UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Empathy, Open-Mindedness and Virtue in Argumentation

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Philosophy

by

Jonathan Anthony Caravello

Committee in charge:

Professor Aaron Zimmerman, Chair

Professor Kevin Falvey

Professor Voula Tsouna

June 2018

The dissertation of Jonathan Anthony Caravello is approved.

_____

Voula Tsouna

_____

Kevin Falvey

_____

Aaron Zimmerman Committee Chair

June 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a dissertation took a significant psychological toll on me, but I would be lying if I said that the burden was my own. I would like to thank every person who helped me in developing my thoughts and supporting me throughout this endeavor.

Since a young age I have been interested in argument (just ask my Mom), which lead me to pursue what I considered to be the deeper questions about the world. I entered college at ASU with the hope of becoming a theoretical astrophysicist. But there were two factors that turned me off once I began my studies. First, I was not pleased with the culture of the discipline. Too often would professors wave off my questions as irrelevant to learning the techniques being taught. "Once you master these techniques," they would say, "you will be in a better place and you will better understand why I cannot answer your questions." Although there is some truth to what they said, I realized later that the reason my questions seemed out of place was because they were philosophical in nature. There were exceptions: Dr. Treacy and Dr. Lebed helped me immensely. Second, my fellow peers suffered from a deep and misguided close-mindedness concerning philosophical concerns. This, for me, was a breaking point. How could I investigate the deepest questions about the world when the space I occupied was full of stubborn interlocutors? Again, there were exceptions: Katie and Lauren, to be specific.

Now, don't get me wrong, there is plenty of stubbornness in philosophy as well. But at the very least, philosophers seemed to be directing their attention toward what really mattered and their practice reflected this. Unlike in my experience in physics, philosophers didn't stubbornly laugh at my concerns, even if they often stubbornly criticized them. Sometimes that stubborn criticism is exactly what I needed – thanks Thad Botham! – but acceptance and understanding were and continue to be what I need. Thad was not only critical, he was understanding and a huge reason why I was accepted into the PhD program at UCSB. Others that were of immense help at ASU, include professors Cheshire Calhoun, Stephen Reynolds, Brad Armendt, and Angel Pinilos, and my fellow classmate Zach Horne. Thank you also to Travis and Jenni for being model graduate students for me, giving me a taste of what was to come.

Thanks to my high school teacher Mr. Schiesser and junior high teacher Ms. Eddy, who shone through the bullshit as beacons of hope. Thank you Aaron Zimmerman for being my mentor and my friend. Thank you Tony Brueckner for showing me how philosophy doesn't have to be stressful to be impactful. Thank you Kevin Falvey for entertaining some of my wilder ideas. Thank you Voula Tsouna for reminding me that there's more to life than academic philosophy. Thank you Tony Anderson, Sonny Elizondo, Nathan Salmon, Teresa Robertson, Dan Korman, Michael Rescorla, Chris McMahon, Matthew Hanser, Tom Holden, and any others I'm forgetting for being welcoming and giving me space to grow as a thinker and philosopher.

Thank you to my partner, Sarah Aspell, who has been my foundation when the floor beneath me was moving. She has somehow cut through the tangled mess of mind to swing me into a more peaceful side of myself. Thank you to my family and friends who put up with my philosophical tinkering for so long: my mom Dolores, my uncle Pat, my twin brother Pat, my older brother Mike, his kids Mikey and Abby, my older sister Carina and her husband John, their kids John, Cali, Dominick, and Brooklyn.

Thank you most of all to my fellow graduate students, who I could not have lived without. Dillon: thank you for opening up and being my partner in philosophy for so long. I learned more through talking to you than I have from anything else in my entire life. Our bond is limitless, even when we disagree. Thank you Jason, Tim, Matt, David, Kyle, Daniel, Sherri, Jenna, Julianna, Jeongyu, Alex, Alex, Josh, Phil, Jenessa, Austin, Matt Peterson, Brian, CC, Jason, Jason, Augi, Damien, Blake, Zach, Dan, Keith, Rick, Rob, David Spewak, and any others I've missed.

I dedicate this dissertation to anyone and everyone who has ever felt isolated from the world, from others, or from themselves.

VITA OF JONATHAN ANTHONY CARAVELLO
Month 2018

Areas of Specialization

Epistemology, Ethics (broadly construed)

Areas of Competence:

Action Theory, Critical Thinking, Moral Psychology

Education

University of California Santa Barbara 2010-Present

- M.A. 2014
- Ph.D. 2018

Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona: B.A. in Philosophy 2010
Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona: B.A. in Physics 2010

Dissertation

Empathy, Open-Mindedness and Virtue in Argumentation

How should we respond when someone challenges the very norms we assume when evaluating arguments? I contest a widely-accepted dogmatist answer according to which we can justly assert or rely on foundational norms or principles even when we know our interlocutors reject them. I go on to develop a virtue-theoretic approach to argumentation, highlighting the central role played by open-mindedness and related virtues in distinguishing good from bad arguments. The resulting theory elucidates the pragmatic nature of argumentative circularity, offers normative guidance for those looking to improve their discursive behavior, and makes some progress towards resolving ongoing debates over the proper response to peer disagreement.

Committee: Aaron Zimmerman (chair), Kevin Falvey, and Voula Tsouna

Awards and Honors

UCHRI Multi-Campus Graduate Working Group Award	2016 - 2017
UCSB Dissertation (Diversity) Fellowship	2015 - 2016
Aida and Philip Siff Award for Best Essay	2015 - 2016
UCHRI Multi-Campus Graduate Working Group Award	2015 - 2016
SIOP Grant	2015
Steven L. Humphrey Fellowship, University of California Santa Barbara	2010 - 2011

Teaching Experience

Instructorships and Adjunct Faculty Positions: (University of California Santa Barbara): Designed syllabi, exams and assignments for both lower and upper division courses, consisting of approximately 50-240 students; conducted 2-3 lectures per week; held office hours; maintained course website; supervised 1-4 teaching assistants.

- THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE
- CRITICAL THINKING
- INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY
- WRITING 2: ACADEMIC WRITING (25 students, no teaching assistants)

Teaching Assistantships: (University of California Santa Barbara) Conducted two discussion sections per week for 50-70 lower and upper division students; held office hours; led review sessions; graded assignments and exams.

- Philosophy of Mind (Winter 2014)
- Intro to Philosophy(Winter2013)
- Philosophy of Religion (Fall 2012)
- Philosophy of Mind (Spring 2012)
- Theory of Knowledge (Winter 2012)
- Introduction to Ethics (Fall 2011)
- Theory of Knowledge (Summer 2011)
- Metaphysics (Spring 2011)
- Theory of Knowledge (Winter 2011)
- Introduction to Ethics (Fall 2010)
- Philosophy of Mind (Summer 2010)
- Critical Thinking (Spring 2010)
- Introduction to Ethics (Winter 2010)
- Introduction to Philosophy (Fall 2013)

Graduate Courses
***Indicates Audited Courses**

University of California Santa Barbara 2010-Present

Topics in Philosophy of Mind | Rescorla
Hellenistic Philosophy | Tsouna
Seminar in Epistemology | Zimmerman
Philosophy of Space and Time | Humphrey
Intermediate Symbolic Logic | Anderson
Seminar in Epistemology | Brueckner
Contemporary Philosophy | Salmon
Seminar on Hume | Holden
Meta-Ethics | Hanser
Seminar in Philosophy of Mind | Falvey
Meaning and Reference | Salmon
Seminar in Ethics | Hanser
Historical Philosophers | Zimmerman
*Seminar in Epistemology | Brueckner
*Seminar in Philosophy of Language | Salmon
*Seminar in Epistemology | Brueckner
*Topics in Theory of Knowledge | Rescorla
*Seminar in Philosophy of Language | Salmon
*Seminar in History of Philosophy | Tsouna
*Seminar in Philosophy of Language | Rescorla
*Seminar in Philosophy of Mind | Falvey
*Seminar in Philosophy of Mind | Rescorla
*Seminar in Epistemology | Zimmerman

Arizona State University 2006-2010

Seminar in Philosophy of Emotion | Cheshire Calhoun

ABSTRACT

Empathy, Open-Mindedness and Virtue in Argumentation

by

Jonathan Anthony Caravello

Disagreements continue over the most basic epistemic questions. Which logic is correct? What makes an argument good? We need a theory that can both explain the prevalence of such disagreements and evaluate the conduct and characters of those who participate in them. I argue that formal theories cannot supply this need. Circular arguments demonstrate the failure of formal approaches. Circular arguments are often impeccable from a formal perspective, but circular argumentation is almost always criticizable. A skilled arguer does not dismiss other viewpoints out of hand. Instead, to reason with those who reject our most basic assumptions about the logic of argumentation itself or the norms we assume when evaluating arguments for cogency or coherence we must break out of the circle of our own opinions. We must exercise a capacity for cognitive empathy.

In chapter zero, I develop a virtue-theoretic account of argumentation centered around the virtue of open-mindedness. I analyze open-mindedness in Aristotelian fashion as the mean between skepticism and dogmatism. Open-mindedness consists in the skillful deployment of empathic ability, which is in turn understood as the capacity to simulate the perspective of another. I use this same framework to analyze two more specific applications of cognitive empathy: sincerity and creativity, which are both essential to responsible argumentation. Responsible argumentation requires sincerity in our forms of expression and creativity in our efforts to resolve those disagreements we must resolve for pragmatic reasons. When it is understood as a "master virtue," open-mindedness is a way

of utilizing sincerity and creativity for appropriate ends, and it is the surest route to epistemic progress.

In chapter one, I apply my virtue-theoretic account of argumentation to a dispute over the fallacy of begging the question. According to Robinson (1971), question-begging is not fallacious because it's fine from a formal perspective. Sorensen (1996) replies that question-begging is fallacious because it compromises the rationality of whoever is begging the question. By advancing the dialectic between Sorensen and Robinson, I aim to show that our argumentative practices must take the perspectives of others seriously, whether or not those perspectives are rational. When you beg the question against someone you fail to empathize with her. A tendency towards circularity of various sorts might be inevitable, but it needn't compromise open-mindedness.

In chapter two, I examine the connection between dogmatism and disagreement to address ongoing debates over the proper response to peer disagreement. How should we respond when we find ourselves disagreeing with a colleague or epistemic peer? According to the "equal weight view," we should suspend belief in this kind of case. I defend this ideal from two charges: (1) that it is self-undermining, and (2) that it renders its adherents "spineless." Even widespread disagreement amongst peers wouldn't force those who endorse the equal weight view into persistent agnosticism. We needn't compromise conciliation and cooperation, even when we find ourselves arguing with dogmatists who reject these cognitive virtues.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface. The same aspect of human nature both pits individuals against individuals and individuals against themselves. The necessity of submitting to the will of others (at least partially, at least sometimes) is something most of us are willing to live with. Unfortunately, submitting to others requires deference, which sometimes involves a sacrifice of one's own well-being. If we aim to engage in reasonable discourse, including peer disagreements, we must at least sometimes submit to the will of others. If my peer and I disagree about the effective course of action to resolve a conflict, yet we must decide on something to do, one of us must defer to the other, even if in doing so one of us sacrifices the satisfaction of their own interests. There needn't be deference in the sense of submitting to the will of another if we resolve the conflict by flipping a coin, allowing the loser to choose next time. Regardless, practical necessity means at least submitting to the will of another for the moment. Our natural tendency to associate *spinelessness* with submission forms one side of the force that works to tear us apart.

When we agree you get your way this time and I get my way next time, then we can resolve the practical need in a reasonable way as virtuous reasoners. In contrast, even the best reasoners of us must sometimes submit to the will of the individual in question for broadly utilitarian reasons. When familial obligation requires care of a child or an elderly parent whose cognitive abilities are diminished, humoring them is the best we can do. For people do not begin and end life as equals in dialogue.

On the other hand, it is also necessary that we sometimes resist submitting to others, even when we regard them as peers. It is sometimes right for someone to hold firm to their individuality and so it is sometimes right to satisfy one's own interests to the detriment of the interests of others. If my peer and I disagree about the effective course of action to resolve a conflict, yet we must decide on something to do, one of us must defy the other, even if in doing so one of us satisfies our interest to the detriment of the interests of others. Einstein's theories flew in the face of his peers' accepted theories, but had he caved and gave up rather than defy the status quo, we might not have the

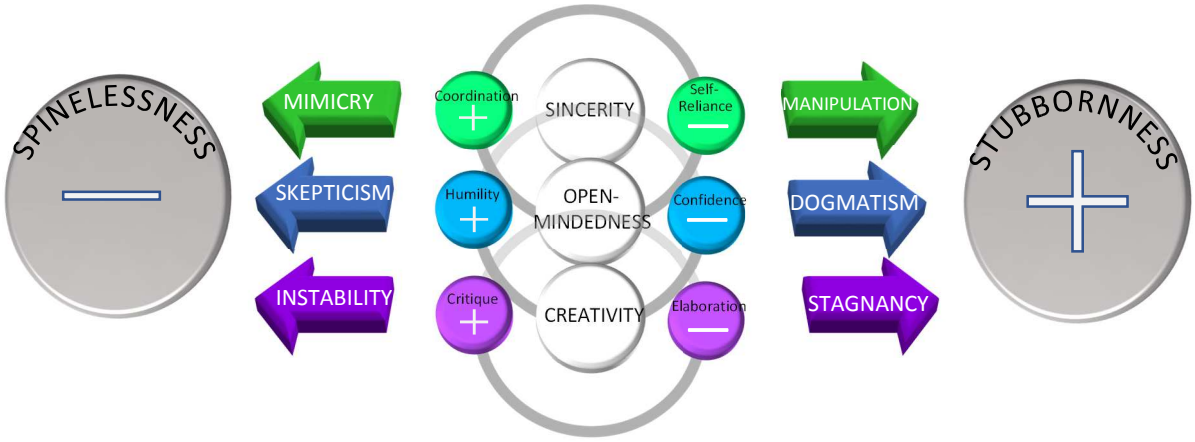
monumental innovations provided by his novel model of physics. Our natural tendency to associate *stubbornness* with defiance forms the opposite side of the force that works to tear us apart.

What makes these associations natural? Submission is seen as a self-destructive weakness because it works directly against our individuality, forcing us to change ourselves in service of others. Defiance, on the other hand, is seen as an unduly self-serving way to seize control from others, a way of forcing them to change for us.

There is a dual aspect of human nature: we want to live by carving out our own paths within a community of others who do the same. We want individuality *and* togetherness. We are, by nature both stubborn and spineless.

But we needn't be. If we can balance the two opposing forces of stubbornness and spinelessness, we can attempt to harness the force into something that can fundamentally change the way we think, interact, and live. But we must do so while working within the confines of this force of human nature. This dissertation is meant as a humble exercise on how we might go about doing this with regards to our practices of argumentation. In short, I argue that we ought to aim to be open-minded, sincere, and creative in discourse as in non-discursive aspects of social life. Through humble confidence (or confident humility), self-reliant coordination (or coordinative self-reliance), and critical elaboration (or elaborative critique) we can evolve.

Figure



Above is a figure that maps the relations between (i) the force that tears us apart, (ii) three pairs of epistemic vices associated with each side of the force, (iii) the corresponding virtue for each of the three pairs, and (iv) the abilities or attitudes that enable us to balance the vices and that together are manifestations of their corresponding virtue. The '+' and '-' symbols are intended to represent a magnetic-like relationship between (i) and (iv) (i.e. positive and negative charges attract, whereas positive and positive, or negative and negative charges repel.) As an example, humility (+) allows us to move away dogmatism, open-mindedness's epistemic vice of stubbornness (+), but at the same brings us closer to skepticism, open-mindedness's epistemic vice of spinelessness (-). On the other side, confidence (-) allows us to move away from spinelessness (-), but at the same time brings us closer to stubbornness (+).

Chapter 0. Introduction to Empathic Argumentation

How should we respond when someone challenges our most basic assumptions? What if these are assumptions about the logic of argumentation itself or the norms we assume when evaluating arguments for cogency or coherence? Dogmatists insist that we can justly assert or rely on foundational norms or principles even when we know our interlocutors reject them. I argue that these dogmatic responses are always irrational as they inevitably manifest some failure of "cognitive empathy," a concept I analyze at length. I go on to develop a virtue-theoretic approach to argumentation, highlighting the central role played by open-mindedness and related virtues in distinguishing good from bad arguments. Responsible argumentation requires *sincerity* in our forms of expression, *open-mindedness* in our attempts to simulate the perspective of another, and *creativity* in our efforts to resolve those disagreements we must resolve for pragmatic reasons. When it is understood as a "master virtue," open-mindedness is a way of utilizing sincerity and creativity for appropriate ends, and it is the surest route to epistemic progress. The resulting theory elucidates the pragmatic nature of argumentative circularity, offers normative guidance for those looking to improve their discursive behavior, and makes some progress towards resolving ongoing debates over the proper response to peer disagreement. Conciliation and cooperation are stable virtues that we needn't compromise, even when we find ourselves arguing with those who reject our cognitive values.

In the remainder of this chapter, I do several things. In section 1, I lay out the limits of formal theories of argument and focus in particular on the emergence of what I call *the circularity problem* in their attempts to give theories of argument goodness. In section 2, I lay out and assess various formal and informal approaches to the normative status of

arguments, including logical and probabilistic, dialectical and epistemic approaches. I argue that they all fail because they are susceptible to variations of the circularity problem.

An argument that philosophers traditionally deem to be good might not speak one bit to my mom. Does that make it bad? No. But "goodness" is a vague term in the sphere of argumentation. Although an argument might be impeccable from a formal perspective, if it does not improve the epistemic status of my mother when I advance it to her, then the argument is flawed from the informal perspective. An argument is bad, then, if it fails to communicate the arguer's reasoning to the contested conclusion and the arguer's reasoning is flawed if appreciating it does not convince the arguee of its conclusion.

It is difficult to bring someone to appreciate one's reasoning by arguing with them. It usually takes time before someone changes their mind, but it also requires a willingness to change on their part. The way one acts in the face of change is at least partly determined by how sincere, open-minded, and creative they are, that is, by how closely they resemble a virtuous arguer. This is why an argument that results in the amelioration of my mom's stubborn tendency is an improvement to her epistemic status. In cultivating a bit of humility, my mom is in better position to appropriately react to the arguments and reasoning of other virtuous arguers.

In section 3, I set the groundwork for my own approach to argumentation: an informal, virtue-epistemic approach that revolves around empathy. My model diverges from other epistemic models by shifting the focus from the generation of knowledge or justified belief to epistemic improvement and self-development towards the cultivation of virtuous conduct and character. This conduct is ultimately grounded in a concept I will elaborate on

at length: cognitive empathy, understood as the capacity to simulate the perspective of another.

If we aim to argue responsibly, and if we need to empathize to do so, we ought also to empathize responsibly. In section 4, I flesh out my approach and utilize Aristotle's doctrine of the mean to characterize open-mindedness, sincerity, and creativity, all of which are essential to responsible empathic (rational) argumentation (REA), and their respective relations to the responsible use of empathy.[1] REA requires *sincerity* in our forms of expression, *open-mindedness* in our attempts to simulate the perspective of another, and *creativity* in our efforts to resolve those disagreements we must resolve for pragmatic reasons. When it is understood as a "master virtue," open-mindedness is a way of utilizing sincerity and creativity for appropriate ends, and it is the surest route to epistemic progress.

1. The Limits of Formal Theories and the Circularity Problem

What makes an argument good? We need a theory that can both explain the prevalence of such disagreements and evaluate the conduct and characters of those who participate in them. I argue that formal theories cannot supply this need. For although circular arguments are often impeccable from a formal perspective, circular argumentation is almost always criticizable.

In his paper, "'P, Therefore, P' Without Circularity", Roy Sorensen (1991) argues against a purely syntactic theory of circularity in favor of a pragmatic theory of the

[1] Not all argumentation is rational. In those cases that are not, responsible empathic argumentation might be the ideal, but if it is, its virtues will shift. Whereas in responsible empathic *rational* argumentation, things like irony and contempt obfuscate the issue at hand, they might be suitable, even *virtuous* elements in certain spheres of non-rational argumentation. An example: a dispute between a fascist and an anti-fascist is typically not rational argumentation. We might say that the dispute is really a clash in core values, where the fascist values 'might makes right' and the anti-fascist values 'justice through truth'. While one may engage in argumentation to support either of those values, rational argumentation, when it is defined in terms of empathy and other intellectual virtues, is only compatible with the latter.

phenomenon on which our charges of circularity must be "relativized to audiences with varying purpose, background beliefs, and inferential prowess" (247).[2] Though my virtue-theoretic analysis departs from Sorensen's in some respects, it is similarly pragmatic insofar as it relativizes circularity to a speaker and her audience.

Consider the fallacy of begging the question. Some think that question-begging arguments are fallacious and that their fallaciousness stems from a shared "formal" deficiency. The syntactic theory of circularity is one such theory. On a syntactic theory, all question-begging arguments are problematically circular because they all display a problematic syntactic schema of argument, say, 'P, therefore, P'. Syntactic features of argument are much too weak to fully capture our intuitions about question-begging arguments. Consider, for example, the following:

(II) Some deductive arguments do not reason from general to particular.

Therefore, some deductive arguments do not reason from general to particular.

The syntactic form of the above argument is 'P, therefore, P', yet it is arguably an instance of a *good* argument, since the argument instantiates or exemplifies the content of its conclusion.[3]

One feature of classical propositional logics (PL), to name just one family of logics, is that it is provable within PL that any inference utilizing only the syntactic rules to manipulate symbolic terms that are introduced in characterizing a PL is truth-preserving. That is, we know that using these rules to construct a premise and conclusion argument out of the

[2] Sorensen, R. 1991. `P, therefore, P' without circularity. *Journal of Philosophy* 88/5: 245-66.

