example, imagine that among your basic convictions (and not mine) is the principle "An individual's liberty should never be violated," and among mine (and not yours) is the principle "Inequality is an unnecessary evil." Imagine further that we come to recognize that your opposition to the tariff legislation is based on the fact (which we both recognize) that the legislation involves a violation of liberty, and my endorsement of it is based on the fact (which we both recognize) that inequality will persist unless the legislation is adopted. Although I do not share your basic conviction, I don't think that you are *irrational* to have it – simply because basic convictions, according to the view we're considering, are not based on reasons. Given PBC, I can recognize your basic conviction as epistemically permissible. It is clear that, given all this, I can take your belief that the legislation shouldn't be adopted to be rational. But – and here is how we resolve the tension between the requirement of tolerance and the permission of conviction – in recognizing that it is rational for you to oppose the legislation, I am not forced to conclude that it would be rational for *me* to oppose it. The relativity of the concept of rational belief, in other words, makes possible the mutual recognition of incompatible, but equally rational, responses to the same evidence. If I learn that your belief that  $\sim p$  is rational for you, given your basic commitment that  $q$ , and I am aware that my belief that  $p$  is rational for me, given my basic commitment that  $r$ , then I can consistently maintain my belief that  $p$ , while conceding that you are rational in your belief that  $\sim p$ . In this way, recognizing and confronting disagreement and difference results in an increase in our knowledge – both of ourselves and of others.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Note that this proposal satisfies liberalism's requirement that both parties recognize each other's belief as having a rational genesis, since the beliefs on which we base our "disputed" belief, in this case, are shared, and so mutually granted to be rational (so we can easily imagine).

Feldman objects to this proposal on the grounds that “once these [basic convictions] are brought out into the open, they are every bit as open to rational scrutiny as anything else is.”<sup>28</sup> But this is precisely what the view described here denies – basic convictions serve to *determine* what beliefs are rational, but are themselves not an appropriate object for rational scrutiny. The question that Feldman says will arise, of whose basic convictions are better supported by the evidence, is a non sequitor. The permissibility of basic convictions does not depend on an evidential basis – *if* PBC is correct.<sup>29</sup>

### 3. There’s no other way to vindicate liberalism

Liberalism is committed to the possibility that two people with the same evidence might adopt different doxastic attitudes with respect of the same proposition. I just described a non-rationalist view which makes sense of this idea. In this section I’ll describe two ways a rationalist might try to say the same thing, and explain why I think they are not promising. Then I’ll discuss a proposal from Thomas Kelly, opposed to Feldman’s skeptical conclusion, and explain why it won’t help liberalism.

An obvious route for the rationalist would be to adopt some of the elements of the view described in §2, in particular the idea that the rational response to evidence, for a person, is determined by her background beliefs. This idea didn’t depend on the possibility of permissible groundless beliefs. But while this is a way of vindicating the idea that I may recognize your belief that *p* is rational, it is not a way of vindicating the idea that I may recognize your belief as having a rational *genesis*. Consider the case that motivated the idea that the rational response to evidence is relative to a person’s background beliefs – the case of my belief that the Wildcat was active in 1941. Although the rationalist can recognize this belief as rational, she *cannot* recognize as rational a belief upon which this belief is based – the belief that Midway was fought in 1941. This is for the simple

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<sup>28</sup> Feldman 2006, p. 226

<sup>29</sup> I defend PBC and the view of basic convictions described here in Hazlett 2006, and in “Faith,” which is in preparation.

reason that *that* belief, by hypothesis, is not based on any (good) reason. So adopting this strategy would be a very limited victory for the rationalist, and would, more importantly, be of limited application when it comes to the kinds of disputes (over morality, religion, and the good life) which matter for liberalism. The rationalist will be forced to concede the spirit of Feldman's objection to the view described in §2 – that once the relevant commitments, that lie at the heart of our dispute, are “out in the open,” they too will be subject to rational scrutiny – on pain of regress, one party is always going to end up being deemed irrational at *some* level. This is so, unless we admit the possibility of permissible beliefs without evidence, i.e. unless we deny rationalism.

Another route would be to maintain that parties to a dispute *with the same background beliefs* may both be rational in their responses to the evidence. The rationalist might claim that the beliefs that I have characterized as basic convictions are better characterized as rational responses to some body of evidence – a body of evidence that allows for a plurality of rational responses. My reply to this suggestion is that the rationalist is now forced to do violence to our notions of evidence and rationality. I am in agreement with the basic idea of Roger White's argument in favor of a “Uniqueness Thesis”<sup>30</sup>; the version I would endorse is the following:

**Uniqueness given Background Beliefs:** For someone with background beliefs  $b_1 \dots b_n$ , there is a unique rational attitude she can take with respect of any proposition, given a body of evidence.<sup>31</sup>

If the rationalist chooses to deny this principle, she has jettisoned an idea crucial to our ordinary conceptions of evidence and rationality. Better to jettison the link between epistemic permission and rationality affirmed by rationalism. The upshot: rationality is not as important as it is often taken to be.

Thomas Kelly has proposed a rival view of disagreement, on which the fact that I am party to a dispute over  $p$  is not sufficient reason for me to suspend

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<sup>30</sup> See White 2005

<sup>31</sup> Note that this may include the person's background beliefs that may not all be rational.

judgment with respect of *p*. His strategy is to reject Feldman's first premise: the Humility Principle. The reason this is plausible, Kelly argues, is that:

[T]he question of how well someone has evaluated the evidence with respect to a given question is certainly the kind of consideration that is relevant to deciding whether his or her judgment ought to be credited with respect to that question. [...] From my vantage point ... it is just this undeniably relevant difference that divides us on this particular occasion. [I can conclude, therefore,] that you have misjudged the probative force of the evidence.<sup>32</sup>

This conclusion, however, is "consistent with my continuing to regard you as an epistemic peer," where an "epistemic peer" is my equal with respect of exposure to the evidence, and "with respect to general epistemic virtues such as intelligence, thoughtfulness, and freedom from bias."<sup>33</sup> But this is irrelevant to the question of whether liberalism is true, as defined. For what the requirement of tolerance requires is not only that I recognize the other party (to a dispute over *p*) as rational *in general*, but rational *in her attitude with respect of p*. This is precisely what Kelly's proposal denies – he avoids Feldman's conclusion (and so saves the permission of conviction), but at the price of abandoning the requirement of tolerance.

Given the difficulties facing a rationalist vindication of liberalism, and the success of the proposal described in §2 in vindicating liberalism, I conclude, tentatively, that liberalism and rationalism are incompatible. Conventional wisdom has it that faith – belief without reasons – lays the ground for fundamentalism and Fascism, and that liberalism is a philosophy for those who embrace the sanction of reason as the only legitimate source of epistemic justification. I think this could not be further from the truth. Faith makes possible the tolerant recognition of reasonable disagreement that is the cornerstone of liberalism. The rationalist alternative, which rejects the possibility of rational difference based on groundless basic convictions, seems to me to require the rejection of the possibility of rational difference. This suggests that only one

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<sup>32</sup> Kelly 2005, p. 179

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 175

worldview, among the diverse multitude of actual worldviews, is rational – and *that* is an epistemology fit for the aforementioned illiberal ideologies.

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