[3]According to Sorensen (1991: 266) there is a long-neglected feature of argument that influences the normative status of certain arguments. (II) and arguments like it are good, according to Sorensen, because they *exemplify* the content of their conclusion. "Exemplification," says Sorensen, "is a subconverse of denotation: a denoting predicate refers to its object, while an exemplar is an object that refers to its predicate *and* instantiates it" (252).

syntactic structures admissible in PL corresponds with one or more semantic relations of validity or truth-preservation that hold between the contents expressed by the premises and conclusion of an inference (where these contents are understood as truth values, or possible worlds, or functions from possible worlds to truth values, or Russellian or Fregean propositions which determine functions from worlds to truth values). Knowledge of the semantics enables us to work *under* a theory or logic to determine whether any particular logical law holds *for that theory or logic*. What justifies our use of the logical laws that hold in the system of a PL (where this includes both its characteristic syntax and semantics) depends in part on our justification for certain principles of interpretation that we utilize when constructing that semantics (e.g. the truth tables).

But what justifies our use of the principles of reasoning that guide us through our interpretation of a formal logical system like the PLs? Consider "if", the logical constant associated with conditional statements. One plausible interpretation of "if" stems from our knowledge of its meaning, which we in turn acquire from (arguably) our competent use of the expression in language. Our knowledge of its meaning is at least in part acquired through our knowledge of when conditional statements turn out true and when they turn out false. We may look to the standard truth tables for the conditional, for example, to guide our understanding of "if" by providing a model which includes truth evaluations under every possible truth value assignment of the conditional's antecedent and consequent. Of course, one might accept the classical truth table on the authority of logicians or by thinking through cases and testing the model with intuitions. A comprehensive justification for utilizing an inferential rule associated with the conditional (e.g. Modus Ponens) would involve some theses about the meaning of the expression we use to articulate the premises and conclusions

of these inferences. Thus, a full justification for using Modus Ponens requires a particular interpretation of its main logical constant, namely, an interpretation under which we can reasonably infer the consequent of a conditional statement just in case we have good reason to take the conditional and its antecedent to be true. Our semantics must cohere with our epistemology.

The traditional truth tables introduced by Wittgenstein, represent a proposition as either true or false (but not both). This aspect of Wittgenstein's early foray into model theory is rejected by many theorists.[4] Some theorists reject the classical model theory of propositional logic by allowing indeterminacy in the truth of a proposition, truth value gaps and the like. This requires interpreting the logical connectives in a different, even if only slightly different, way. Under a non-traditional interpretation of one of the logical connectives, certain inferential rules that turn out to be valid in PL are not so in the alternative logic. Famously, if propositions can be indeterminate in truth, the classical law of excluded middle will not hold of them, though variants on it will. For example, though an indeterminate proposition is neither true nor false, it is not true. So the claim that all propositions are either true or not, might still hold. Famously, higher-order vagueness, threatens even this formulation of the law. For it might be neither true nor false that a proposition is indeterminate.[5]

The existence of alternative logics does not imply anything on its own. But so long as different logicians advance differing logics as uniquely good, valuable or worthy of use in mathematics or science there will exist real disputes that hinge on a disagreement between

[4] See Forbes. 1983.

[5] One might think that this is absurd and insist that 'either we *can* determine the truth value of a proposition, or else we *cannot*.' But, of course, any such reasoning would rely on some formulation of the law of excluded middle.

theorists about which arguments are valid and which are invalid. To consider a simplified example, whereas the classical logician would accept the conclusion of an argument which involves essential use of double-negation elimination, an intuitionistic logician will not. The intuitionist is no bogey man, or even like the classical epistemic Skeptic. There are real people who reject excluded middle and double negation elimination. Of course, the classic model theoretic proof of the validity of modus ponens rests on the least controversial theses regarding the meaning of "if": i.e. that a statement of the form "If p, q," cannot be true if p is true and q is false. And modus ponens is not rejected in practice by any philosopher, mathematician or logician as a general rule. Nevertheless, some theorists have argued that the principle is not valid in full generality.[6]

Now consider, in this light, a rule-circular argument, i.e. an argument for why the use of a certain rule of inference in argument is epistemically rational that depends on the use of that very rule. Although the circularity exhibited by such an argument may be benign in the sense that the use of the rule is not strictly prohibited (a priori) in arguing for its justified use, it would provide nothing in the way of rationally persuading someone who was skeptical of it. If one were to offer an argument to the conclusion that, say, following the inferential rule associated with Modus Ponens is always epistemically rational, and utilize MP in the process, then it would be unreasonable to expect that someone who rejects its validity would be rationally persuaded by it. Such an attempt would be irrational on the grounds that it constitutes an *empathic failure* on the part of the arguer, who advances an argument for the validity of a rule to someone whose position they should know precludes the possibility of

[6] See Priest. 1979.

consistently believing in the justified use of the rule. A formal theory of an argument's inability to ground such a judgment constitutes the *circularity problem*.

My theory attempts to utilize the existence of apparently reasonable disagreements of this type as a catalyst for philosophical discovery by highlighting how we ought, rationally speaking, to approach, process, and resolve such disagreements in argumentation. In chapter 1, I utilize the theory I develop in this chapter for a dialectical case study, where I explain the character and conduct of two participants to a debate surrounding the existence and status of question-begging arguments. In chapter 2, I utilize my theory for an epistemic case study, arguing that the right response when we find out our epistemic peer disagrees with us is conciliation, not dogmatism. Both case studies depend on an informal theory of virtuous argumentation on which good arguments are the ones that would rationally persuade a virtuous arguer, i.e. the open-minded, sincere, and creative arguer. All else equal, one should prefer the theory of discursive excellence which aligns our judgments about the goodness and badness of arguments with an approximation of our actual argumentative practices. In short, a good theory should hold itself accountable. My virtue theoretic account is an attempt at this.

Before laying out my theory, let's take a look at a few theories of argument, which all highlight criteria on which we can judge an argument good or bad. All of these theories, I argue, are susceptible to the circularity problem because they lack the power to fully capture the character and conduct of those engaged in disputes about the normative status of arguments. This will set us up to shift the perspective from argument to arguer.

2. The Good and Bad of Argument

When is an argument *good*/*bad*? Can we determine an argument's normative status by examining its formal features? Formal theories of argument attempt to delineate the good arguments from the bad ones by appealing to formal features of the argument. Informal theories admit the need for something more to fully capture the normative status of arguments. In what follows, I consider several distinct criteria of good and bad argument, including formal logic, probabilistic coherence, cogency, dialectical effectiveness, and knowledge-generation, before ultimately arguing in favor of an informal approach that differentiates the good from the bad arguments by considering whether an argument would be accepted by a virtuous arguer.

The Formal/Logical Approach

Under what we may call the standard *logical approach to argumentation* (*LAA*), an argument is good just in case it meets some formal, logical standard and bad just in case it fails to meet this standard. Let us say that an argument is deductively valid just in case it is logically impossible for its premises to be true while its conclusion is false.[7] (There are notorious complications that arise when we try to explicate the sense of impossibility at issue, but I will put them to the side in what follows.) Undoubtedly there is something good about deductively valid arguments. I can know, for instance, that the inference is truth-preserving, i.e. that the truth of the premises guarantees the truth of the conclusion. Indeed, if the argument is formally valid, it is arguable that I can know its validity "a priori" or

[7] Why do we characterize validity in terms of "logical" impossibility? Because our analysis of validity isn't sufficiently "formal" otherwise. It is impossible that "x is water" is true at a world at which "x is H_2O" is false. But intuitively, the latter does not follow *logically* from the former, and a direct argument from the former claim to the latter one does not qualify as a logically valid deduction of this conclusion until its set of premises is augmented with the necessary truth "water is H_2O." See Kripke (1980) for arguments in favor of countenancing the a posteriori necessity of "water is H_2O" and similar claims.

without substantive observation and experimentation. Moreover, if I know that an argument is valid and I know its premises, then, assuming closure under known entailment, I can know the conclusion. But even though the deductive validity of an argument might be a virtue of it, it is neither necessary nor sufficient for an argument's goodness. If it were necessary, then no non-deductive argument would be good. Acceptance of this criterion would thus issue in a negative evaluation of a great deal of scientific reasoning, as scientists often use abductive, probabilistic and statistical inference to support hypotheses.

If the formal criterion were sufficient for an argument's goodness, then no valid argument would be bad. But just as there are good invalid arguments (e.g. any good inductive or abductive argument), there are bad valid arguments, as evidenced by the following:

1. Barack Obama is the current president of the United States of America.
2. There is only one current president of the United States.
3. Barack Obama is not Donald Trump.
4. Therefore, Donald Trump is not the current president of the United States of America.

Validity is too weak to be the criteria on which we base our normative judgments of arguments. The above argument, though formally valid, is problematic because its first premise is false and because someone who rejected its conclusion would not accept this first premise.

What about soundness? Let's say an argument is sound just in case it is valid and it has true premises. Soundness, like validity, is too weak to capture good and bad of argument. Consider:

5. Donald Trump is the current president of the United States of America.
6. Therefore, Barack Obama is not the current president of the United States of America.

The above argument is sound, and would remain sound were it augmented in the obvious way to secure formal validity, but it has no persuasive force in most, if not all, contexts. In chapter 1 I argue that the overly minimalistic view of argument evaluation that attempts to reduce the number of ways an argument can fail to two (invalid or false premise) fails because it permits the construction of bad, sound arguments, either because they are question-begging or because they are self-defeating.

Disagreements in Logic

Insofar as logic can be used to elucidate the normative nature of arguments, it might be thought that our discovery of the "one true logic" could provide the basis for a set of laws or rules we ought to abide by when theorizing, reasoning, and arguing.

But logicians disagree about which logic is the correct logic (and, in fact, whether there is one true logic).[8] One way to settle the dispute is to provide arguments that justify our uses of certain of our most basic logical laws (e.g. the law of excluded middle, the law of non-contradiction). Some instead attempt to justify the choice of a single logic by pointing to implication principles (e.g. logical consequence/implication, logical consistency) that legitimize the use of a distinguished set of rules of reasoning (e.g. reasoning according to Modus Ponens, conditional proof), which are then supposed to uniquely enable to construction of arguments that can be known to be semantically good (i.e. truth-preserving or valid) a priori.

[8] And some have ran with it. Beall & Restall (2006), for example, defend what they call "logical pluralism, the view that there is more than one genuine deductive consequence relation, and that this plurality arise not merely because there are different languages, but rather arises even ***within*** the kinds of claims expressed in the one language" (3).

This might seem to suggest that arguments are good or bad only relative to a choice of logic, so that one argument can be both good relative to classical logic and bad relative to intuitionistic or paraconsistent logic. Gillian Russell urges against this move. According to Russell, "pairs of logics where one is a sublogic of the other need not be thought of as rivals." If our pair includes the modal logic S5 and truth-functional classical logic (a sublogic of S5), we can say that the two logics "need not be thought of as disagreeing on the sets of valid and invalid arguments, but can be considered to be two different attempts to define them." What about in the case where a logic is developed as a rival, such as intuitionistic logic? Russell says that even in such cases, "we have the option of reconstruing their purpose, for example as an offering to a logical sub-project: that of isolating *constructively valid* arguments from the rest."[9]

But even if Russell is right that rival logics need not be thought of as grounding a disagreement about the set of valid and invalid arguments, the fact remains that there exists disagreement about how to argue for one's methods of argument evaluation. And if these methods rely on one's underlying logical theory, then one could not rationally persuade someone who didn't already accept that theory.

What if we could justify our use of certain basic laws of logic as uniquely good and universally appropriate? Russell takes there to be three potential justifications for our endorsing basic laws of logic: either (i) we argue that the logical truths we can derive from these laws are analytic, (ii) we argue that the logic in question is central to the web of our beliefs, or (iii) we argue that reasoning in accord with these principles – rather than the truths of logic we can derive from them – is epistemologically basic.[10] Russell argues for the third

[9] Russell (2008: 593-594).
[10] Russell (2015: 794-797).

approach, saying that the justification for our most basic laws of logic "rests of the justification for certain principles of theory choice."[11] Our claims about formal logic, according to Russell, are justified by principles of reasoning which are epistemologically basic, principles like "[a]ll things being equal, one should prefer the theory which does the best job of explaining diverse phenomena in a unified fashion" and "[a]ll things being equal, one should prefer the theory which is most elegant."[12] We may then, according to Russell, justify our basic laws of logic by investigating the epistemologically basic principles of reasoning that, according to Russell, turn out, on investigation, to be grounded in or based on our preferences related to theory choice.

I agree with Russell that if our claims about formal logic are to be justified, they cannot be justified by a formal logic itself, but rather by certain epistemologically basic facts about reasoning. Where I diverge from her picture, however, is in which facts are most basic to our reasoning.[13] Whereas Russell focuses on various theoretical virtues like *elegance* and *unified explanatory power*, I opt to focus on virtue-theoretical, epistemic-argumentative character traits. For it seems obvious to me that disagreements will arise about which theoretical characteristics can be invoked as virtues when we try to justify our most basic laws of logic. Indeed, even if we were to agree that, say, *elegance* is one of those virtues, disagreements about what constitutes elegance would emerge. And even if we agree on the nature of elegance and agree that it is a theoretical virtue, disagreements will arise over how elegance should be weighed against other virtues in the evaluation of arguments of any complexity. These are familiar lessons from the literature on aesthetic and ethical evaluation.

[11] Russell (2015: 802) points out the connection between her views and those defended by Harman (1986), who argues for the priority of reasoning over logic though what he calls "principles of belief revision" (3).
[12] Russell (2015: 802).
[13] My project also does not involve justifying the use of any laws of logic as basic or uniquely good.

Though these disagreements are perhaps less common in mathematics and logic, they exist in these domains. Again, if we rely on an a priori, formal criterion of argumentative excellence we fail to recognize cogent challenges that will inevitably arise for the chosen criterion. When such challenges are articulated, we find ourselves stuck in limbo.

For example, our over-reliance on formal theoretical tools puts us in the unfortunate position where we are unable to account for the badness of circularity and other related argumentative failures. This is unfortunate not just because it leaves our theory woefully incomplete, but because it seems to lead to what appear to be reasonable disagreements between epistemic peers who are content to let others treat their disagreements as either trivial or insoluble. Viewing such practices of argumentation – where theorists "agree to disagree" – as an inevitable result of ideal human reasoning leads to isolated intellectual bubbles viewed by outsiders as grossly elitist.

A theory which focuses on the pragmatic aspects of argument just as much as the logical aspects when attempting to provide argument evaluations, however, explains the existence of such disagreements without the ugly side effects identified above. The existence of reasonable disagreement should not work as an impediment to our analyses; it should not fracture a community in such a way that its members feel the need carve out their own (incompatible) paths. It should work as a catalyst for cooperative attempts to learn, improve, and discover. But doesn't philosophy thrive on "mapping out logical space"? For example, why not allow the classical logicians "to do their thing," the intuitionists to do theirs and so on? My answer is that although philosophical discovery requires knowing the various paths forward, philosophy (and by extension its corresponding argumentative practices) thrives on

actually moving forward. Absent a major discovery or a drastic change in our material circumstances, our way forward will involve looking inward.

Probabilistic Coherence as the Normative Basis of Argument

Might probabilistic coherence serve as suitable test for sound reasoning/arguing? Suppose an inference from premises to conclusion is probabilistically coherent just in case there is a truth-probabilfying relation between the statements therein expressed. According to many formal epistemologists (viz. probabilists), Kolmogorov's theory of probability (with its widely accepted axioms) can be converted into a formal theory of reasoning by interpreting probabilities as degrees of belief or credence and adding Bayes' theorem, which is interpreted as describing the uniquely best way to update our degrees of belief or credence in light of new evidence.[14] But Bayesian accounts of reasoning of this sort also fail to fully capture all instances of bad argument/reasoning.

Historically, Bayesian epistemologists have attempted to give a formal account of our reasoning by appealing to the deductive laws of logic and the laws of probability.[15] It is thought that the deductive laws can provide us with both synchronic and diachronic rational constraints on belief. Synchronic constraints concern rules about the rationality of a belief set (e.g. Principle of Consistency), whereas diachronic constraints concern rules about the rationality of changes in belief (e.g. various deductive rules of inference). And it is thought that the laws of probability provide additional rational constraints on *degree* of belief,

[14] Bayes, T. 1764. An essay toward solving a problem in the doctrine of chances. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 53, 370-418. Ramsey, Frank P. 1926. Truth and probability. in Richard B. Braithwaite (ed.), *Foundations of Mathematics and Other Logical Essay*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1931, pp. 156–198. There are many different variations on this general approach, but their details will not concern us in what follows.

[15] Easwaran & Fitelson (2015) diverge from traditional approaches which treat probabilistic logic as a generalization of deductive logic. Fitelson now believes that the norms of rationality derivable from Bayesianism are "weaker" than this insofar as they do not entail deductive or logical consistency.

namely, probabilistic coherence standards on our set of beliefs and probabilistic rules of inference on our modifications.[16]

But there are reasons to suspect probabilistic coherence is inadequate to serve as a criterion of good argument. Consider the lottery paradox.[17] Suppose I buy a lottery ticket that I know to have a 1 in a million chance of winning. The inference from the evidence to the belief that my ticket won't win seems to be a good one. But then, if I form similar individual beliefs for every ticket, it seems as though I could justifiably infer that no ticket will win, a conclusion I know (per assumption) to be false. As Gilbert Harman puts it, "[a]lthough one believes that one could win, one could also infer, for any ticket that *that ticket* won't be the winning ticket" (71).[18]

How can we evade this problem? Harman's (1986) proposed solution starts by conceiving of the inferences from the evidence about any given particular ticket's chances of winning the lottery to the conclusion that it won't win the lottery as probabilistic inference. Here's what he says:

> There is no actual contradiction here. To say one can infer this of any ticket is not to say one can infer it for all. Given that one has inferred ticket number 1 will not win, then one must suppose the odds against ticket number 2 are no longer 999,999 to 1, but only 999,998 to 1. And after one has inferred that ticket number 2 will not win, one must change the odds on ticket number 3 to 999,997 to 1, and so on. If one could get to ticket number 999,999, one would have to suppose the odds were even, 1 to 1, so at that point the hypothesis that this ticket will not win would be no better than the hypothesis that it will win, and one could infer no further. (Presumably one would have to have stopped before this point.) But the order of inference *really* matters here, since one could have inferred that ticket number 999,999 won't win if only one had made this inference early enough.[19]

---

[16] Talbott, W., Bayesian epistemology. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/epistemology-bayesian/>.
[17] The original construction of the lottery paradox is from H. Kyburg (1961) *Probability and the logic of rational belief*, Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press.
[18] Harman, G. 1986. *Change in view*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
[19] Harman, G. (1986: 71).

Of course, since there is nothing incoherent about someone who reasons validly from known premises to a conclusion they antecedently disbelieve, no actual contradiction arises. It is not as if the reasoner is stuck with a contradictory set of beliefs. The rational response would be to resolve the inconsistency by reflecting on the argument to look for a flaw or by giving up the antecedently held belief that one ticket will win the lottery. Harman, however, claims that if we conceive of our reasoning in probabilistic terms, the problem does not arise. We are responsible reasoners who are careful when inferring along probabilistic lines and make sure to update our evidence base each step of the way. At some point in the chain of inferences, our updated evidence base would make any subsequent inference irrational.

His diagnosis of the problem as merely apparent, however, has the unwelcome side effect that two people could come to reasonably disagree about which tickets won't win. If one were to start with ticket 1, one could reasonably infer that ticket 2 won't win, since the revision to the evidence base would not be significant enough to result in a premise's failure to probabilify the conclusion. If one were to start from the last ticket in line and proceed backwards, one would be able to reasonably infer that ticket number 999,999 will not win, but proper updates to one's evidence base will prevent reasonable inferences to the conclusion that ticket 2 won't win. This is problematic because it implies that two people could come to disagree about which tickets will not win the lottery by using the same type of reasoning from what is initially the same body of evidence. But since one could not justify a choice of starting points, their respective instances of reasoning would be at worst biased or otherwise irrational and at best entirely arbitrary. Strictly speaking, there may be, "no contradiction here," as Harman says, but the problem does not go away. If the above-

described reasoners disagree about the losing tickets upon learning how the order of inferences matters, then despite the probabilistic coherence of their inferences, their reasoning has failed them. Insisting that *these* tickets (as opposed to *those* tickets) won't win the lottery is no less irrational than holding a set of contradictory beliefs. A theory which holds probabilistic coherence as the ideal of argument fails because it cannot capture the irrationality of such reasoning.

The (Informal) Epistemic Approach

On the *epistemic approach to argumentation* (*EAA*), an argument is good just in case it produces knowledge or some other epistemic good. Such approaches allow us to evaluate arguments by examining whether it satisfies the aim of generating knowledge (or some other epistemic good) in the user of the argument. It is important to note that epistemic theories evaluate arguments not as purely abstract objects, which are in turn comprised of other abstract objects (e.g. propositions) as the logical approaches to argumentation do, but as "a sequence of events" consisting of a person's argumentative acts.[20] Unlike on the logical approaches, an argument's goodness or badness cannot be gleaned from the internal features of the argument alone.

Consider the following argument, which could be found in a basic logic or critical thinking book.

(i) All people are reptiles

(ii) All reptiles are butterflies

(iii) Therefore, all people are butterflies

[20] I borrow this from Biro and Siegel (2008) p. 92.

At most, such arguments, which allow students to more easily discern the logical features of an argument, are pedagogically useful. But, according defenders of *EAA*, the argument fails because it does not (and, in fact, cannot) produce knowledge for those who endorse it.

Nor would such an argument be suitable in producing justified belief. According to Alvin Goldman (2003) "…what makes a good argument good is its suitability to produce justified belief in its conclusion by means of justified beliefs in its premises….In other words, a good argument is one that can transmit justification from premises to conclusion (and justification *vis-à-vis* the premises does not require prior justification of *vis-à-vis* the conclusion" (58).[21] Thus, the above argument would be bad on his account as well.

But the argument only seems flawed because we have a difficult time conceiving of a context in which advancing such an argument would be reasonable. Such contexts, however, do exist. If, for example, I am arguing with someone who, for whatever reason, believes that all people are reptiles and that all reptiles are butterflies, but rejects that any one person is a butterfly, such an argument might very well come to persuade them of something. Although the argument may not generate any new knowledge, it may pressure someone to change their beliefs in a way that benefits them epistemically. For before encountering the argument, our imagined reasoner held an inconsistent set of beliefs (i.e. (i), (ii), and ~(iii)). After hearing the argument, she may come to question one or more of those beliefs, perhaps resolving the inconsistency by coming to believe the conclusion. Yes, the conclusion is patently false, but at least she would be more consistent than before.

[21] Goldman. 2003. An epistemological approach to argumentation.

Cogency

So knowledge-generation (or even justified belief-generation) is much too strong a standard to be a normative criterion on argument. Not only might arguments like the reptile argument be good for epistemic-pragmatic reasons (like reinforcing certain ideals of reasoning like consistency), we can imagine a litany of examples of arguments that are by all measures good arguments that nevertheless do not provide us with new knowledge or justified belief. If, for example, someone advances an argument to the conclusion P that is impeccable from my perspective, but I also have considered an argument to the conclusion ~P that I find equally compelling, I won't be able to generate knowledge or justified belief in P.

What is wrong with the following argument?

(iv) Either pigs fly or induction works.

(v) Pigs don't fly.

(vi) Therefore, induction works.

Under the assumption that the reader accepts the second premise, I kindly ask you to imagine that you do not already accept the conclusion. Now, do you have reason to accept the first premise? In all likelihood, you will concede that whatever warrant you might have for (iv) is dependent for its warrant on (vi). In other words, our actual warrant for (iv) comes from the fact that we know its second disjunct is true. But the second disjunct of (iv) just is the conclusion. If you were to advance this argument to your interlocutor in an attempt to sway them away from being skeptical about induction, you would fail miserably.

According to Crispin Wright, an argument is *cogent* when "someone could be moved [by it] to rational conviction of the truth of its conclusion".[22] Wright's definition of cogency enables him to utilize the notion of warrant transmission to make better sense of our normative judgments about arguments. Consider a question-begging argument. One obvious defect in such an argument is that one's belief in the premises would not be justified (i.e., the premises would not be acceptable) unless one's belief in the conclusion was already justified. In Wright's words, warrant fails to transmit over the inference of the argument.

To illustrate the point further, consider Wright's famous "soccer inference", in which we are told to imagine seeing a player being congratulated after kicking a ball into the net and then considering the following inference:

(vii) A goal has just been scored.

(viii) A game of soccer is in progress.[23]

The problem with the above inference understood as an argument is that it fails to transmit warrant from premise to conclusion. Whatever warrant I have for the inference's premise I have only because I already have warrant for its conclusion. That I saw a ball kicked through the net by a player who then received congratulations from his teammates serves as evidence for (vii), but this observation is only evidence for (vii) under the assumption that a soccer game is in progress. For, as Wright rightly points out, if I were to find out that a soccer movie was being filmed on the field, my warrant for (vii) would be defeated.

Consider another famous example from Dretske (1970) that is given as potential problem for closure under known entailment, unlike the soccer inference.

---

[22]Wright. 2000. Cogency and question-begging: some reflections on McKinsey's paradox and Putnam's proof. *Noûs* 34: 140-63.

[23]Wright. 2002. (Anti-)sceptics simple and subtle: G. E. Moore and John McDowell. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 65: 330–348.

(ix) That is a zebra.

(x) So, that is not a cleverly disguised mule.[24]

This inference, like the soccer inference, fails to transmit warrant from premise to conclusion. If I know that the black-and-white-striped animal I am looking at while at the zoo is a zebra, then my knowledge provides me with no extra reason to believe (ix). It's true that (x) follows from (ix)—and can be made to follow "logically" from (ix) by adding as a premise that no zebra is a mule—but as I have argued already, this fact is not enough to ensure the goodness of a given argument.

Now, I do not want to deny that one may know (x) on the basis of one's perceptual evidence. But since (ix) is warranted in the very same way, the zebra inference is not cogent. For no one could be "moved to rational conviction of the truth of its conclusion" without evidence or reasoning independent from the argument itself.

Being moved to rational conviction of truth does not mean gaining knowledge, for one could be moved to rational conviction of the truth of a false proposition. What then does Wright have in mind by "moved…to rational conviction"? He says, "a transmissible warrant should make for the possible advancement of knowledge, or warranted belief," so the possibility of an argument being such that it can move someone to rational conviction of the truth of its conclusion requires that the argument be comprised of a set of premises and conclusion and an inference that transmits warrant such that someone who has warrant for the premises could also come to have warrant for the conclusion.[25] In short, to be moved to rational conviction is to be persuaded in the right way – i.e. to be rationally persuaded. An argument that transmits warrant provides a new warrant for belief in the conclusion. An

[24] Dretske. 1970. Epistemic operators, *Journal of Philosophy*, 67: 1015–1016.
[25] Wright (2002: 332).

argument's cogency amounts to its potential to rationally persuade someone of said argument's conclusion (in certain argumentative contexts).

Although cogency brings to bear the kind of epistemic-pragmatic notions that I think are necessary for a good theory of argument, it is important to note that cogency does not, by itself, serve as a suitable criterion of good argument. One issue to consider is that an argument that is cogent from my perspective might not be from someone else's perspective. Another issue is that an argument may be cogent but nevertheless bad. For instance, an argument to the conclusion that no one will win a large enough lottery has acceptable premises, relevant to the conclusion that together move one to rational conviction of the truth of its conclusion. Or at least these premises *would* rationally persuade one of its conclusion if one did not already reject that conclusion. In fact, under certain definitions, a paradox is "…an apparently unacceptable conclusion derived by apparently acceptable reasoning from apparently acceptable premises."[26] So a paradoxical argument might have premises that, when reasonably believed, rationally compel one to accept a conclusion one knows to be false.

The Dialectical Approach

Like the epistemic approaches to argumentation, dialectical approaches to argumentation (*DAA*) agree that we must appeal to features of arguments that are not internal to the argument. In other words, dialectical approaches take into account pragmatic features of arguing to assess the relative goodness of any given act of arguing. In *Fallacies*, Hamblin suggests that fallacy theory should shift its perspective from argument to dialectic.[27] By shifting from the context of arguments to the context of dialogues, we have set ourselves up

[26] Sainsbury (1995). *Paradoxes Second Edition* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 1.
[27] Hamblin (1970).

to construct a dialogical model on which we can formulate the rules of dialogue. The model will provide us with evaluations not of an argument, but of "a technique of argumentation that is used wrongly."[28] For when an argumentative maneuver is "used in a counterproductive way to steer discussion away from its proper goals or even in an aggressive attempt to close off the effective possibilities of an adversary's critical question in dialogue," the maneuver is fallacious (258).

Consider one view that falls under the *DAA*: Douglas Walton's *Pragmatic View*. For Walton, our evaluations of reasoning conform to traditional logic, but our evaluations of argument are pragmatic. Logic is thus seen as obviously ill-equipped to give us an account of any theory belonging to a larger theory of argumentation. The distinction is borne out of his respective definitions of reasoning – "propositions…joined into steps of inference by a warranted inference," and argument – "a use of reasoning to contribute to a talk exchange or conversation called a dialogue."[29]

According to Walton, we engage in various types of dialogues, all of which have distinct goals. The goal of critical discussion, for instance, "is to resolve a conflict of opinions" and the goal of inquiry "is to prove whether a particular proposition is true (or false)."[30] Some types of dialogues, like negotiations – where it "is not truth or falsity, but rather money or some kind of goods, economic resources, or other items of value that are at issue" – are not exactly epistemically relevant."[31]

[28] Walton. 1995. *A pragmatic theory of fallacies*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press. p. 238.
[29] Walton (1995: 254).
[30] Walton (1995: 99-100).
[31] Walton. 1998. *The new dialectic: conversational contexts of argument*. Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press. p. 100.

Walton distinguishes between fallacies and less serious argumentative mistakes. An argumentative technique counts as fallacious "if it twists some scheme or theme of argument rightly used in some context of dialogue to the advantage of the participant who has made the move or sequence of moves in (possibly another) context of dialogue."[32] Take, for example, the fallacy of begging the question. Here is Walton's characterization:

> To commit the fallacy of begging the question is a serious matter that involves an aggressive attempt by one participant in a context of dialogue to use a circular sequence of argumentation to try to convince another participant erroneously and misleadingly that he (the first participant) has properly met the burden of proof appropriate for this context. Thus to commit a fallacy involves more than just inadvertently arguing in a circle.[33]

But according to Walton, *inadvertently* arguing in a circle is not counted as a fallacy, but as a blunder, a less egregious argumentative move. This undercuts the original motivation for shifting to the dialectical perspective: that theories focused on arguments (rather than dialogues) will be forced to relativize judgments of fallaciousness to individuals. The pragmatic view will be forced to relativize our judgments about fallacies (viz., begging the question) to individual motivations, just as an epistemic approach would have it.

Under the dialectical approach, if an argument is bad, it is bad because it breaks a rule of some dialogue. If it is good, it is good because it contributes to satisfying the goals of the dialogue in question; whether the arguer accepts the argument is beside the point. On this model, an argument is a tool that is used by an individual to satisfy some goal of the dialogue in which they participate. The goal will depend on the type of dialogue, according to most theories, but since I am concerned only with argumentation, I will narrow my scope and assume that the goal in question is the rational persuasion of one's interlocutor, the resolution

[32] Walton (1995: 235).
[33] Walton (1995: 234).

of a disagreement, or something else that leads to an epistemic improvement for at least one of the arguers. (This leaves out dialogues like negotiations as characterized by Walton).

There are two problems with the dialectical approach. First, it falsely assumes that whether an arguer accepts the argument in any given dialogue is irrelevant to the argument's goodness. The way we argue suggests that it does matter whether our interlocutors accept the arguments they advance. If I discover my colleague accepts the argument she advances when I reject its conclusion, the fact that she disagrees with me should play a role in figuring out how to progress. The fact that one's peer accepts an argument one rejects is evidence (at least a little) against the rationality of one's rejection. And this makes sense: we take our peers, primarily, as pursuers of truth, understanding, or some other epistemic good, not mere persuasion. (Of course this is not so when we know our interlocutor is putting on a show). If I advance an argument I don't accept, then my interlocutor would think that I did accept it. And if she is rational, this would play a role in whether she accepts the argument.

Second, the dialectical approach presupposes that there is such a thing as an ideal model of rational discourse, and furthermore, that such a model will depend ultimately on the goals of a given dialogue. Suppose we came to determine that the ideal of rational discourse involved the eradication of some or other problematic belief. It might be in our best interest, pragmatically speaking, to get others to give up said belief by any means whatsoever. But recall that our pragmatic interests here correspond to whether an argument contributes to the goals of the dialogue. So, if the primary goal of the dialogue is to resolve disagreement, it might also be in our *epistemic* best interest to employ non-rational persuasive tactics in an attempt to get others to fall into line and give up the problematic belief in question. I do not see, however, how non-rational persuasive tactics (like pounding one's fist, or threatening

one's interlocutor, etc.) would count as *rational* argumentation, even if they contributed to the satisfaction of the goals of the dialogue.

The goals and methods of the dialectical approach are interrelated. There are certain methods that are intuitively rational in a context and others that are not. Pounding one's fist or threatening, for example, are irrational means of persuasion when they persuade.[34] But the dialectical theorist says that we should do whatever is necessary to achieve the goal of the dialogue in question, and that doing so is rational. In other words, acting rationally in argumentation requires that one choose whatever methods are necessary to satisfy the goal. But this seems to leave open the problematic possibility that threatening one's interlocutor is the most rational move to make in a rational dialogue. Any good account of rational argumentation should count such actions as irrational.

Ultimately, I think dialectical approaches to argument/argumentation make the same mistake as logical approaches: in an effort to make sense of normative judgments in the sphere of argumentation, they abstract away from the actual features of argumentation to some idealized abstract entity like argument (for logical approaches) or dialogue (for dialectical approaches). Proponents of the dialectical approach are right to shift the focus away from arguments, but the notion of dialogue is no less abstract than argument. Even if we were to assure ourselves that the individuals who participate with us in dialogue were conceiving of the dialogue in the same way we were (i.e. our goals lined up) and even if we were confident that they were not attempting to persuade us through coercion, we would still need to know the dialogical rules of rational argumentation to check our judgments. And,

[34]Unless one is trying to persuade one's interlocutor that people do in fact pound their fists, etc. I have already discussed how arguments via exemplification pose a challenge to formal characterizations of argumentative excellence and will have more to say about them in what follows.

just like the logical theory, the dialectical theory inevitably reveals deep disagreements about those rules, disagreements that would be unresolvable, since the dialogue's participants would permit or prohibit different dialectical maneuvers based on their respective accepted rule sets.

Pragma-Dialectics

All approaches so far have been approaches developed (largely) by and for analytic philosophers. There are other approaches, however, that eschew the analytic bend for a more interdisciplinary feel. I won't rehearse all the details here, but I would like to discuss an alternative which I find to be of importance to the project at hand: the pragma-dialectical view.

The pragma-dialectical approach aims to bridge the gap between the normative and descriptive aspects of argumentation by refocusing our discussion on the "functional rationale" of argumentation.[35] The approach is only a piece of a larger pragma-dialectical project that consists in (i) developing a model of acceptable argumentation from an ideal model of philosophical reasonableness, and (ii) conducting empirical investigations to make sense of how we actually argue. On *PDA*, individual arguers play a role as nodes in a larger network; *PDA* aims to explain how the network functions and provide us with the tools to strategically maneuver within it. Although I find the project as a whole, and this piece in particular, to be fascinating, it diverges from mine along the rational dimension. I intend my theory to also provide evaluations of individual argumentative acts that are not bad because inefficient or otherwise detrimental to the functional rationale of the system, but because they are manifestly irrational.

[35] Van Eemeren (1995: 133).

PDA, like *DAA*, suffers from potential irresolvable disagreements about the correctness of the norms associated with argumentation. Since *PDA* takes argumentation to be part of a larger whole (critical discussion) which is supposed to work towards resolving disagreements, we might also wonder what constitutes a resolution of a disagreement.

Van Eemeren (and Houtlosser) have begun to attempt to rectify the early shortcomings of the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation by introducing the notion of "strategic maneuvering," which brings in rhetoric features of argumentation (like the fact that most people argue not to resolve disagreements, but to resolve them in a way that benefits our own interests). As Tindale puts it, "strategic maneuvering is the attempt to monitor reasonableness (seen in dialectic) and effectiveness (seen in rhetoric)."[36] When I think of strategy, I think of a game or of war. There is no doubt in my mind that the typical conception of argument – the one that permeates through philosophers and non-philosophers alike – is one that is framed on a metaphor of war. And in one way, I am happy to admit that there is something right about the metaphor. We philosophers who desire to engage in rational argumentation have a common enemy. That enemy takes many forms – the authoritarian, the solipsist, the global skeptic, the sophist – but one thing they all have in common is that they inhibit our freedom to argue responsibly and to solve problems without resorting to violence, insofar as we can.[37] Though it may sometimes seem like it, this is not a game.

[36] Tindale, C. 2015. The philosophy of argument and audience reception. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 16.

[37] I don't want to make any controversial claims about the role violence might or might not play in interpersonal communication at large, or argumentation in particular. Although pervasive quietism is a vice, staying quiet on certain issues at certain points in our dialogue can be permissible. And although dogmatism is a vice, being dogmatic on certain issues at certain points in our dialogue can be permissible.

Similar to the way *LAA* centers on "the argument" as their object of investigation, and similar to the way *DAA* centers on "the dialogue" as theirs, *PDA* focuses in on the ideal of "critical discussion". But like *LAA* and *DAA*, *PDA* leaves out certain dynamics of argumentation that inevitably play a role relevant to our ratio-argumentative successes and failures. Consider the following example to see why.

> Suppose I know Sarah and Dillon very well. I have practiced seeing things from their perspectives and I know the types of arguments they like and the ones they dislike. Suppose further that I come to find out that they disagree with me about the truth of theory T. I simulate Dillon's perspective to the best of my ability and judge that the most efficient way of rationally persuading him of T is to advance argument X, whose premises he has no antecedent reason to reject. I then simulate Sarah's perspective to the best of my ability and determine that the most efficient way of rationally persuading her of T is to advance argument Y, whose premises she has no antecedent reason to reject. But, as it turns out, argument X includes a premise that I have good reason to believe Sarah would reject and argument Y includes a premise that I have good reason to believe Dillon would reject.

So, what should I do? On the one hand, I could attempt to argue with them right then and there. But then when I advanced argument X to Dillon, he might piggyback on Sarah's rejection of the premise, a premise he now has at least some reason to reject (on account of Sarah rejecting it.). This would frustrate my chances of rational persuasion. And the same can be said for when I advance argument Y to Sarah in the presence of Dillon. Maybe this is the best I can do, rationally speaking.

On the other hand, I could get each of them alone and attempt to rationally persuade him or her in isolation. Per assumption, advancing argument X to Dillon and Y to Sarah is the most efficient way to rational persuasion. And, at least on the face of it, I have some sort of responsibility to make available to my interlocutors what I see are the most damning critiques to their beliefs *from their perspective*. If I anticipate that they won't take these

arguments as seriously when in the presence of one another, then perhaps getting them alone is, after all, the most rational thing to do.[38]

But there also seems to be something insincere, disingenuous, even manipulative about responding in this way to increase my chances of persuading them. If it became a widespread practice to get others alone to argue with them, people might then start to deliberately surround themselves with people who will vociferously defend their beliefs on their behalf. This might lead to a type of irrational deference to others, eroding one's self-confidence, stability, even sanity.

What about in a case where my correspondence with Dillon does not overlap with my correspondence with Sarah? Suppose, for instance, that Sarah and I debate the truth of T on Sunday morning. In such a case, I don't seem to be acting irrationally if I advance an X-like argument. And if Dillon and I talk in that evening after Sarah leaves, I am not acting irrationally in advancing Y-like arguments in attempting to persuade him of T. How am I irrational when I advance X to Dillon after I intentionally get him alone, but not irrational to advance it to him in a situation that is the same except lacks intentionality?

On my account, the irrationality arises from my insincerity in the "premeditated" case. Sorensen says that "[r]ationality, like fitness, is relative to environment" (EC: 504). Similarly, we might say that *epistemic* rationality is relative to the *epistemic* environment. Since other agents are necessarily part of our epistemic environment, the relations that hold between us play an important role in our rationalities. When I am arguing in an insincere,

[38] In this case, if they come to find out that they now agree with me (and each other) about theory T, they might ask each other why, before finding out that they believe T for different reasons – reasons that the other rejects! And this might undercut the force of my original arguments. But it's also possible that they never talk about it in the future, in which case this would not even come up.

close-minded, or otherwise irrational way, I am not simply expressing my internal flaws, I am impressing them onto others. My irrationality wouldn't come from flouting the "functional rationale", or from breaking a rule of rational dialogue, or from dialectical inefficiency, or from a logical flaw, but from the coercive epistemic attitudes I embody.

The Virtue-Epistemic Approach

The only approach that is adequate to coherently diagnose the above type of case is one that concentrates on how we connect as epistemic or rational agents. Under my virtue theoretic approach to argumentation, a premeditated argumentative maneuver like the one I described above is insincere (and coercive). And, as far as I can tell, no other view but a virtue theory can adequately handle nuanced cases like these. I propose that a virtue argumentation theory centered on empathy and open-mindedness can do this. The correct shift, I think, is from arguments to arguers and so the normative status of arguments is inextricably linked up with how we, as agents, interact when arguing. (In this way, an argument written down and an argument uttered in discourse might differ in their normative status, even if they are equivalent tokens of the same argument type.) On my account, a good argument is one that exemplifies a success in empathy on the part of the arguer, where empathy is understood as the capacity to simulate the perspective of another. Imaginatively understanding an interlocutor allows one to contribute to the goals of the dialogue and improve the epistemic status of that participant. Cognitive empathy therein promotes a defensible argumentative ideal: constructing an argument that would persuade a virtuous arguer. A virtuous arguer grasps the minds of her audience and appropriately responds to their content, where "proper" response is defined in terms of open-mindedness and allied

virtues. When wrought in this way, changes in the audience's beliefs are not coerced, and this is the essence of rational persuasion.

A formal theorist might object right away and say that a theory of argument should allow us to judge an argument as good or bad regardless of whether it in fact persuades someone. The formal theorist insists that they can abstract away from the pragmatic features of argumentation and rely on an unbiased perspective to give a fair evaluation of the argument. For example, if someone who believes Utilitarianism is false considers the best argument for Utilitarianism, they are still able to judge the argument as "good," even if they take there to be overwhelming evidence against the truth of the theory and see no way of being rationally persuaded by it. But wouldn't the virtuous arguer just be the one who accepts all the arguments that support the correct views? And if utilitarianism is false, wouldn't the virtuous arguer reject any argument that supports it, especially the best ones?

I believe that such an objection follows from a misunderstanding of my theory. The mistaken assumption made by the formal theorist above is that we can imagine the cognitive architecture of *the* virtuous arguer. We can only, however, simulate the minds of individuals whose cognitive architecture is by and large the same as ours. And an idealized virtuous agent understood as one who accepts all the correct theories is an idealization we as humans could never live up to. In short, *the* virtuous arguer is infallible; it is an unattainable ideal because we, by nature, are fallible.

Instead of attempting to simulate *the* virtuous arguer, I suggest we simulate *a* virtuous arguer. A good argument is one that a virtuous arguer would be (rationally) persuaded by given a certain worldview or mindset. There is nothing incoherent if I conceive of a virtuous arguer who accepts utilitarianism, even if I know utilitarianism is false.

In figuring out whether a virtuous arguer would accept a given argument, I must attempt to accurately simulate the perspective of the idealized (or as close to idealized as possible) version of a utilitarian. Maybe I know someone who is one and so I talk to them in an effort to understand. Maybe I read John Stuart Mill's work fifteen more times. At any rate, the more I understand the utilitarian's perspective, the easier it is for me to discern the arguments that would be judged good from the utilitarian's perspective.

If we relativize the notion of cogency to individual world-views or mindsets (or something similar), we can say that the attempt to accurately simulate the perspective of a virtuous arguer (given some worldview or mindset) essentially involves the construction of cogent arguments from their perspective. And since cogency amounts to potential to rationally persuade, rational persuasion will also be relativized to a perspective, as it should be.

3. Empathy and Virtue in Argumentation (The Good and Bad of Arguing)

A virtuous arguer should aim to be open-minded, creative, and sincere by walking the line between two incompatible irrational attitudes – stubbornness and spinelessness – that threaten to derail our practice of rational argumentation. To cultivate these virtues, the arguer should at once be both confident and humble with respect to herself as an epistemic agent, she should engage in both critique and reflection when she revises her epistemic attitudes, and she should be both self-reliant and coordinative in her attempts to improve her own or another's epistemic status through argumentation and other forms of discourse.

The virtuous arguer thinks for herself and with others. Her ability to engage in the practice of ***empathic simulation*** allows her to best approximate the perspectives of others in such a way that is neither egocentric nor otherizing. Working with others, of course, requires

coordination. Working on one's own requires self-reliance. Both require trust. **Sincerity**, which can be defined as the mean between the epistemic vices of mimicry and manipulation, enables one to construct arguments that represent one's defense of a position on some matter in such a way that one can be understood by one's interlocutors. Just because an argument is rationally persuasive from one's own perspective does not mean that it will be rationally persuasive from one's interlocutor's perspective. So, if one is attempting to rationally persuade, one must construct an argument that is rationally persuasive from one's interlocutor's perspective. If one is unwilling to take the perspective of one's interlocutor, then one will have a hard time rationally persuading anyone. If one is *too* willing, one will be too easily persuaded. Instead, one must be **open-minded**, attempting to hit the mean between stubborn dogmatism and spineless skepticism. Since arguing is a discursive practice that is typically employed as a means to rational persuasion, and rational persuasion can be defined as changing minds in a rational way, the construction of a good argument requires the epistemic virtue of **creativity**, defined as the mean between the two vices of stagnation and instability. One must utilize creativity to construct one's arguments in such a way that they will provide a new way of seeing things for one's interlocutor.[39] In rational argumentation with a dissenting epistemic peer, one resists crumbling into isolationist skepticism or insisting dogmatism, opting instead for ***cooperation*** through ***conciliation***. We can actively avoid persistent agnosticism by reflecting on the original evidence together; re-evaluating the degree to which it supports our original beliefs together; and trying to explain to one another exactly how it could be that we, as "peers," independently drew contrary conclusions from this same body of evidence. If the explanation comes down to our

[39] I have followed my own advice and have included virtue diagrams in the preface of this dissertation.

speaking from importantly unique perspectives, perhaps we can help each other see the evidence in a new light. Even better, we might attempt to reconcile our disagreement by engaging someone who we both consider an epistemic peer, or search for a new, less biased perspective to help us negotiate our impasse.

In the remainder of this chapter, I investigate these epistemic virtues and vices: a set of epistemic attitudes and actions relevant to our argumentative activities. In particular, I am interested in questions concerning the relative rationality of individual arguers who engage in the cooperative activity of rational argumentation. In argumentation, people advance and respond to arguments. The arguments are intended to represent the arguer's view (i.e., their attitudes, beliefs, actions) on some matter and they are advanced in an attempt to positively influence another. When two people argue in good faith in an effort to rationally persuade one another, they engage in what they conceptualize as *rational* argumentation. But two people can conceptualize their discourse as an attempt at rational argumentation while criticizing each other for the irrationality of the arguments to which they give voice. These allegations are legion, but I am particularly interested in the allegation that one party to a dispute has undermined the rationality of her argument by indulging in "circularity" of some sort. I analyze "circularity" as a charge brought against the normative status of an argument whose goodness depends on whether the person advancing that argument committed an *empathic failure* of some sort.

The Mean

Aristotle's doctrine of the mean says that a virtue is the mean between two extremes: one, which is an excess, and the other a deficiency in a given magnitude.[40] I hypothesize that

[40] Aristotle. *Niomachean Ethics*: 1106a26-b28.

we can extend this idea from moral practice to the practice of argumentation and say that a good *arguer* finds the mean between two extremes: stubbornness and spinelessness. The former is reflected in question-begging arguments, whose acceptance results in a deficiency of humility (or, equivalently, excessive confidence). The latter is reflected in self-defeating arguments, whose acceptance results in an excess of humility (or, equivalently, a deficiency of confidence). The epistemically appropriate balance of humility and confidence is exemplified by the virtue of open-mindedness.

Open-mindedness consists in the skillful deployment of empathic ability, which is in turn understood as the capacity to simulate the perspective of another. I use this same framework to analyze two more specific applications of cognitive empathy: sincerity and creativity, which are both essential to responsible argumentation. Responsible argumentation requires sincerity in our forms of expression and creativity in our efforts to resolve those disagreements we must resolve for pragmatic reasons. When it is understood as a "master virtue," open-mindedness is a way of utilizing sincerity and creativity for appropriate ends, and it is the surest route to epistemic progress.

Sincerity helps us understand ourselves because it requires us to act and present as ourselves when arguing so that our actions are accurate representations of what we think and the rational basis for why we think it. This self-understanding gives us a better idea of when to rely on ourselves and when to coordinate with others. And creativity, which requires us to cut loose from the ropes that bind our typical patterns of thinking, allows us to explore ourselves. In this way, creativity can be a catalyst to novel discovery: if we learn to utilize the malleability of our minds, we will be more amenable to changes in our patterns of thinking in the appropriate circumstances. The same virtue-theoretic treatment given to

open-mindedness will be given to both sincerity and creativity. First, however, we must lay the foundation for what is to come.

Empathic Argumentation

Imagine you are talking to a friend about philosophy and that you are quite familiar with her argumentative actions/reactions. For instance, suppose she is hypercritical of X-type arguments because of her standing philosophical commitments and that you are justified in believing this based on past occurrences in which you attempted to argue in favor of some claim by appealing to an X-type argument. (In other words, you have good reason to expect how she will react to X-type arguments when they are advanced in the setting of rational argumentation.) On one occasion, however, your friend seems all too willing to accept that your X-type argument is a good one.

What is the rational response in such a situation? I submit that basking in the glory of having (finally) gotten through to her would be objectionably dogmatic given your expectations of how your friend would respond to X-type arguments. Rather, you should rehearse what you thought your friend would say in an effort to remind her of what she usually says about X-type arguments. For if you took her opinions seriously in the past, then her (all-too-willing) acceptance of your argument at this juncture should make you give pause to the assumption that you actually have gotten through to her.

In what does this rehearsal of your friend's way of thinking consist in? Roy Sorensen suggests that in the activity of *empathic simulation* is essential to successful argumentation. As he puts it:

> When I argue with you, I try to advance an argument that is rationally persuasive from your perspective. The arguments fail because they cannot be perceived as good arguments by their intended audience. To this extent, `rationally persuasive argument' is response-dependent. A rationally

> persuasive argument must be such that it can be perceived as such by those it is directed at. Thus part of the arguer's task is to step into his adversary's shoes and appraise the argument from his opposed viewpoint.[41]

Sorensen extends this line of thinking to give an empathic analysis of the fallacy of begging the question. A failure to advance an argument in order to persuade one's interlocutor that "can be perceived as [rationally persuasive] by those it is directed at" is an empathic failure, a failure to appropriately simulate one's interlocutor in the context of argumentation.

If the arguer is to appreciate and appropriately respond to the perspectives of others in argumentation, the arguer must perform a perspective shift. The idea of a "perspective shift" is elucidated by appeals to our natural ability to empathize with one another, in the broad sense of "empathy" on which it denotes the capacity to appreciate and appropriately respond to perspectives of others. First and foremost, this requires charitable interpretation.[42] The *principle of charity* (*PC*), extended to argumentation, rationally requires an arguer, S1, to interpret her interlocutor, S2, as "rational" or "coherent" in her articulated views. Typically, in communication, *PC* requires S1 to interpret S2's beliefs, desires, intentions, and other relevant cognitive states as being part of a coherent system that helps S1 "make sense" of S2's actions. The resulting model will not be perfect, since necessarily S2's cognitive states are (at best) transparent to S2 and *no one else*. But the model gives S1 the best chance to take seriously the perspective of S2, to understand what S2 believes and the rational basis for those beliefs.

[41] Sorensen (1999). An empathic theory of circularity. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77: 508.
[42] Davidson (1973). Radical interpretation. *Dialectica*, 27: 314–28.

Empathic Simulation

Not much argument is needed in defense of why we should try to understand one another's perspectives when, or even before, we argue. But how *should* one respond to the perspective of other without direct or introspective access to their cognitive states? On theory-theory, we access an already held theory of human behavior, a so-called "folk psychology," which we then utilize to reason theoretically to conclusions about another's mind.[43] On simulation-theory, the activity is not theoretical, but instead involves an imaginative episode of mental projection where one simulates the perspective of another (Gordon 1986, Goldman 1989, 2006).[44] Although there is considerable discussion surrounding this debate, arguing for simulation theory is not within the scope of this work.[45] In what follows I will give enough of the broad strokes of simulation-theory for the reader to understand its usefulness to the current project. I will not get into complicated and detailed accounts about how our minds or nervous systems enable us to engage in exercises of simulation, and I will only briefly touch on debates surrounding different theories of simulation.[46]

How does the process of simulation work? Let us consider an example that might help us answer this question. Suppose that Sally believes that (1) All cats like to knock over glasses of water and that (2) Scribbles is a cat. Now, Suppose Fran, who knows that Sally believes (1) and (2), attempts to simulate Sally's perspective and in doing so attributes to

[43] Defenders of the theory-theory include Carruthers & Smith. 1996. Simulation and self-knowledge: a defense of theory-theory, in Carruthers & Smith (eds.) 1996, 22–68.
[44] Gordon (1986), Goldman (1989, 2006).
[45] For a nice layout of the debate, see Heal (1994), Simulation vs theory-theory: what is at issue? in Christopher Peacocke (ed.), *Objectivity, Simulation, and the Unity of Consciousness: Current Issues in the Philosophy of Mind* (Proceedings of the British Academy, 83), Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 129–144.
[46] Goldman (2006) is a good place to survey such accounts.

Sally the further belief that (3) Scribbles likes to knock over glasses of water. Gordon and Goldman disagree about the role introspection plays in a simulation like this.

Goldman believes introspection plays a key role in simulation. On his model, there are three stages of the process. In the first stage, Fran imagines herself believing (1) and (2). In the second stage, she introspects on these simulated states and feeds them into an off-line reasoning process. In the third stage, Fran attributes to Sally (3) on the basis of its being an output from feeding in the products of stage one into the reasoning mechanism in stage two. According to Goldman's theory, the entire process of what I have been calling "simulation" involves a *projection* stage, what Goldman calls "the act of assigning a state of one's own to someone else" (40). When the simulation is completed, that is, after the empathizer successfully generates a simulated mental judgment, she must "pop out" from the simulation and attribute the state to the owner of the simulated perspective.

Gordon, on the other hand, believes that introspection plays no role at all in simulation. Instead, simulation starts by Fran imagining to be Sally by executing an "ego shift" so that "I" now refers to "Sally". So, in the context of the simulation, Fran believes (1) and (2), which produces in her the belief that (3). According to Gordon, by asking herself whether she believes that (3), and upon answering in the affirmative, the simulation concludes with "I believe (3)." Since Fran is just a simulated stand in for Sally, by making this judgment, she successfully represents Sally's mental states without having to utilize introspection. Rather, Fran simply performs an ego shift so she is centered back on herself.

Instead of getting caught up in this debate, I will rely on the readers' ability to intuitively grasp the idea that to simulate another's perspective is to imaginatively adopt it.[47]

[47]Imaginatively adopting another's perspective is much the same as thinking through a thought experiment. Other proponents of the simulation theory will point to psychological evidence about the workings of motor and

In truth, I lean towards Goldman's view, but the details don't matter much for the project at hand. What's important is that we recognize the toxicity of *egocentric errors* and our potential to assuage this toxicity through *quarantining*.

So let us suppose that simulation theory of some sort is the correct view of our "mindreading" capabilities, that is, the ability to represent the mental states of another in our own minds. When simulating the perspective of our interlocutors, we can think about it as running our reasoning capabilities "off line", much like we can run our perceptual capacities "off line" when ensconced in an episode of visualization.[48] After all, we do not actually come to adopt the mental states of our interlocutors when arguing with them, just as we do not actually see the shapes we are visualizing. If we desire to empathize responsibly, we should attempt to quarantine certain of our own beliefs (and other mental states) to the best of our abilities.

Simulation-theory holds that we initiate the simulation process by utilizing our own cognitive architecture. But to construct an argument that would be judged cogent from someone else's perspective, one must imaginatively perform a mental action within the simulated perspective. We do not actually adopt the mental states of another person, but we must hold them in our minds to the extent that we can make judgments from the perspective that *are* affected by the imaginatively adopted mental states. In order to do this, we must in a sense partition off our own mental states to the extent that it is possible so that they don't unduly influence (i.e. distort) our simulated judgments.[49] According to Goldman, we must

---

visual imagery to stress the ubiquity of the creative, imaginative aspect of empathy. See: Currie & Ravenscroft. 1997. Mental simulation and motor imagery. *Philosophy of Science*, 64(1): 161–80; Currie. 1995. Visual imagery as the simulation of vision. *Mind and Language*, 10(1–2): 25–44.

[48] Currie (1995).

[49] Gordon (1995), Goldman (2006).

"[*quarantine* our] own genuine states that don't correspond to states of the target, that is, keeping such states from intruding into the simulation" (41). To the extent that we fail to quarantine our own mental states, we run the risk of being susceptible to egocentric errors, attributing to our interlocutors simulated judgments that *we* would make in such a scenario but they would not. Given the pervasiveness of such errors, simulation-theory's ability to account for and offer guidance to avoid such errors speaks in its favor.

One such bias is the "curse of knowledge," on which our own knowledge of some matter infects our judgments about whether others know it as well.[50] In short, we are more likely to attribute knowledge to someone else if we already have said knowledge. A simple experiment conducted by Elizabeth Newton (1990) demonstrates this phenomenon.[51] In the experiment, some subjects were asked to tap out the melodies of some well-known songs while others were asked to guess the song. When asked whether the listeners would get it right, the tappers routinely overestimated the listeners' ability to guess correctly, suggesting that the tappers had a difficult time quarantining their own mental states surrounding the tapped melodies.

Responsible Simulation

So how should we empathize when arguing? A first pass would involve constructing a model by making predictions based on generalizations about how one's interlocutor thinks. We can think of such a procedure as similar to theory-theory, on which we access a folk theory of psychology before reasoning theoretically about the target mind. Or we can think of it as closer to Gordon's model on which the simulator transforms herself into the

[50] Camerer, Loewenstein, and Weber. 1989. The curse of knowledge in economic settings: an experimental analysis. *Journal of Political Economy*.
[51] Story about Newton via Chip and Dan Heath. The curse of knowledge. *Harvard Business Review*.

simulated in her imagination before reasoning within the simulation. The problem with such a procedure is that it would be susceptible to cognitive biases of which the arguer is not aware in its very first stage.

How about a "bottom-up" approach on which one constructs a model of one's interlocutor's perspective by using oneself as a base model and assuming the cognitive states of one's interlocutor are largely similar to one's own before proceeding to tweak the model in light of any available evidence about the differences between the two? According to Sorensen, since "[t]he broadest area for divergence between structurally similar people is variation in belief and desire," once a base is set, the arguer can tweak her model for known differences in cognitive states relevant to the issue at hand.[52] Such a procedure is more akin to Goldman's theory.

Does this procedure allow for differences in inference or reasoning patterns? Although I agree with Sorensen's claim that "[m]any apparent divergences in inference patterns can be explained in terms of hidden disagreements and unshared goals," I doubt all hidden disagreements and unshared goals can be easily explained through appeals to differences in belief and desires. So when it comes to understanding another's perspective through empathizing, one may need to do more than simply imagine a mind similar to one's own plus or minus a few beliefs and desires. In fact, contrary to Sorensen's claim, I think we often encounter people whose reasoning patterns are largely incongruous with our own. (Perhaps complete incongruity is incompatible with our sharing a common language with which to frame our disagreements.) If we have a chance at rationally persuading these parties (and to refrain from simply labeling them irrational) we must violate the *principle of*

[52] Sorensen. 1998. Self-strengthening empathy. p. 85.

humanity (*PH*), which roughly says that "others reason from their perspective as I reason from mine," since, at least sometimes, it is clear that others do not reason from their perspective as I reason from mine.[53]

A person's self-conceptions include a conception of her own epistemic agency, and a person's sense of her epistemic agency depends on how she views herself in relation to others in the epistemic community. Examples of "epistemic communities" might be academic departments, classrooms, or chat rooms. If many of the members of a given epistemic community successfully represent themselves to a participant as being experts in the domain discussed by that community, she will likely view herself as less capable than she would have had those members represented themselves as merely competent to contribute to discussion or even incompetent for these purposes. Of course, sometimes, we are less competent than those we debate; sometimes more. Often competence is itself hard to define much less measure. When members of a group convince a participant that they are less competent than they really are, she will likely develop an inflated sense of her own credibility. If many of those she takes to be her *peers* treat her as an epistemic inferior, when in fact she is not, she might stop trusting herself. If her peers, on the other hand, treat her as an epistemic superior when in fact she is not, she might develop an inflated sense of her own credibility, perpetuating myths and promulgating errors she would have corrected had she developed the habits of self-criticism that come from internalization of an expert's perspective.

In feminist epistemology, standpoint theory has highlighted the epistemic importance of perspectival differences that arise from one's social location. Standpoint theory supports

[53] R. Sorensen. 2004. Charity implies meta-charity. 312.

the claim that one's epistemic perspective depends on social and material location.[54] As an example, consider people of color in the United States of America who have had to deal with the structures that maintain and reinforce systemic racism their whole lives. People of color know what it is like to deal with racism all the time. They have a sense of how white people see them and this affects how they see themselves. In contrast, many white people don't have to think about how people of color see them as they might not find themselves depending for the cooperation of people of color for the satisfaction of their ends. More generally, a member of a marginalized group in a community has an epistemic privilege on account of bearing certain social and material relations to her environment that are not shared by people outside her group. (This might lend to the explanation for why white people have such a tough time understanding systemic racism.)

Since a person's self-conception as a reasoner or an arguer is tied up with her self-conception of her epistemic agency (a construct which includes her level of confidence), her self-conception as a reasoner or arguer will be affected by her standing in her epistemic community. It may be that were the other members of the community to adopt her perspective, different issues would arise in their communications, leading to a transformative shift in the functioning of the unit. For example, the issues considered pressing in analytic philosophy might look a whole lot different if the discourse had been shaped by the perspectives of people in marginalized groups.[55] Although it is only anecdotal, it seems to me that white people in America are much less likely than people of color to believe certain

[54] For a good overview of Standpoint theory, including more recent developments in the field, see selected pieces from Harding (2004) *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, including from black feminist thought (Collins, Harding, hooks).

[55] West, C. 1989. *The American evasion of philosophy*: *a genealogy of pragmatism*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

obvious truths about race, e.g. that racism exists. This does not mean that white people (or men) cannot come to achieve the black or brown American (or feminist) standpoint. It just means that they need to reflect on how the social and political structures in their communities relate to their own lived experiences so to avoid ego- and ethnocentric practices. More determinately, white men need to listen to women and black and brown people to learn what they are experiencing. In "starting out thought" from the perspective of the marginalized, perhaps members of the dominant group will be able to realize how their unexamined beliefs about race constructed from the confines of their own perspectives might negatively influence the direction of their intellectual endeavors to the detriment of the marginalized and themselves. The resulting shared perspective may be more balanced, more just, and more reasonable.[56] It may, to borrow from bell hooks, transform us, "individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world."[57]

Rather than manipulating a base model that favors our own perspectives or running the risk of bias in generalizing, we should start with a base model that is adaptable enough to represent the perspectives of ourselves and the perspectives of others, even if they disagree with us and even if they lack the reasoning skills we try so hard to live up to. **Why? Because our epistemic standing is partly dependent on the perspectives of others.** If our epistemic self-conceptions of our own epistemic agency are affected by social factors, so too are our self-conceptions of our own reasoning and argumentative practices. Since empathic simulation plays such an integral role in taking the perspectives of others seriously, our base

[56] For an excellent introduction to the considerable amount of literature on epistemic justice, see Fricker (2007). *Epistemic injustice: power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[57] hooks (2004). Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness. In Sandra G. Harding (ed.), *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*. Routledge. 160.

models in responsible empathic simulation might also be affected by social factors. Sure, over time we can revise the model, but its foundations will always be rooted in a perspective whose construction is susceptible to egocentric errors and limiting constraints based on others' perspectives of you, perspectives which themselves are affected by racism and sexism.

This third alternative route to empathy lays the groundwork for a three-step process of responsible empathic argumentation (REA). In the first step of REA, the arguer should assume that her interlocutor's perspective falls in the set of *reasonable* perspectives, unless she has good reasons to think otherwise.[58] If she were to assume that her interlocutor's perspective falls outside the set of reasonable perspectives, then argumentation would never get off the ground. And if she were to advance an argument that is obviously rationally persuasive from her own perspective, but whose construction pays no mind to the differences in beliefs and inference patterns of her interlocutor, she would be irrational because dogmatic.

What is involved in our counting each other's perspectives as falling within the set of reasonable perspectives? In essence, I conceive of the set of reasonable perspectives as those

[58] This can be understood as requiring quite a bit in the way of epistemic virtue. Can you argue with someone you know isn't reasonable? Well, if you have good reasons to think the other person's perspective falls outside of the set of reasonable perspectives – say, if you know that the person's position is internally inconsistent – you might still be able to argue with them, just not rationally. For if cogent arguments are impotent against your interlocutor, you would have to resort to non-rational means of persuasion (viz., coercion) to make any progress in resolving a dispute. These tactics are utilized for both good and bad purposes. On the one hand, we can think of the NRA, which preys on people's fears and insecurities to persuade people that they should be wary of attempts to amend our gun control policies. But on the other hand, we can think of Kendrick Lamar, who, in his song "Alright," raps "and we hate po-po, wanna kill us dead in the street for sho'." Both instances might be based in sentiments that are very real, but neither is an attempt at rational persuasion. Often, when rational persuasion is off the table, and we want to avoid violence, our only remaining option is to participate in a discursive struggle for power. This might come in the form of hyperbole, like in the case of the NRA, or in the form of art, like in the case of Kendrick Lamar. When a fascist, whose perspective falls outside the set of reasonable perspectives, attempts to 'debate' an anti-fascist, anything from subtle manipulation to overt coercion should be favored over (the threat of) violence.

perspectives which are at least *minimally rational*. This includes, at the very least, arguing in good faith, being open to other perspectives, and being willing to change your mind when engaged in rational argumentation. If someone's perspective leads them to dismiss the possibility of rational argumentation, if it precludes them from understanding their interlocutor, or if it seals itself off from counter evidence, then the perspective fails to live up to the minimal rationality requirement. Since these failures are depressingly commonplace, "minimum rationality," as I have defined it, is still quite substantive. It should not be confused with notions of minimal rationality linked to very possession of a mind, perspective or intellect. As I have defined it, minimal rationality is what a virtuous reasoner must assume her audience possesses if she is to fruitfully reason with them in a virtuous manner. Engaging in rational argumentation with individuals who lack minimal rationality (so understood) is fruitless. Individuals in this class may still be persuadable, but they cannot be induced to change their minds through rational means—the means a virtuous arguer would employ. When faced with such an audience, virtuous arguers must make an all-things-considered choice as to whether or not to disengage or utilize non-rational, less-than-ideally virtuous tactics of argumentation. This choice will crucially depend on the moral or practical importance of changing minds on the issue at hand and the costs of employing less-than-ideal means to this end. For example, PETA uses shocking imagery to alter opinions on cruelty to animals. While this display of shocking imagery is not itself rational argumentation, and not the kind of persuasion a virtuous epistemic agent would use in rational discourse between open-minded people, it may be justified "all things considered," given the great suffering it is designed to mitigate.

The second step of empathic argumentation requires the arguer to manipulate her base model to account for those differences between the parties to the dispute, which thereby increases the chances of rationally persuading her interlocutor. If, for instance, I know you tend to be more skeptical than me, then I should amend my (simulated) attitude to reflect this. Failing to amend my attitude would frustrate my chances of constructing a (potentially) persuasive argument, i.e., an argument you would not dismiss on account of your skeptical leanings. But making accurate adjustments to one's base model can be tricky, as we will see in a few short moments.

The third and final step of empathic simulation requires the arguer to judge potential arguments from her simulated perspective. As I say above, if the arguer wants to increase the likelihood of rational persuasion, she would be wise to construct arguments that would be judged as rationally persuasive, not by her, but by her interlocutor. Empathy allows her to do just this, at least if she is successful in her attempts to make adjustments so that her resulting simulation closely resembles her interlocutor's state of mind.[59]

Egocentricity, Otherization, and Isolation

As I alluded to above, a problem arises in the second step of this model of rational argumentation when an arguer attempts to make accurate adjustments to address the difference between her own and her interlocutor's perspective. If the speaker fails to tweak her base model enough and models her interlocutor's cognitive states as too similar to her own, she runs the risk of being *egocentric* in her persuasive tactics. If she overcompensates

[59] In a courtroom during a trial, lawyers on opposing sides are not trying to convince each other, but are both trying to persuade a judge or jury. In such cases we can say that they are arguing on behalf of others (the plaintiff and the defendant) in an attempt to persuade a third party (the judge or jury). Because there is a third party in these cases, the arguers needn't simulate the perspectives of one another if they want to be successful, but they should simulate the perspectives of the third party that both are attempting to persuade.

and models her interlocutor's cognitive states as more different from her own than they actually are, she runs the risk of being *otherizing* in her persuasive tactics. Both errors frustrate the goal of rational argumentation and both lead down a path that ends in isolation.

The dangers of egocentricity in our persuasive tactics are twofold. First, when constructing an argument in an attempt to persuade, failing to respect the perspective of one's interlocutor can result in extreme difficulties in successful persuasion as evidenced in the cases where people continue to argue when it is clear to all disinterested parties that there is no point to their doing so. For example, recall the earlier case of the lottery where two people reason in similar ways to different conclusions about who won't win the lottery even though their total evidence is the same. They reach different conclusions only because they start their reasoning with different tickets. Attempts to persuade one another about which tickets won't win the lottery would never gain a footing because the dispute lacks rational grounds. Like I said above, insisting that *these* tickets (as opposed to *those* tickets) won't win the lottery is no less irrational than holding a set of contradictory beliefs. And second, one who fails again and again in her attempts to persuade but nevertheless resists accepting her interlocutor's judgment might resort to either pounding her fist in a fit of objectionable dogmatism or, worse, employing other non-rational methods of persuasion like violence. Now, a frustrated debater might feel justified in employing these methods. He or she might say: "Those people just won't listen to reason – I *tried* to explain it to them. What more do you want from me?" The answer we should give if we know the party in question is minimally rational in the ways imagined is: empathize better and try again. If we extend the idea of empathic failure to the domain of philosophy, in which our main tools of persuasion are arguments, such methods of persuasion, in conjunction with an overly dogmatic attitude,

could result in intellectual isolation from one's peers. "No chance for persuasion? No chance for discussion."

So there is at least one case in which an arguer is egocentric in her persuasive tactics, a case in which she models her interlocutor 's cognitive states as more similar to her own than they actually are.[60] When, if ever, do we assume that our interlocutor is more different from us than they in fact are? We are probably guilty of this kind of behavior more than we would like to admit. Often, when one thinks one's interlocutor's rational capacities are compromised, it leads one to presuppose that the interlocutor's perspective lies outside of the set of rationally persuadable perspectives. For instance, when one is engaged in rational discourse with someone who disagrees with her about the truth of her most firmly held beliefs, she might tweak her model of her interlocutor's cognitive states in such a way that the interlocutor responses are outlandish or absurd in the simulation-produced model. The implications of otherization may pull one either toward relativism – if one accepts the interlocutor's position as one that is rationally on a par with one's own – or toward skepticism – if one infers from the insoluble disagreement that neither is rational. In the worst case, one's perceived understanding of the interlocutor's perspective as one that makes it impossible for the interlocutor to engage in rational discourse might motivate one to isolate said interlocutor from the rational community at large. For instance, when a speaker is engaging with an interlocutor who rejects her most firmly held beliefs, she may therein characterize her interlocutor as outlandish or absurd (or "crazy"). (The anthropologists are at pains to

[60] And I imagine there are many more. A defining characteristic of conspiracy theories, for example, is that they construe evidence against them as evidence in their favor. The conspiracy theorist fails to appreciate the evidence from the perspective of someone who is skeptical of her theory. B. Keeley. 1999. Of conspiracy theories. *The Journal of Philosophy* 96: 109-26.

warn us of this error when we are trying to communicate with the members of highly foreign cultures.) Such disregard of another's beliefs, though, foments resentment in the disregarded.

In the worst case, the speaker's perceived understanding of the interlocutor's perspective as radically other might motivate her to discount everything the interlocutor has to say: in effect, isolating said interlocutor from the community of which the speaker is a member. But we are doing something wrong if our argumentative practices make it impossible for us to get through to each other. If we want to be successful arguers, we must be willing to simulate positions – positions that do not preclude us from fruitfully reasoning with them in a virtuous manner – even when we firmly believe (or even know) those positions are rationally flawed in other ways.

If we desire to interpret our interlocutors as reasonable (and we do) we must find a balance between interpreting them as thinking exactly like us and interpreting them as thinking in such a way that compromises their rationality. Sometimes this is impossible; our interlocutors place themselves in positions which are wholly incongruent with our way of thinking. But in some such cases we are nevertheless justified in believing that their positions are faulty and we are rational in attempting to persuade them of this. But to do so requires simulating irrational perspectives. Sometimes we must break out of the circle of our opinions so we can pull others in. In the following chapter, I provide a concrete example of this, which surrounds a debate about the fallacy of begging the question. In the concluding section of the current chapter, I will tie together the various threads that run throughout its first three sections and arrive, finally, at my new theory of virtue argumentation.

4. Belief Entrenchment, Rational Argumentation, and A New Virtue Theory of Argumentation (The Good and Bad of Arguers)

> I openly confess my recollection of David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction. I was far from following him in the conclusions at which he arrived by regarding, not the whole of his problem, but a part, which by itself can give us no information. If we start from a well-founded, but undeveloped, thought which another has bequeathed to us, we may well hope by continued reflection to advance farther than the acute man to whom we owe the first spark of light.[61]

Before he encountered Hume's problem (regarding the origin of our concept of cause) Kant was presumably satisfied with the direction of his own investigations. But upon being awoken by Hume's insights, his direction changed course. At its core, philosophy is a cooperative activity aimed at bringing us closer to the truth. Historically, it has at times stood in direct opposition to the kind of religion that promises truth through faith (not reason) and to sophism, which uses reason as a mere means to persuade. Philosophy thrives on defiance over submission, its practitioners using reasons to argue in an effort to rationally persuade.

When Kant awoke from his slumber, his once confident swagger was reduced to a tepid walk. His epistemic stance had changed because the beliefs and actions that were once to a high degree entrenched in him became much less so. Let's say that a belief B is entrenched in S to a degree of 1 if and only if B is incorrigible for S, i.e., S cannot be persuaded in such a way that results in the loss of B. As the degree of entrenchment approaches .5 (equally balanced between B and its negation), S becomes more and more likely to give up B in the face of purported counterevidence. Note that degree of entrenchment is not the same as degree of confidence where the latter is measured

[61] Kant, *Prologomena to any future metaphysics,* p.8.

phenomenologically (i.e. how certain one feels) or behaviorally (e.g. how much one is willing to bet on the truth of a decidable claim). Whether the degree to which B is entrenched is .9 or .51, S may very well be *just as confident* in B in phenomenological and behavioral terms. Degree of entrenchment is a relation between believers, beliefs, and how a believer would modify those beliefs in the face of purported counterevidence.[62] In short, it is a representation of how much we are tied to our beliefs.

Sorensen takes 'rational' to be an "absolute" concept, one defined by the absence of certain features. (E.g., cleanliness is the absence of dirt, flatness the absence of bumps in a surface, etc). In particular, Sorensen thinks rationality can so be defined as "the absence of irrationalities, such as "bias, circularity, dogmatism, and inconsistency."[63] Elsewhere, he defines rationality simply as *efficiency*.

We are fallible agents with limited time and cognitive resources. We inevitably generate some false beliefs, even inconsistent sets of beliefs. Because of these facts about our agency, we are rationally exploitable. Non-rational attempts to persuade (e.g. propaganda, sophistry, advertisements, etc.) take advantage of these facts and in doing so can further entrench us in our natural deficiencies, like our susceptibility to bias, circularity, dogmatism, and inconsistency.

Whereas formal theories have difficulties accounting for the badness of certain circular arguments, my account gestures towards a way of characterizing each type of irrationality (although I narrow the scope to circularity) as a problem regarding belief

[62] Degree of a belief's entrenchment is helpfully defined and distinguished from three other measures of belief: (i) willingness to risk things on the truth of a claim, (ii) phenomenological measures and (iii) the degree to which the information in question has been assimilated into the mind or brain of the subject in question in chapter 2 of A. Zimmerman. 2018. *Belief: a pragmatic picture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[63] Sorensen (1991). Rationality as an absolute concept. *Philosophy* 66/258: 473.

entrenchment. Empathic failures result from steadfast reinforcements of our already entrenched commitments.

Conceptions of Degrees of Belief

The sense of degree of belief I have in mind when I talk of belief entrenchment is best understood when we contrast it to other conceptions of degree of belief. One common conception sees degree of belief as degree of risk, often measured on the basis of betting behavior.[64] On this picture, degree of belief is said to be equivalent to one's credence on a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 is complete lack of confidence and 1 is certainty. If one allows for talk of full on belief, we can say that when one's credence falls below a threshold closer to 0 than 1, she disbelieves the proposition and when one's credence surpasses a threshold closer to 1 than 0, she believes it. Although I am not endorsing this move, notice how natural it seems to extend this picture from betting behavior to assertion. When beliefs are conceptualized as assertions or their inner analogues (judgments), risk can be equated with asserting what is believed. The higher the credence in a proposition in a context the more likely one is to assert it in that context. Hesitancy in assertion is modeled as lower degrees of credence between .5 and 1. The refusal to assert either a proposition or its negation (and therein risk one's reputation should it be shown false) would be modeled with degree of credence .5. Numbers between .5 and 0 would then be used to represent the disposition to dissent from the proposition's truth or even assert its negation.

Another common conception of degree of belief is one that appeals to phenomenological measures.[65] I have no doubts whatsoever that there is a difference in the

[64] Ramsey. 1931. Truth and probability, in *The Foundations of Mathematics*, R.B. Braithwaite (ed.), London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, pp.156-98.
[65] A relatively recent example is provided by Cohen. 1992. *An essay on belief and acceptance*, Oxford: Clarendon.

feeling between doubt and belief. On such a picture, degree of belief would really break into two distinct though intimately related notions, degree of belief and degree of doubt. One might simplify things by demarcating the two (perhaps at suspension of belief, where one's degree of belief and one's degree of doubt balance each other) so that one could not both believe and doubt a proposition simultaneously.

A third conception of degree of belief is a more recent development along pragmatist lines.[66] On the pragmatic picture, degree of belief involves how a given body of information is assimilated into our minds when we engage in an activity, physical or not, that requires controlled and attentive thought. If, for instance, "You bring a given body of information to bear when paying full attention to the activity you're engaged in, we can say that you have at least minimally assimilated the information that guides you in that endeavor." The information that guides you in an endeavor is maximally assimilated, on the other hand, "if you act or reason on that same information when your attention is fully diverted to other things."[67]

I propose to focus on degree of entrenchment and the ways in which the propositions or information we act, reason and argue on can be differently entrenched in the minds of those who so act, reason and argue. Consider the following story:

Suppose that Sally and Fran are genuine believers in God and the Christian faith. Both attend church regularly and both serve as assistants for a twice-a-week bible study. When asked to describe their devotion, both describe themselves as devout. In an activity that their church holds, both were asked to attempt to convert other members of the group who were role playing as non-believers. It was easy for Sally and Fran. Both had recited arguments to themselves many times to ready themselves for occasions such as these, where they need to assert and support their beliefs to a non-believer. They are rarely questioned about their faith, but each has a

[66] Following the lead of Pierce, The fixation of belief, *Popular Science Monthly*, 12 (November 1877), pp. 1-15.
[67] Zimmerman (2018: 7).

niece who often ask questions regarding their shared religious beliefs and both Sally and Fran do their best to instill the correct beliefs in their respective nieces. Sally and Fran also act on their beliefs regarding God and religion. In high school, both were pressured to try some pot, but both turned it down because it was inconsistent with their way of life. During the evolution portion of their biology classes, both paid enough attention to get a good grade, but never really took seriously the theory. Suppose further than Fran, but not Sally, becomes much more skeptical of her devotion in the face of purported counter evidence to her beliefs.

The point of the above story is this: although the religious beliefs of Sally and Fran are similar in the degree to which they are willing to bet on their truth, and in the degree to which they guide their respective actions and assertions, and the degree to which they induce feeling of conviction or certainty, we can coherently imagine the two aunts nevertheless differing with how they respond to purported counterevidence. How is this possible? One possibility is that Sally has sealed herself off from any future purported counter evidence, discounting any counter-evidence as illusory or misleading precisely because of its inconsistency with her religious commitments. Or perhaps Fran simply blindly accepts what others say if they are assertive enough with her. Or maybe both.

In either event, the difference between the beliefs of Fran and Sally would consist in their differing *degrees of entrenchment*. On my account, spinelessness with respect to some belief, view, course of action, etc. results when the corresponding degree of entrenchment reaches a sufficiently low threshold. On the flip side, stubbornness results when the corresponding degree of entrenchment reaches a sufficiently high threshold. In the above story, either Fran is spineless, Sally is stubborn, or both.

Rational Argument(ation)

My discussion of belief entrenchment was meant to bring out an important fact about rational persuasion, namely, that rational persuasion is as much about belief revision as it is

about belief entrenchment. Given that we take each other's beliefs as evidence for the truth of some matter, we can become each other's tools for revising, altering and eliminating beliefs we should not hold. By changing our minds in these ways we provide one another with a model of how someone may reasonably think something different. The view of argument I endorse is epistemic, insofar as the aim of argumentation is rational persuasion and rational persuasion leads to the improvement of at least one person's epistemic standing. Rational persuasion can work as a method of entrenchment, like when I come to believe the conclusion of an argument about a topic I had never considered. Or rational persuasion can work as method of revision, as when an argument rationally compels me to modify my methods of investigation. In cases of the former type, I might acquire a new piece of knowledge (or justified belief), the acceptance of which I would subsequently integrate into my set of beliefs and actions relevant to the topic. And in cases of the latter type, I might learn something that compels me to shed some false (or unjustified) beliefs. In cases of both types, my epistemic standing improves.

So persuasion is "rational," in the sense defined in terms of argumentative discourse, just in case at least one of the arguer's epistemic standing is improved by the act. If an arguer's perspective constrains them in such a way that their views are immune to rational persuasion, then their perspective precludes an improvement in epistemic standing through rational argumentation. Given that rational argumentation is one primary forum for eliciting epistemically positive changes in belief, a person with such a perspective undermines the function of rational argumentation when attempting to participate in it. For example, a conspiracy theorist who counts any purported counter evidence to their view as further evidence for its truth does not meet this minimal rationality requirement for rational

argumentation. As such, one cannot engage in rational argumentation with such an individual where the proposition under dispute is the conspiracy theory itself.[68] In chapter 2, I examine a few plausible minimal rationality requirements for peer disagreements, a special case of rational discourse.

Might there be certain beliefs or principles almost all of us regard as obvious that are such that it would be rational to ignore *any* evidence presented against it? I have in mind here claims like the ones Wittgenstein calls "hinge principles," claims like "I have hands," "The Earth is round," or "2+2=4." Now, in almost all contexts any evidence presented against such claims could be ignored without sacrificing one's rationality. After all, if we are to think and act effectively, we must make some assumptions, assumptions that "[give] our way of looking at things, and our researches, their form" (211).

But I think that the introduction of radical skeptical worries might change the subject and therein render these assumptions problematically dogmatic when they usually aren't. The radical skeptic just *is* questioning how we think about reality. But what does it mean for one to *really* questions reality? It is not enough to pretend to do so in the epistemology classroom. One can play the role of the skeptic as much as they want, saying things like "Do you *really* know there is a tree there?" in response to others' claims to knowledge. But if they go home and rely on beliefs of similar kinds to navigate their world, they are all bark and no bite.

It seems that Wittgenstein too recognizes such contexts as well when he says, "[w]e know that the earth is round. We have definitively ascertained that it is round. We shall

[68] I want to make clear that this does not mean that the conspiracy theorist cannot be rationally persuaded out of their theory. We might, for example, engage in rational argumentation about the truth of some other proposition that is importantly related to the conspiracy theory. If the conspiracy theory becomes less confident in one such belief, they might, upon reflection, become compelled to question how solid the conspiracy theory really is.

stick to this opinion, *unless our whole way of seeing nature changes*" (291: my emphasis). Such a change, however, would be achieved through a monumental discovery, not the rehashing of skeptical concerns in the classroom. Now although Wittgenstein thinks it possible for us to be shaken from our hinges, his justification for standing fast on them bottoms out in the fact that he sees no alternative. For the quote continues with the imagined dialogue, ""[h]ow do you know [that the Earth is round]?" – I believe it." As he says earlier on in *On Certainty*, "[t]o be sure there is justification; but justification comes to an end."[69] If I wish to persuade the skeptic who *really* does not believe that the Earth is round, then I must figure out how to argue with him. But doing so requires an understanding of his perspective, a perspective that sees nature in a wholly different way than my own. I do not owe the radical skeptic, who argues that we know nothing, an argument that we do know something, for their perspective rules out the possibility that any such argument will have rational persuasive force. Moreover, I myself am skeptical that self-described radical skeptics, who all seem to take for granted the world's existence when living their lives and interacting with it, really do doubt the world. So although a more reserved skeptic, like a skeptic about the external world who categorically doubts our claims that we have knowledge of the external world but also accepts that we have *some* knowledge, may yet be moved by one of the various arguments leveled against him. For a view of the world that rejects a specific domain of our knowledge is less radical than a view of the world that rejects all domains of our knowledge, and so requires a less substantial shift in the skeptic's way of seeing nature. By

[69] That certain of our epistemic practices "come to an end" is a theme in *On Certainty*. In addition to saying the practice of giving justification comes to an end (192), Wittgenstein says the same of: testing or giving grounds (110) and justifying the evidence (204), the end of which is "an ungrounded way of acting", explanation (189), the end of which is "mere description," knowledge (378), the end of which is "based on acknowledgement", and giving reasons (612), the end of which "comes persuasion." And it is clear that he thinks doubt comes to an end as well, for he says that "[a] doubt without an end is not even a doubt" (624).

utilizing premises that the skeptic would accept, one can construct arguments that are rationally persuasive from the skeptic's point of view. So long as the skeptic is open to changing his view, such arguments might move him to doubt his previously established view of the world.

Argument, as I conceive of it, is a methodological practice that we can engage in either alone or in the presence of one another in an effort to improve at least one of our epistemic standings. When practiced alone, argument simply collapses into reasoning. During reflection and revision of my beliefs, for instance, I attend to some of them and make inferences from them and in the process learn something new, either as a new piece of knowledge about the world outside myself or, at the minimum, as an item of self-knowledge or self-understanding revealing something about my own views. When practiced together, in the presence of a dispute between at least two individuals, the practice of argument becomes the activity of argumentation. If arguers are sincere and arguing in good faith, then they may engage in (more or less) *rational* argumentation. This is argumentation that is conceptualized as rational by those engaged in it, even if they differ in some of their inference rules or the norms they utilize to criticize and evaluate arguments. Rational argumentation, when it is defined in this idealized sense, can be seen as a cooperative activity in which at least two individuals involved in a dispute (or disagreement) aim to improve their epistemic standing through forms of persuasion they conceptualize as rational. In the ideal case, when both arguers are epistemically virtuous and seek to conform to norms of argumentation that support these virtues, the activity of argumentation can resemble a kind of cooperative reflective equilibrium between the participants' ways of seeing the world.

Good Faith/Bad Faith

A person S argues in good faith just in case (i) S's arguments are sincere representations of things S believes and the rational basis for why S believes it and (ii) S argues in an effort to rationally persuade (and so improve the epistemic standing of) her interlocutor. The person who argues in *bad faith*, then, either does not advance arguments that are sincere representations of her beliefs and their rational support or does not argue in an effort to rationally persuade. Typically, a bad-faith arguer utilizes the practice of argument as a vehicle to persuade, but does not require that persuasion to be rational. In short, the difference between someone who argues in good faith from someone who argues in bad can be explained by a difference in interests. Whereas philosophers value argument as a practice because it can help us gain insight into the truth, the sophists, as an example, value argument because of the persuasive influence it can have over a person (and perhaps because they see rhetoric as being better than other kinds of force). (Consider also the Pyrhonnian skeptics, who seem to argue in an effort to procure tranquility, or perhaps move others closer to it).[70] The philosopher values knowledge or wisdom in part because she takes truth to be inherently valuable. For both, argument is a way of getting others to see the world in a certain way. But whereas the philosopher aims to do it *virtuously* arguing in an effort to rationally persuade another person that the world is a certain way[71], a way discordant with that other person's view, the sophist is interested only in persuasion.

[70] Annas, J. & Barnes, J. (eds.). 2000. *Sextus Empiricus: outlines of scepticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[71] Now this conception relies on the assumption that we can be right/wrong about the certain way the world is. I take it even if there are more than one *correct ways of seeing the world*, as a pluralist might say, there is only *one way the world is*. (I think the pluralist would agree).

Is the sophist, then, rationally (or epistemically) condemnable? I say "yes" for several reasons. First, in caring only about persuasion and not *rational* persuasion, though they might sometimes present an argument that actually causes an improvement in their interlocutor's epistemic standing, they sometimes use their knowledge of how people think to exploit someone's rational blind spots or susceptibility to fallacious reasoning, just to give a few examples. Rather than spreading knowledge, or helping someone develop her worldview in a reasonable way, the sophist is out to simply persuade someone of something. Second, the sophist spreads lies. When the activity of argumentation is conceived by its participants as rational, these participants almost always present arguments whose premises they accept and whose inferences from these premises are found sufficiently compelling to warrant acceptance of their conclusions as either truths or rationally permissible objects of belief. But sophism does not abide by such a norm. This means that the sophist sometimes presents arguments she does not accept simply because she thinks that doing so enables her to persuade her interlocutor of some point. Such a practice is disingenuous and insincere. It is reasonable for one to assume that the sophist accepts the premises of her argument because it is reasonable to assume (absent evidence to the contrary) that anyone who engages in the activity of argumentation does so in good faith. So when the sophist advances, for instance, an argument whose premises she does not accept, her interlocutor in all likelihood would form a false belief that the sophist believes the content of the premises. Third, the sophist reinforces our bad epistemic habits, like being disposed to biases or fallacious reasoning. If the argument the sophist advances is fallacious and persuasive to her interlocutor, and the sophist knows this, then she is deliberately exploiting her interlocutor's failures in reasoning rather than pointing them out in an effort to help break bad habits. Fourth, the sophist

misrepresents herself not just by seemingly accepting premises she actually rejects. If the sophist recognizes the fallaciousness of her argument and advances it anyway, and her interlocutor spots the fallacy, her interlocutor will think the sophist is a worse reasoner than she actually is. Not to mention, the sophist will have a difficult time persuading practiced reasoners who see through their bullshit.

It seems obvious to me that if we want to achieve anything we have set out to achieve in doing philosophy, we must argue in good faith – i.e. we should typically advance arguments that we accept in an effort to rationally persuade.[72] This precludes the type of effortful deception that underlies the sophist's attempts to persuade. But it also precludes a type of rational imitation that may lead someone to blindly accept the arguments of her interlocutors. What the rational deceiver and the rational mimicker have in common is that both are forms of insincerity. Arguing in good faith, again, requires sincerity on behalf of the arguers who are aiming to rationally persuade. Sincere, rational argumentation allows us to assume, absent evidence to the contrary, that our interlocutors accept the arguments they advance and reject the arguments they say they reject.

The Aretaic Turn

In recent times, virtue-theoretic accounts in epistemology have been developed to offer an interesting and important alternative to more traditional theories. Cohen (2007) and Aberdein (2010) have recently attempted to extend this virtue-theoretic framework into an approach to argumentation theory.[73] Aberdein believes the development of these accounts

[72] This comes with a caveat. There are special circumstances in which one is rationally permitted to advance an argument one does not accept. Namely, circumstances where the only path to rational persuasion involves advancing an argument one does not accept, one is rationally permitted to do so. I discuss this in chapter 1.
[73] Aberdein. 2010. Virtue in argument. *Argumentation* 24: 165-179. Cohen, Daniel H. 2007. Virtue epistemology and argumentation theory, in David Hitchcock (ed.), *Dissensus and the Search for Common Ground*. OSSA.

indicate a turn in epistemology, which he takes to have benefited the discipline, stating that it "has been promoted as cutting through entrenched positions to provide new solutions to old debates," including novel definitions for epistemic concepts like knowledge, justified belief, and truth.[74] Depending on the theory, the list of epistemic virtues may vary, but Aberdein divides them up into two camps: Ernest Sosa's virtue reliablism, on which the virtues are *reliable processes* and Linda Zagzebski's virtue intellectualism, on which the virtues are acquired excellences.[75] The former takes notes from epistemological reliablism, which counts a belief as knowledge just in case its source reliably produces true beliefs. Visual perception, memory, deduction, and various forms of induction all count as epistemic virtues on Sosa's theory. On the other hand, since Zagzebski characterizes the epistemic virtues as acquired excellences, taking more guidance from traditional discussions of virtues (in particular, Aristotle's list of the intellectual virtues), her list of virtues includes things like "the ability to recognize the salient facts; sensitivity to detail; open-mindedness in collecting and appraising evidence; fairness in evaluating the arguments of others; intellectual humility; intellectual perseverance, diligence, care and thoroughness; adaptability of intellect; the detective's virtues: thinking of coherent explanations of the facts; being able to recognize reliable authority; insight into persons, problems, theories; the teaching virtue: the social virtues of being communicative, including intellectual candour and knowing your audience and how they respond" (Zag, 1996, 114).[76]

[74]Aberdein (2010: p. 167).
[75] Sosa, E. 2007. *Apt belief and reflective knowledge, volume 1: a virtue epistemology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Zagzebski, L. 1996. *Virtues of the mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[76] She also includes further virtues, including "intellectual courage, autonomy, boldness, creativity, and inventiveness" (1996: 220, 225).

Whether we lean closer to Sosa's or Zagzebski's theory, one thing is clear: to apply a virtue-theoretic framework to argumentation theory, we must eschew the traditional focus of argument appraisal from acts to agents. The question becomes: Is this the kind of argument that a virtuous interlocutor would use to a good faith audience in an effort to rationally persuade? If we define good and bad arguments as the arguments made by good and bad *arguers*, whether any given act of arguing is good or bad will depend on whether the user of that argument was virtuous or not in advancing a given argument. This does not mean that one who is in general dogmatic or skeptical cannot sometimes argue well. Just as a generally bad or vicious person can do something good or virtuous, a stubborn or spineless interlocutor might still produce a good argument from time to time. In fact, allowing for the possibility that people can improve their argumentative practice by more closely resembling our shared ideals of virtuous argumentation requires that people be able to argue well even when they aren't yet ideally virtuous.

Does shifting the focus from argument appraisal to evaluation of the arguers force us into committing the *ad hominem* fallacy? The fallacy *ad hominem* is an argumentative maneuver, which consists in an appeal to facts about the arguer in an attempt to discredit the arguer's argument in the eyes of the arguer's audience. It certainly seems like condemning an argument on the grounds that its advocate was vicious in her presentation of it would amount to arguing *ad hominem*. There is, however, far from a consensus on whether all instances of *ad hominem* are fallacious.[77] As Aberdein succinctly puts the points: "…if the alleged facts about the arguer are relevant to the persuasive force of his argument, where is

[77] Brinton. 1995.

the fallacy in using them to appraise his argument?"[78] And it seems as if we know a person to be generally dogmatic in arguing, and we engage them in argumentation only to be unable to rationally persuade them, we have good reason to criticize them for arguing as they have. Absent evidence to the contrary, we can criticize their arguments as well. To adopt this stance is not to rule out the possibility that a normally dogmatic interlocutor has this time produced a good argument. It is appropriate to use our experience with a person to shape our expectations of their future behavior. This needn't license unconditional dismissal or a refusal to reconsider the judgment in the light of new evidence should it arise.

Virtue Argumentation Theory

Daniel Cohen (2009) motivates his discussion of the epistemic virtues of argumentation by highlighting two contributions theories of argumentative virtue can make to the field of epistemology on the whole. First, he supposes that a large portion of the philosophical community passes on to their students approaches to argumentation that can be understood as deriving from what he calls a "methodological bias towards skepticism."[79] According to Cohen, this type of approach rears its head when the novice student stands fast on her already held opinions. But the link that Cohen attempts to draw between skepticism and conservatism is counterintuitive, as it seems a methodological bias towards skepticism would undermine the student's already held opinions. Second, Cohen motivates his project by appealing to cognitive states that have not gotten the attention in epistemology one might expect since they are often assumed to not be the kinds of states with a justificatory status.

[78] Aberdein, (2007: 118) Virtue argumentation. See also Gascon, J. 2016. Virtue and arguers. *Topoi* 35 (2):441-450.
[79] p. 52

According to Cohen, though, "[v]alues, attitudes, understandings, feelings and other cognitive states are things that can be justified" (53).

Let me just make a few remarks about where I stand on these issues. I could not agree more with Cohen that there is something deeply wrong if a philosophy student (or anyone, for that matter) makes a presumption that her interlocutor is wrong if the interlocutor disagrees with her already held beliefs. But unlike Cohen, I would describe the attitude that underwrites these behaviors as both skeptical *and* dogmatic, rather than a methodological bias towards skepticism. Perhaps what Cohen has in mind here is that philosophers often skew *critical* rather than constructive. It is not difficult to imagine how a dogmatic attitude about one's own beliefs, along with a skeptical attitude towards anyone who disagrees, might manifest in an apparent favoring of criticism in activities of argumentation.

I agree wholeheartedly with Cohen's second piece of motivation, namely, that cognitive states like values, attitudes, understandings, etc. have been relegated to the sidelines of epistemological theorizing for far too long and should play more of a central role. This point provides positive motivation for the aretaic turn in epistemology and, more recently, in argumentation theory.

The Virtues of Argumentation

Recent studies in virtue argumentation theory have produced several worthwhile discussions about open-mindedness. In this section, I attempt to contribute to the discussion about open-mindedness and kickstart similar discussions about sincerity and creativity. Sincerity has played a huge role in social epistemology and is typically discussed in conjunction with testimony, trust, and reliability.[80] With regards to sincerity, I intend to shift

[80] And their discussions concerning sincerity understood in this way are important and fruitful. See Burge (1993), Fricker (1994), Moran (2006).

the focus away from the content of what is said and onto *how* it was said by the speaker. In some ways, my conception of sincerity is more in line with Confucian 'cheng' or Aristotleian truthfulness.[81] As for creativity, although there has been a recent surge in philosophical interest regarding it, epistemic studies are, unfortunately, barely getting off the ground.[82]

Sincerity, open-mindedness, and creativity are epistemic-argumentative virtues that play a role important to our rationalities. They are epistemic because they enable us to turn our gaze inward and engage in rational self-modification aimed at truth, knowledge, and other epistemic goods. They are argumentative because they enable our epistemic communities to progress toward greater understanding, truth and knowledge despite myriad obstacles that arise from conflicts in those beliefs or values we evince in argument. In what follows, I further extrapolate the roles these three virtues would play in an ideal sphere of argumentation.

Being Ourselves and Sincerity in Argumentation

We should not argue all by ourselves: argumentation requires cooperation to succeed. Cooperation, however, precludes complete deference. The trivialist, who accepts every argument presented to him, does nothing but offer empty approval to the arguer. He does not count as cooperating in the activity of argumentation. Cooperation also precludes complete dismissal. The logical skeptic, who rejects every argument presented to him, does nothing but agitate his interlocutors with unfounded dismissal. Both arguers must embody full-bodied reasoners when engaged in argumentation, relying on their own skills to navigate the

[81] "In philology, both 'sincerity' and 'cheng' primarily mean, 'to be true to oneself'." An, Yanming. 2004. Western 'sincerity' and confucian 'cheng'. *Asian Philosophy* 14 (2):155 – 169.

[82] In a fairly recent collection of essays, there are sections devoted to the intersection of creativity with philosophy of art, value theory, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, and philosophy of education. Paul and Kaufman (2014). *The philosophy of creativity: new essays*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

activity. But they must also coordinate in such a way that their own skills don't go to waste; to do this they must take steps to ensure that there is a relatively high level of mutual understanding between them about what they believe and why they believe it. Excessive coordination, however, leads to irrational deference, or *mimicry*. The mimic exemplifies insincerity because he fails to give his interlocutor a genuine representation of what he thinks, opting instead to parrot what his interlocutor thinks. Similarly for the manipulator, who exemplifies a deficiency in coordination (or, equivalently, an excess of self-reliance). The manipulator, too, is insincere since he misrepresents what he actually thinks. And the sophist, who advances arguments he doesn't accept if he thinks it will contribute to satisfying his goal of persuading his interlocutor, is insincere in a manipulative or mimicking way depending on what serves to satisfy his goals. He presents as someone he is not and instead of treating his interlocutor's beliefs as evidence, he treats them only as potential ammunition to help him persuade.

In Book IV, Chapter 7 of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle applies the doctrine of the mean to identify an epistemic virtue important to our social lives, where people "pursue truth and falsity in what they do."[83] Aristotle tries to identify a virtue in this sphere that has no name[84], but could nevertheless be identified with a description of the person who exemplifies it. He says, "The person at the mean, however, is straightforward, and truthful in life and in what he says, since he acknowledges no more and no less than the qualities he has." Aristotle is of course contrasting the person at the mean with the people who sit at one of the two vicious extremities. The virtue is elucidated through the prism of its corresponding

[83] Aristotle. *Nicomachean ethics*: 1127a-1127b33.
[84] In the very same chapter, Aristotle at point calls the person who sits at the mean "truthful." He also speaks of the truthful person in regards to justice, however, which may explain his timidity in attributing the virtue a name at the beginning of the chapter.

vices. The more common vice is exemplified by the boastful person, who "seems to be the sort to lay claim to esteemed qualities that he either does not have or has to a lesser degree than he claims." The other, less common extreme, is exemplified by the self-deprecator, who "seems to disclaim those he has or to play them down" (76). The unnamed virtue of accuracy in self-representation is a mean between these two extremes.

I suggest that Aristotle's discussion of the (moral) virtue that sits at the mean between boastfulness and self-deprecation is a good model on which to explain the epistemic virtue of sincerity. Sincerity can be understood as an epistemic-argumentative virtue because it is a precondition for rational argumentation. And just as Aristotle gained insight into the virtue by examining the vices that surround it, we can do the same. Sincerity, I claim, is the virtue at the mean between rational mimicry and manipulation, the first of which is spineless in nature and the latter of which is stubborn.

Suppose an arguer, who knows his interlocutor is susceptible to making a certain kind of mistake in reasoning, advances an argument he knows to be bad in an effort to persuade his interlocutor. This type of arguer is akin to Aristotle's boastful person, since he lays claim to the esteemed quality – being connected to the truth – when in fact his argumentative actions do not show he has such a quality. Such a person, on my view, exemplifies the vice of manipulation within the sphere of rational argumentation. This person might gain adoration, reputation, and credibility, but all would be undeserved. Rather than be sincere, he shirks the requirement on rational argumentation that one argue in good faith in an effort to *rationally* persuade.

A similar diagnosis holds for the person who verbally assents to arguments of his interlocutor, when he actually rejects them or who verbally rejects arguments he actually

accepts. For such a person manipulates his interlocutors into thinking that they have brought him closer to the truth when they haven't, or that they have failed to bring him closer to the truth when they have. The former imbues his interlocutor with an unearned boost in confidence, and the latter with an undeserved boost in confidence. In both cases, the insincere person is being manipulative.

At the other extreme, the "self-deprecator," in the sphere of argumentation, exemplifies the vice of rational mimicry. Rather than give himself the credit he deserves by actually thinking for himself, he simulates the perspective of someone else and uses it as a model on which to base his interactions with his interlocutor.

Suppose that a student, when asked about the explanation for Donald Trump winning the 2016 U.S. presidential race, rehearses what he has heard his professors say, although he does not buy the explanation. If all the teacher cared about was that the student was able to rehearse such explanations when queried, then it seems as though the student succeeds in answering the question. But if the teacher desires that the student learn that his rehearsed explanation is *the* explanation of why Trump won the race – that is, if the teacher cares for the student to *believe* that it is the correct explanation – then the teacher will be dismayed if she finds out the student does not actually accept the explanation. In this case, the student is insincere in a mimicking way, rehearsing an explanation as if he endorses it when in fact he does not. Similarly in argumentation. The kind of person I have in mind who resorts to mimicry in argumentation is the one who simply rehearses the arguments he hears someone else endorse or those he thinks someone else would endorse. In both cases, the arguer would be irrational because he resorts to mimicry rather than sincerely representing what he thinks by being truthful in what he says and what he does. And in both cases, rather than think for

himself, the arguer utilizes a model of another person to stand in as a representation for his own argument.

Sincerity + Empathy

There is reason to think mimicry is a trait humans could not do without. Given the way children learn, it is easy to see how experiences of others' actions give them a model on which to base their own actions. Now I am not saying that the child consciously constructs the model or applies it when acting. But there is precedent for the idea that our sympathetic contagion makes "the minds of men…mirrors to one another."[85] As Sorensen puts it in his discussion of this Humean notion of sympathy: "As David Hume observes, and as is richly and somewhat embarrassingly corroborated by classic social psychology experiments, we adopt the moods and ways of our company. Identification, motor mimicry, vicarious feelings, and emotional contagion sweep us into solidarity…"[86]

It is important to make a note here that though "sympathy" and "empathy" are often used interchangeable, these terms are not best interpreted as picking out a singular or unified psychological capacity. The con man, who excels at empathizing with others, may very well feel no compassion at all for the person he intends to manipulate. His empathy consists in his ability to explain and predict the minds of other people by adopting their perspectives. But one can have this capacity without feeling happy for the triumphs of others or sad for their suffering and so lacking sympathy in the intended sense. The expert chess player, too, may empathize with an opponent in order to determine what move might best work in his favor, all the while keeping an emotional distance. And sympathy can existence in the absence of empathy. Someone may sympathize with migrants displaced by the Syrian battles in Aleppo,

[85] Hume, D. 1888. *A treatise on human nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 365.
[86] Sorensen (1998: 79).

yet be utterly at a loss as an affluent white person in her attempt to empathize with them or adopt their perspectives from the "inside."

What about manipulation? Unfortunately, as long as people see benefits in taking advantage of others, instances of manipulation seem inevitable. Rather than cooperate, we look to outwit one another. Rather than work to reconcile our differences, we work to drive further wedges that divide us. But, if we are careful, there is hope that we can at the very least expose the manipulators and warn others of their activities.

At minimum, being sincere is acting and presenting as oneself. Does this mean that one cannot "try on different hats" when engaged in rational argumentation? No; it means simply that a person should be upfront and honest about trying out a view or persona when this is what she is doing.[87] Both forms of insincerity – mimicry and manipulation – have negative epistemic impact on an insincere person's audience. If an agent is insincere in argumentation, she thereby violates the implicit trust we have in one another to present and act as ourselves when engaged in rational argumentation.

Given that we take each other's beliefs as evidence for the truth of some matter, we can become each other's tools for de-entrenchment, providing one another with a model of how someone might reasonably think something different from what we do. But if I deliberately make others think that what I believe is something other than what I actually believe, and they discover this, then they would be right to distrust me and largely discount me as a suitable partner for argumentation. If I were to verbally object to an argument while at the same time finding it rationally persuasive, then I could rightly be condemned for

[87] There is one exception to this rule. Namely, when a person holds a view that precludes the possibility of the construction of arguments that might persuade her rationally, the rational response may involve persuading her from her own irrational perspective. In such cases, there is a tradeoff between rational persuasion and sincerity.

manipulation. Given that we take each other's beliefs as evidence, if you trust me, my verbal objection may very well make you question your acceptance of the argument. If I were to verbally accept your argument while at the same time actually finding it not at all rationally persuasive, then I could rightly be condemned for mimicry. Again, if you trust me, then my verbal acceptance of your argument would make you more confident than you should be about your own acceptance.

To sum up: we should aim to be sincere when arguing with one another in an effort to escape two epistemic vices: mimicry, which is exemplified by spineless deference to one's interlocutor, and manipulation, which is exemplified by stubborn dismissal of one's interlocutor. Insincerity in argumentation is bad because it can lead to the domination or alienation of one's interlocutor.

Sincerity can be defined as the epistemically appropriate balance of coordination and self-reliance. (Coordination alienates, self-reliance dominates.) These two states of being are intimately linked. A person who relies only on themselves, for example, is lacking in the kind of coordination that would allow them to relate to and collaborate with others. And a person who is too coordinative lacks the self-reliance needed when no one else is around and they need to pull themselves together. Equivalently, then, we can use either of the two aforementioned states to define sincerity as the mean between two extremes: manipulation and mimicry. Since manipulation can be equivalently described as excessive self-reliance and mimicry as a deficiency in self-reliance, we can say that sincerity is the mean between an excess and deficiency in self-reliance. Or, since mimicry is the excess of coordination and manipulation is the deficiency of coordination, we can say that creativity is the mean between two extremes, the excess and deficiency of coordination.

Open-Mindedness in Argumentation

Once satisfied that our interlocutor is arguing sincerely, how might we treat our disagreement? Insofar as we count other's beliefs and arguments as evidence, we should treat one another's arguments open-mindedly, for a mindset that is dogmatic or skeptical can undermine education, contribute to intellectual isolation, preclude the discovery of new truths, and halt epistemic progress. Moreover, dogmatism can lead us down philosophical rabbit holes that waste our intellectual abilities; skepticism can lead us to give up hope, leaving our abilities to rot.

Daniel Cohen (2009) is one of many who has recently applied a virtue-theoretic account to argumentation theory.[88] In his version, open-mindedness counts as a critical virtue, where critical virtues are those traits that contribute to the various goods and accomplishments that can be achieved by engaging in argumentation. Cognitive virtues are different from critical virtues in that they are "aides on the way to cognitive achievements" rather than achievements in argumentation (54).

> Open-mindedness puts our beliefs on the table for discussion. Even though open-mindedness is consistent with strong commitment to our beliefs, simply allowing that they be up for discussion calls them into question – and calling beliefs into question, even ones that are well-justified, runs the risk of losing them. Open-mindedness, then, is most important for people whose beliefs are mostly unjustified or wrong. For people whose beliefs are mostly in order, however, it is epistemologically risky, unnecessary, and unwise (57).

For Cohen, whether open-mindedness is an epistemic virtue is a contingent matter based on facts about human epistemic agents such as whether our beliefs are by and large true, whether our instances of reasoning are not *post hoc* rationalizations, and whether our original judgments are more reliably true than our reflective judgments. If our belief sets

[88] Cohen. 2009. Having an open mind and having a sense of proportion as virtues in argumentation. *Cogency* 1(2): 49-64.

include, by and large, true beliefs, then being open-minded is risky. If our instances of reasoning are indeed *post hoc* rationalizations, then being open-minded might vary between people and situations. If our original judgments are more reliable than our reflective ones, then "the willingness to revise our beliefs might in fact be more negative than positive" (58).

Carter and Gordon (2014) attempt to argue that the connection between open-mindedness and truth is tenuous and highly conditional since there are situations where being open-minded is not truth-conducive. For example, writing about a person's set of beliefs about physics, which they label "P," The state that "whether it is comparatively more truth-conducive to be openminded or dogmatic with respect to P, depends on whether the beliefs in P are true." On the one hand, if the beliefs are (mostly) true, "*being dogmatic* has the upshot of making one resilient to giving up one's true beliefs and falling into error." On the other hand, if the beliefs in P are (mostly) false, "it is better to be openminded and accordingly led from error" (208).

Both Cohen and Carter & Gordon, however, fail to treat open-mindedness with the nuance that it deserves. Carter and Gordon (2014), for instance, construe open-mindedness as the "Aristotelian 'midpoint' between credulity and dogmatism" (207).[89] Consider an example: If I have a set of beliefs about a subject, all of which are true, and I encounter a dozen experts on the subject matter who all assure me that many of my beliefs are false, then I would be irrational to hold to my beliefs. For holding onto my beliefs in the face of such glaring counterevidence (in the form of the experts' opinions) would be objectionably dogmatic. On the flip side, if I have a set of beliefs on some matter, most of which are false, and I encounter a dozen experts who assure me that my beliefs are correct, then giving them

[89] Carter, J. and Gordon, E. 2014. Openmindedness and truth. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 44/2: 207-224.

up (absent any independent reasons) would be objectionably skeptical. Yes, it is true that in the first case I would hold onto a host of true beliefs that I would have otherwise lost if I had capitulated to the experts. And yes, it is true that in the second case, holding onto my beliefs would preclude my ridding my mind of error. But losing a few beliefs (or holding onto a few false ones) *when the evidence seems to suggest that doing so would be rational*, is a small price to pay for being perceived as credible by the respective experts.

Cohen seems to be equating open-mindedness with *willingness to revise one's beliefs*. As he says: "Part of open-mindedness is the ability to listen carefully, the willingness to take what others say seriously, and, if called for, the resolve to adopt them as one's own," but also "the willingness, ability, and resolve to re-examine one's own beliefs and, if called for, to let them go" (56). If Cohen is right that open-mindedness can be given a virtue-theoretic treatment by applying Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, then the two corresponding vices of open-mindedness would be total willingness to revise one's beliefs and total *unwillingness* to revise one's beliefs. Based on his analysis, it makes sense why Cohen would think it natural to say that a person can be *too* open-minded.

But if we take seriously the context in which Aristotle's doctrine of the mean is utilized, we can see that Cohen's analysis must be mistaken. Consider courage, a moral virtue, as an example. For Aristotle, courage is defined by being the mean between two extremes, one the excess (rashness) and the other a deficiency (cowardice) in a given magnitude. Suppose a person walking by a burning building overestimates her abilities and the need for intervention, and underestimates the dangers involved, and so runs into what is in fact an empty building to save the innocent people she falsely assumes are trapped inside. If she dies moments later when the building collapses, we will not say that she was *too*

courageous. Instead, we say that she was rash. Similarly with open-mindedness. If a person is too willing to revise her beliefs, we should not say that she is *too* open-minded, but instead that she is spineless, just as we would say of the person too unwilling to revise her beliefs that she is stubborn.

Cohen does seem to agree that skepticism has something to do with the picture here. His reasons for why he thinks open-mindedness is not an epistemic virtue have to do with the fact that whether it improves our epistemic standing is highly dependent on the context and situation. In certain situations, he claims, great damage can be done to the epistemic project as a whole if one is open-minded. For if we were to apply open-mindedness "globally and without any sense of proportion," it would lead us into full-on skepticism. But if I am right and we should define open-mindedness as the mean between skepticism and dogmatism, then we can say that only the most spineless of minds will be taken in by global skepticism. For when it comes to *arguing*, global skepticism gains traction only if there is a proponent willing to argue in favor of it. But if someone were willing to argue in favor of global skepticism, the skeptic's interlocutor would be able to rationally condemn the skeptic (or the skeptic's use of the argument, at least) on the grounds that her position is *spineless*.

Open-Mindedness + Empathy

Jack Kwong (2015) argues against Cohen's treatment of open-mindedness. Kwong instead construes open-mindedness as the *willingness to take a novel viewpoint seriously* and in the process of defending this view he gives a better characterization of the benefits of this trait of mind. If we understand this idea of taking a novel viewpoint seriously as something necessary for rational argumentation, we can see that open-mindedness too has deep connections to empathy. But whereas our sincerity revolves around how we present and act

in argumentation, whether in constructing our own arguments or responding to others, open-mindedness concerns how we process the information we acquire through our interlocutor's argumentative actions.

Open-mindedness can be defined as the epistemically appropriate balance of humility and confidence. These two attitudes are intimately linked. A person who is too confident, for example, can be described also as lacking the appropriate degree of humility. And a person who is too humble lacks the appropriate degree of confidence. Equivalently, then, we can use either of the two aforementioned attitudes to define open-mindedness as the mean between two extremes: dogmatism and skepticism. Since dogmatism is the excess of confidence and skepticism is the deficiency of confidence, we can say that open-mindedness is the mean between two extremes, the excess and deficiency of confidence. Or, since skepticism can be equivalently described as excessive humility and dogmatism as a deficiency, we can say that open-mindedness is the mean between an excess and deficiency in humility.

Changing our Minds and Creativity in Argumentation

In the right epistemic circumstances our rationality enables us to more or less resist or accept change in the face of new evidence, be it new information we gain from interacting with our environment, evidence acquired through careful observations, knowledge secured through reasoning, or understanding through deep reflection. We can choose, to some degree to check out completely from REA, either utilizing argument only when it suits our needs and with no regard for others or letting others do the arguing while we choose the "winning" side. We can choose to some degree to seal our minds off from outside influences, utilizing argument only to bolster our defenses or attack our adversaries. The good thinker, though,

does not merely exercise her rational capacities to inquire, evaluate, reason, and argue; she turns them in on themselves to check and improve herself. As rational agents we are imbued with the ability to, upon reflection, change not only what we think but *how we think* by attending to our own and others' epistemic perspectives.

Unfortunately change isn't always up to us. Though every person is imbued with a natural rational ability, what we think/believe is often the product of socialization, our upbringing and our environment, and our cognitive proclivities and deficiencies. We can mitigate the influence of many of the things that cause our beliefs to become more or less entrenched in us through education, practice, and therapy (among other things). So if we really aim to be more virtuous arguers, we need to become better empathizers, so we can reach out to others when the world works in our favor.

When *is* it epistemically appropriate to accept or resist change? The answer to this question will depend on the agent and her epistemic situation. The question I aim to answer is different: what type of epistemic character and conduct enables an agent to make the epistemically appropriate changes when needed? The *epistemically virtuous agent* aims to hit an equilibrium by accepting or resisting change to her beliefs, attitudes and actions when it is epistemically appropriate to do so. In other words, the virtuous agent's beliefs are such that they are entrenched to an epistemically appropriate degree, given her overall epistemic state. The virtuous agent's beliefs (and actions) should not make it impossible for her to change herself in the future. There may be times where she seems to be more or less stable and her epistemic states more or less balanced, but in some such cases that balance is ephemeral. With new information comes the need for critique, reflection and revision. Resisting change in a dynamic environment inevitably leads to stagnation. But accepting

change upon the slightest breeze would be epistemic suicide. We are fallible rational agents ecologically constrained by our cognitive resources and limited time; how we think should reflect this fact. In order for an epistemic agent to make rational changes when integrating new information, her views must be dynamically grounded.

Creativity, understood as an epistemic virtue, can be defined as the mean between stagnation, a stubborn epistemic state, and instability, a spineless one. It is the virtue that gives us a sort of rational malleability. The amelioration of instability is elaboration; the amelioration of stagnation is critique. The direction of Kant's investigations were likely grounded in beliefs he had settled on, after much deep philosophical investigation, which served as elaborative scaffolding for the rest of his thinking. But those beliefs were clearly not entrenched to a degree of 1 in Kant as evidenced by his being shaken by Hume's problem. The subsequent critique of the direction of his own investigations enabled him to exercise his creativity to modify their direction, first by engaging in some self-critique, and second by elaborating on his new direction. Had he not been open to Hume's arguments, he would not have been able to modify the direction of his investigations to avoid stagnation. If he had been too open to them, he would have followed Hume in thinking that the habits that contribute to our methods of investigation are a sheep to the dog of custom, which might lead to the type of hyper skeptical empiricism that says we have no say in the matter when it comes to how we think. (The degree to which Hume succumbed to radical skepticism continues to be the subject of a great deal of scholarly debate.)

In most cases, an argument's conclusion is something on which we have already formed an opinion. If you disbelieve the conclusion until I persuade you of it, then you probably have other beliefs, attitudes, and actions that hang together with your now shaken

disbelief. These other beliefs, attitudes, and actions, however, might make it impossible for you to know (or be justified in believing) the conclusion of my argument. If you were to accept the conclusion of my argument despite the fact that it is incompatible with a great number of your already held beliefs, has your epistemic position improved? Suppose you tell me that you believe the conclusion of my argument, yet everything else you do, say, or believe makes it reasonable for me to attribute to you a *disbelief* in the conclusion. Have I really rationally persuaded you? Have I even persuaded you? What if the apparent inconsistency between your stated belief about p and your actions associated with your acting on p ultimately drive you mad? Still? My point is simply that rational persuasion amounts to more than getting someone to verbally accept the conclusion of an argument in seeming sincerity. If we understand rational persuasion as the function of rational argumentation, we can say rational persuasion is defined by a relationship between an argument and the arguers who utilize it, with the end of getting someone to reflect and revise their overall states so that their epistemic position improves. One of my main points in this dissertation is that *how we argue with each other* deeply affects our chances of genuine epistemic improvement. If we really expect others to improve epistemically, we need to give them time to recalibrate.

Creativity + Empathy

In "An Empathic Theory of Circularity," Roy Sorensen seems to hit on something close to what I conceive of as creativity when he describes the adaptive role the successful arguer plays:

> The successful arguer must inhibit many natural reactions; he must abstain from attractive paths of reasoning and decline to use well known propositions as premises. The arguer needs to act out the role of his adversary in much the same way as an actor takes on a character. Part of this is a matter of knowing

> who you are simulating. But there is also the task of restraining knowledge…[90]

If we desire to be responsible epistemic agents, we must be stable enough to express what we think to all types of people, but malleable enough to allow us to successfully empathize with others. In cases where our interlocutor pushes us to our extremes, when "attractive paths of reasoning" fall flat and using "well known propositions as premises" gets us nowhere, we need to get creative.

Creativity is needed in three areas of REA. First, when one sets off to construct an argument in an effort to rationally persuade one's interlocutor, one should attempt to simulate the perspective of one's interlocutor to the best of one's ability. One's ability to empathize and subsequently simulate another's perspective allows one to more or less experiment with simulated arguments until settling on something one reasonably judges to have a good chance of rational persuasion. By exercising what Sorensen calls "the less cognitive aspect of successful argumentation," one is able to treat the opinions of one's interlocutors as reasonable by doing one's best to see the issue from their perspectives, which are in part constituted by the opinions in question. In short, I must "break out of the circle of my own opinions" to construct an argument that is rationally persuasive from the perspective of my interlocutor (508). This involves letting go of my own opinions and views to such an extent that they do not affect my judgments about which arguments would be rationally persuasive from my interlocutor's perspective.

The second area of argumentation in which creativity is vital is when I look to modify my own beliefs and actions in order to avoid inconsistency or other irrationalities. What should I do when someone successfully persuades me with an argument? Should I calculate

[90] Sorensen (1999: 508).

a measured response to the argument and deploy when my opponent is at his weakest? No. I should take some time to think it over, while also learning more about my interlocutor, seeking out the opinions of others, and forming habits that can help attenuate any residual effects from my previously held belief so as to avoid inconsistency in belief and action. If I aim to be virtuous, I must respond to that argument with a *critique* of my own views in light of my newly acquired evidence in such a way that I can *elaborate* that view to myself and others.

Third, creativity is vital in figuring out how *we* should proceed after conciliatory resolutions to peer disagreements. Suppose that S1 and S2 are engaged in rational argumentation, which hinges on a disagreement about the truth of a theory T. Suppose further that, though they sometimes disagree, they argue very often with one another and often end up adopting similar views. In fact, suppose that they are peers with respect to all things related to T, perhaps because they are both experts. When S1 comes to realize S2 is an epistemic peer and that they have arrived at contrary conclusions on the basis of the same evidence, the rational response for S1 is conciliation. Minimal conciliation rationally requires a person to reduce confidence in her own view and increase confidence in her peer's view. In cases where her peer's view is just the negation of her view, the reduction of confidence in her own view and increase in her peer's view are conceptually connected. Maximal conciliation rationally requires a person to treat one's interlocutor's beliefs in the same way one weighs one's own. This might lead to the resulting state where both individuals suspend on their original beliefs. By weighing one's interlocutor's views in this way, they can be seen as a critique of one's own views in the very same way a piece of (counter) evidence learned through empirical observation or a priori reasoning would enable

internal critique. But internal critique need not lead to internal conflict; through self-reflection one can resist persistent agnosticism enough to get a footing going forward. Creativity comes in when trying to determine *how* to proceed. In ideal circumstances, both peers would conciliate and proceed through cooperation and collaboration. Discoveries are difficult to come by for any one person, but two minds are often better than one, at least when it comes to epistemic progress.

Creativity can be defined as the epistemically appropriate balance of critique and elaboration. (Critique erodes; elaboration reinforces.) These two states of being are intimately linked. A person who is too critical, for example, is lacking in the kind of elaboration that would allow them to articulate their views. And a person who is too elaborative is less wont to exercise critique when the circumstances call for them to revise their views. Equivalently, then, we can use either of the two aforementioned states to define creativity as the mean between two extremes: stagnation and instability. Since stagnation can be equivalently described as excessive elaboration and instability as a deficiency in elaboration, we can say that creativity is the mean between an excess and deficiency in elaboration. Or, since instability is the excess of critique and stagnation is the deficiency of critique, we can say that creativity is the mean between two extremes, the excess and deficiency of critique.

I am here taking some pretty familiar tools of the philosophical tool-belt in "elaboration" and "critique" and utilizing them to generate something novel and of philosophical value. I did similar (or at least I sought to) with humility and confidence, and with self-reliance and coordination. All three pairs were utilized to see what I call the epistemic virtues in a new light.

In Book IV, Chapter 8 of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle describes a virtue in the sphere concerned with "tasteful social conduct" as the mean between an excess and deficiency in the use of humor, or what he calls buffoonery and boorishness.[91] The buffoon, Aristotle says, "will do anything for a laugh, and care more about this than speaking decently and not offending those who are the butt of their jokes." The boor, on the other hand, "contributes nothing and takes objection to everything, even though relaxation and amusement are thought to be a necessary part of life." If we extend this virtue-theoretic framework to the sphere of argumentation, the virtue of quick-wittedness, which Aristotle ascribes to "[t]hose who joke in a tasteful way…as if they are quick-to-turn," can serve as a model for what I have been calling creativity.

Why does excessive elaboration lead to stagnation? Why does excessive critique lead to instability? The overly elaborative reasoner or arguer is too often adding nuance to bolster their view instead of considering alternatives. They can construct a view, but once they've started down one path, there's no turning back. On the other hand, the overly critical reasoner or arguer is too concentrated on considering alternatives to ever solidify a position of their own. But if one strikes a balance between elaboration and critique, one can achieve (or at least approach) the type of dynamic stability required for creative epistemic and argumentative behavior.

5. Conclusion

Although I have been talking in terms of being virtuous, I of course allow greater and lesser degrees of discursive virtue in general and the particular virtues I've identified in particular. So virtue theoretic evaluation is often appropriate even when we know or suspect

[91] Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*: 1127b34-1128b9.

that we are incapable of achieving these ideals in full. There is no doubt in my mind that it is impossible, at least psychologically, to be maximally sincere, open-minded, and creative all the time. At most, what we can do is aim towards the ideals we use these words to express. If the Aristotelian approach to the analysis of these ideals is correct, we can best promote the associated virtues in ourselves by balancing ourselves between the corresponding vices. (Indeed, in each case, Aristotle identifies the more common failure to achieve virtue, whether it be the associated excess or deficiency, and advises his pupils to overcompensate at first, by, for example, begin acting rashly if one is now cowardly, so as to arrive at courage. I have not provided similar advice in the discursive realm. But the more general point remains. The impossibility of perfection does not drain the utility from critique. Our inevitable imperfection should not stop us from criticizing those who advance irrational arguments or engage irresponsibly in argumentation. We should all be learning together.

This initial chapter of the dissertation was intended to be constructive, by offering an alternative framework under which we can make normative judgments about arguers, arguments, and argumentative actions. The next two chapters are case studies for my framework. The first is aimed at providing justification for our judgments concerning a particular type of *bad* argument, namely, a question-begging argument. The second provides justification for our judgments concerning the *irrationality* of being steadfast in the face of peer disagreement. I argue that such behavior – both circular argumentation and steadfastness in the face of peer disagreement – is symptomatic of *dogmatism*, which itself reflects a failure in cognitive empathy on the part of the dogmatist.

Chapter 1. Breaking out of the Circle[92]

What's wrong with begging the question? Some philosophers believe that question-begging arguments are inevitably fallacious and that their fallaciousness stems from a shared "formal" deficiency. In contrast, some philosophers, like Richard Robinson (1971) deny that begging the question is fallacious at all. And others characterize begging the question as an "informal" fallacy of reasoning that can only be understood with the aid of epistemic (as opposed to syntactic and semantic) notions. Roy Sorensen (1996) joins this last camp by offering a powerful argument against both Robinson's skepticism and fully formal approaches to the phenomenon. According to Sorensen's view, question-begging is fallacious because it compromises the rationality of the question-beggar's position. Though his argument forces Robinson into a peculiar dialectical position, it does little to elucidate the reasons why Robinson's position is unstable and it fails to embody Sorensen's own conception of rationally persuasive argumentation. I utilize this conception to show how Robinson is left with no principled basis on which to deny the fallaciousness of begging the question. By advancing the dialectic between Sorensen and Robinson, I aim to show that our argumentative practices must take the perspectives of others seriously, whether or not those perspectives are rational.

1. Introduction

Suppose Sally loves chocolate ice-cream, but Fran does not. Might it be appropriate or unobjectionable for Sally to attempt to persuade Fran that chocolate ice cream is delicious? The answer to this question will depend on their perspectives. We can suppose

[92] An earlier version of this chapter is published in *Argumentation.* The final publication is available at https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10503-017-9426-x

that Fran has tasted chocolate ice cream and hates the taste. Now it may be that Sally should know about Fran's aversion to chocolate, perhaps because Sally has seen Fran gag when she tried it in the past. We can imagine the conversation going something like:

Sally: "Mmm, this chocolate ice cream is delicious. You should try some!"

Fran: "But I hate the taste of chocolate. Didn't you see me gag the last time I tried it?"

Sally: "Yes, but you should try it!"

Or maybe Sally has never seen Fran try chocolate, but Fran has assured her that she hates the taste.

Sally: "Mmm, this chocolate ice cream is delicious. You should try some!"

Fran: "As I've told you many times, I hate the taste of chocolate."

Sally: "But this chocolate is the best, Fran. You should try it!"

Maybe Fran has never told Sally about her distaste for chocolate, but she has always turned it down in the past.

Sally: "Mmm, this chocolate ice cream is delicious. You should try some!"

Fran: "No, thanks. Haven't you seen me turn down chocolate in the past?"

Sally: "Well yes, but this chocolate is the best, Fran. You should try it!"

Are Sally's attempts to persuade Fran appropriate or unobjectionable? If Sally knows (or should know) that Fran does not like the taste of chocolate and knows that Fran's aversion is relatively non-malleable, it would be irrational for her to insist that Fran try the dessert; indeed, since chocolate isn't essential to health it would be wrong for Sally to try in more subtle ways to impart her love of chocolate to Fran.

Why are Sally's attempts to persuade objectionable? An attractive diagnosis would attribute Sally's attempt to an *empathic failure.* Sally should recognize that the actions she

undertakes in order to persuade Fran will not work for a particular reason. Sally's attempt fails because she did not take into account how chocolate ice-cream tastes to Fran. Fran's palate is partially constitutive of Fran's perspective. A failure to consider Fran's palate is therefore an empathic failure in a suitably broad sense of "empathy" on which it denotes the capacity to appreciate and appropriately respond to the perspectives of others.

Now, suppose Sally has reason to think that Fran's judgment is entirely ungrounded. Maybe Fran was brought up in a culture whose people viewed sweet, cold treats as disgusting, although Fran has never tasted chocolate of any kind. If Sally knows this, then her insistence that Fran try some might work to persuade Fran that chocolate ice-cream is delicious. Now of course this depends on whether Fran will *actually* like the taste of chocolate ice-cream, but surely we should not blame Sally for her attempt. Such attempts at persuasion, if they are appropriate, require the persuader to comprehend the prospective persuadee's perspective.

In what follows, I apply the same analytic framework to elucidate the pragmatic nature of argumentative circularity. If successful, my analysis will shed light on the fallacy of begging the question, argument evaluation, and rational persuasion.

Question-Begging

What's wrong with begging the question? Some philosophers believe that question-begging arguments are inevitably fallacious and that their fallaciousness stems from a shared "formal" deficiency.[93] In contrast, some philosophers, like Richard Robinson (1971) deny that begging the question is fallacious at all.[94] And others characterize begging the question as an "informal" fallacy of reasoning that can only be understood with the aid of epistemic

[93] Defenders of the formal approach include Walton (1994) and Woods (1992).
[94] Robinson (1971). Begging the question. *Analysis* 31: 113-17.

(as opposed to syntactic and semantic) notions.[95] Roy Sorensen (1996) joins this last camp by offering a powerful argument against both Robinson's skepticism and fully formal approaches to the phenomenon. According to Sorensen's view, question-begging is fallacious because it compromises the rationality of the question-beggar's position.[96]

In this chapter, I endorse the view that what is wrong or objectionable with question-begging is that it constitutes the same form of objectionable dogmatism evidenced in attempts to persuade of the type I describe above. In section 1, I lay out the complex dialectic between Sorensen and Robinson.[97] Though Sorensen's argument forces Robinson into a peculiar dialectical position, it does little to elucidate the reasons why Robinson's position is unstable and it fails to embody Sorensen's own conception of rationally persuasive argumentation. In section 2, I improve upon Sorensen's case by arguing that Robinson's view is self-defeating. Robinson must either accept my argument or reject it, but he can do neither without endorsing a contradiction. His only other option is to abandon his formal characterization of fallacious argumentation. And this leaves Robinson no easily identifiable grounds on which to deny the fallaciousness of begging the question. By advancing the dialectic between Sorensen and Robinson, I aim to show that our argumentative practices must take the perspectives of others seriously, whether or not those perspectives are rational. Finally, in section 3, I examine a bit more in depth the connection between empathy and circularity. Though the tendency towards circularity might be an inevitable feature of the human condition, empathy offers a way to break out.

---

[95] Defenders of the epistemic approach, which rely on pragmatic features like knowledge, belief, justification, and presuppositions, include Sanford (1972) and Ritola (2006). Wright's (2000) approach, which focuses on the argument's *cogency*, i.e., its ability to rationally persuade, probably falls into this camp as well.
[96] Sorensen (1996). Unbeggable questions. *Analysis* 56: 51-55. Sorensen (1999). An empathic theory of circularity. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77: 498-509.
[97] Sorensen. Cf. Teng, Truncellito and Ritola.

2. Unbeggable Questions

Richard Robinson (1971) argues that there is no fallacy of begging the question – that a prohibition on the practice is just a "rule of an old-fashioned competitive game" (116).[98] Roy Sorensen (1996: 51) disagrees and propounds the following argument against Robinson:

(A) There is a fallacy of begging the question.

Therefore, there is a fallacy of begging the question.

The basic idea is this: Robinson must either condemn (A) or accept it as a good argument. He cannot accept (A) as a good argument, as that would commit him to the content of A's conclusion: the fallaciousness of begging the question. But if Robinson condemns (A), he must do so on the grounds that (A) begs the question or because (A) is either invalid or unsound. But if he condemned (A) on the grounds of begging the question, Robinson would have to acknowledge the fallaciousness of at least one question-begging argument and therein concede the point at issue. Robinson's only option, then, is to reject (A)'s premise.[99] I will argue (in section 2) that rejecting (A)'s premise does Robinson no favors. But before I do, I want to investigate Sorensen's reasons for claiming that Robinson cannot condemn (A) on these grounds as (according to Sorensen) argument (A) does not beg the question.

Argument Evaluation

[98] Robinson is talking here of Aristotle's dialogical game *Elenchus*, in which the activity of the interlocutors engaged in rational inquiry is governed by a set of rules that permit certain moves and prohibit others. Aristotle gives two accounts of the fallacy: one in the *Prior Analytics* and the other in *Topics*. Aristotle's first account can be loosely associated with informal (epistemic) approaches to diagnosing the fallacy. His second account can be loosely associated with more formal (dialectical) approaches. Robinson takes both accounts to be mistaken: "…Aristotle's *Analytics* account is a failure, and his *Topics* account makes it merely a rule of a game which nobody plays any more…" Robinson thinks that since both accounts fail, the use of the phrase "begging the question" is "nearly always a muddle, or improper, or both" (117). For helpful discussions of the distinction between the two approaches, see Walton (1994) and Hazlett (2006).

[99] In ''Unbeggable Questions,'' Sorensen suggests as much: ''After all, Robinson has a viable reply to my argument. He should simply deny my premise'' (51). But he fails to follow up on this admittedly ''viable reply'' to his argument and in doing so fails to follow his own advice in taking seriously Robinson's perspective.

Sorensen (1996: 53) argues that (A) does not beg the question even though its single premise is reiterated as its single conclusion. He argues for this surprising claim as follows:

(1) To beg the question is to beg the question against someone.

(2) An argument can only beg the question against someone who would not agree with all of the argument's premises and conclusion.

(3) An argument can only beg the question against someone who can consistently object that the argument begs the question against him.

(4) If argument (A) begs the question against someone, then he either agrees with all of its premises and conclusions or he cannot consistently object that (A) begs the question against him.

(5) Therefore, (A) does not beg the question.

The argument is valid. Premise (4) is a consequence of (1), the relevant auxiliary argument (A) and the relevant features of the dialectical situation between Robinson and Sorensen. And (5) follows from (2)-(4). By themselves, (2) and (3) imply that if an argument begs the question against someone, then that person does not agree with all the argument's premises and conclusion and he can consistently object that the argument begs the question against him. Accusing (A) of question-begging, however, precludes the possibility of satisfying both conjuncts of the consequent.

Against (1)/(2)

I take (2) to be obvious. What about (1)? One might think that one can beg the question against *oneself* and that this would undermine (1)'s plausibility. But begging the question against oneself would still amount to begging the question against *someone*. Plus, it isn't clear that one could coherently beg the question against oneself. What would this entail? Well, for one, the subject *S* would propound the argument to herself, thereby committing herself to accepting the argument as rationally persuasive. But in accusing the

argument of begging the question, *S* also rejects the argument as unpersuasive. *S* therein contradicts herself. Still, regardless of whether such an activity would be incoherent, in begging the question against herself *S* commits herself to belief in all of the premises and conclusion of the argument, contradicting (2).

A position that viewed begging the question as a formal defect of the argument could at least get off the ground in its rejection of (1). One might, for instance, assert that all arguments of the form 'P, therefore, P' beg the question as they merely restate their premise as conclusion. If we can determine whether an argument is question-begging by appeals to its syntactic and semantic features only (and without appeals to the pragmatic features of argumentation) we might be tempted to say that such an argument begs the question full stop, regardless of whether it was propounded *against* someone. If we could take the "perspective from nowhere" we would be able to evaluate arguments for the fallacy just like we do when we evaluate an argument's (formal, deductive) validity.

There are, however, good reasons to reject formal models of the fallacy. Almost everyone agrees that question-begging arguments are rationally unpersuasive. But whether an argument is rationally persuasive depends on who the argument is intended to persuade. The rational persuasiveness of an argument is not a monadic property of an argument, like the argument's validity or soundness (given certain idealizations), but is indexed to a time and a person.[100] As such, any account of begging the question will have to take into account pragmatic features of argumentation, such as what is known by each of the interlocutors, the

[100] Of course, the same relativity to speaker and time affects the validity and soundness of arguments that contain indexicals, demonstratives, tenses and other "context sensitive" features, but these complications won't arise in what follows.

aims and goals of the dialogue, and other features that bear on whether the argument would be found rationally persuasive by one or more of these parties.

And there is another, independent reason to be dubious of formal accounts of the fallacy. Sorensen provides several examples of arguments that are of the form 'P, therefore, P' which seem not to beg the question. Consider just one such example:

(I) There is at least one argument typed in black ink

Therefore, there is at least one argument typed in black ink.

Acceptance of (I)'s premise confers justification on one's belief in its conclusion because the argument *instantiates* the content of the conclusion. Sorensen thus concludes that there are instances of arguments of the form 'P, therefore, P' that are not circular, i.e., that are not question-begging. And since any formal view prohibits *every* instance of such an argument, the above example constitutes a counterexample to formal models of the fallacy. Any construal of the fallacy which prohibits appeals to pragmatic (or at least non-formal) features of argumentation is implausible.[101]

Against (3)

Someone might reject (3) because she thinks *no* arguments beg the question. If no arguments beg the question, the argument fails because (3) is vacuously true. Such a denial would be illegitimate, since it would render the above argument, which intends to show that (A) does not beg the question, superfluous. If a rejection of the argument requires one to assert that no arguments beg the question, then there is a much more straightforward argument to its conclusion: no arguments beg the question, therefore, (A) does not beg the

[101] Sorensen (1991: 248). Per an anonymous reviewer, a slightly more ambitious example from Sorensen (1999: 498): (II) Some deductive arguments do not reason from general to particular. Therefore, some deductive arguments do not reason from general to particular. Both arguments (I) and (II) work for my purposes.

question. So a response on behalf of Robinson along these lines fails because "attributing a defense that defeats the defender" is an explicit violation of the principle of charity.[102]

Perspective Shift in Argument

Nevertheless, even if we grant that (A) does not beg the question, Sorensen's argument fails to be rationally persuasive. To see this, consider what Sorensen calls "perspective shift in argument."[103] The person who advances the argument to another in good faith must do so in a manner that is rationally persuasive to this other party *from this party's point of view*. This process of "simulation", when done competently, can be said to have met an important goal of discursive rationality. The problem for Sorensen is that he fails to heed his own advice: he advances an argument he should have known would not persuade Robinson, since the falsity of its premise is entailed by Robinson's position.

Earlier I said that there are three responses Robinson could give to Sorensen's argument (A). In accepting (A) he concedes the point. If he were to reject (A) on the grounds that it begs the question, he would also concede the point. The only plausible response he could give, then, would be to reject (A)'s premise. And why not? After all, Robinson's position commits him to a denial of the existence of the fallacy of begging the question, i.e., its truth entails the falsity of (A)'s premise. There is good reason to think that any argument which purports to persuade someone of the irrationality of her position and utilizes a premise the falsity of which is entailed by her stated view is an argument she need not take seriously. For her stated position would already rule out the argument as unsound. In fact, just as in the "ice-cream" case where Fran's palate is partially constitutive of her

[102] Sorensen (1996: 51). The *principle of charity* is a principle constrained by our communicative and interpretive practices. Roughly, charity requires us to interpret our audience as rational.
[103] Sorensen (1991: 505).

perspective, Robinson's rejection of Sorensen's premise is partially constitutive of his perspective.

Now, some believe that Sorensen mischaracterizes the dispute between him and Robinson as a dispute about the *existence* of the fallacy of begging the question. Teng (1997), for instance, believes the dispute is really about whether begging the question is fallacious: Robinson thinks no, Sorensen thinks yes.[104] And Truncellito (2004) thinks the dispute revolves around the *nature* of the fallacy: Robinson takes it to be a logical fallacy, whereas Sorensen takes it to be rhetorical.[105] I will not take these issues up here, since there is a live option on the table for Robinson that does not involve a re-construal of the dispute. Robinson can simply reject (A)'s premise and condemn (A) on the grounds that it is unsound.

The dialectic thus far looks something like this:

R: There is no fallacy of begging the question

S: (A) There is a fallacy of begging the question.

Therefore, there is a fallacy of begging the question.

R: (A)'s premise is false.

Still, though rejecting A's premise is Robinson's best strategy, in the next section I argue that Robinson's extraordinarily restrictive position on when we can properly condemn an argument prevents him from executing this maneuver. Robinson believes that there are only two ways to properly condemn an argument: either an argument should be condemned on the grounds that it is invalid, or else the argument should be condemned on the grounds that it has a false premise, i.e., that it is unsound. All other condemnations of an argument are, according to Robinson, improper. In response, I advance an argument he cannot

[104] Teng (1997). Sorensen on begging the question. *Analysis* 57: 220-22.
[105] Truncellito (2004). Running in circles about begging the question. *Argumentation* 18: 325-29.

consistently reject. Robinson's attempts to evaluate my argument lead to contradiction because his position permits for the construction of faulty arguments whose faultiness cannot be detected from his perspective on the evaluation of arguments.

3. The Rational Persuasion of Robinson

We can all agree with Robinson that "[i]t is absurd…to condemn an argument because its premise entails its conclusion…" Our accusations of question-begging are not forceful if we base them on the entailment of conclusion by premises, or else any valid argument would count as question-begging. This is why we should reject any account that implies an argument begs the question so long as its conclusion is "contained" in its premises.[106] But Robinson should be wary of anti-deductivist paranoia. Though he is right that sometimes people mistakenly condemn an argument as question-begging *"*just *because* [the] premise necessitates [the] conclusion" it is unfair to suspect that a person who condemns an argument for begging the question does so *because* it implies the falsity of their own view. I hope that my argument below, which can be condemned for reasons *other* than being invalid or unsound, helps stave off this paranoia.

Robinson's position regarding the fallacy of begging the question is parasitic on a claim he makes about what it is to properly condemn an argument. My argument is only effective against someone who endorses his stated position on this broader issue. As such, it shows why abandoning this overly narrow position is paramount. Consider what Robinson says in response to someone who condemns an argument as question-begging.

[106] I here pass over the notorious difficulties that plague attempts to explicate the intended notion of containment.

> There are only two proper ways of condemning an argument. One is to say that the conclusion does not follow from the premises. The other is to say that you do not accept the premises as true. Your begging the question appears to be neither of these. So it is not a proper accusation. (Robinson, 114)

I reply that accepting Robinson's minimalist position on when an argument can be properly condemned commits him to endorsing the following paradoxical argument:

(B) 1. A deduction can be properly condemned just in case it is either invalid or unsound.

2. This deduction can be properly condemned.

Therefore,

3. This deduction is either invalid or unsound.[107]

Clearly the argument is valid, as (3) follows by Modus Ponens from (2) and the left to right conditional of (1). Is it sound? If Robinson wants to properly condemn the argument, he must do so by rejecting one of the premises. He cannot consistently reject premise (1) because he would thereby give up his definition of "bad deduction." By rejecting premise (1), he would thereby concede the point that a deductive argument can be properly condemned on the basis of something other than its being invalid or unsound.

Must he accept premise (2)? Suppose premise (2) is true. If premise (2) is true, the argument's conclusion follows from its premises via Modus Ponens. So let us suppose that the argument's conclusion is true. The argument's conclusion says that the argument is invalid or unsound. Since we have already concluded that its premises are true, we can conclude that the argument is invalid. (This follows from the definition of "soundness.") But

[107] Argument (B) bears a resemblance to the pseudo-scotus puzzle. Jaquette (2003). The soundness paradox. Logic Journal of the IGPL 11: 547–556. The pseudo-scouts puzzle, also known as the Validity Paradox, is generated from attempting to evaluate the following argument, (V): Argument (V) is deductively valid. Therefore, Argument (V) is deductively invalid.

the argument consists in a single application of modus ponens. Thus, to deny the argument's validity, Robinson would have to reject the validity of modus ponens. And this is a high price to pay. Indeed, even if there are exceptions to modus ponens (as has been argued by Forbes), these putative exceptions all involve the interaction of tense and various operators.[108] To allege that the above argument begs the question is highly unintuitive.

Suppose, to explore the other fork of our dilemma; that premise (2) is false. If premise (2) is false, what it says is false, and what it says is that the deduction above can be properly condemned. We can therein conclude that the deduction above cannot be properly condemned. But if we conjoin this claim with premise (1), simple first-order reasoning (utilizing biconditional elimination) allows us to conclude that the deduction is neither invalid nor unsound. Equivalently, the deduction is both valid and sound. But applying the classic definition of "soundness" allows us to conclude that the deduction has true premises. This, however, contradicts the assumption that premise (2) of the deduction is false.

To sum up, the argument can be used to derive a contradiction from Robinson's definition of "bad argument." Robinson is unable to condemn arguments on any grounds other than their being invalid or unsound. This forces him to accept arguments against this very conception that others might reject. Since he cannot reject (1) without giving up his definition of "bad deduction" and he cannot reject (2) without generating a contradiction, his only plausible remaining option is to accept that the argument is a good deduction because rejecting Modus Ponens is implausible. But if he were to accept (B) as a good deduction, Robinson would be committed to the conclusion that (B) is either invalid or unsound. Back around the circle he goes.

---

[108] G. Forbes. 1983. Thisness and vagueness. *Synthese* 54: 235–59.

So: Either Robinson accepts (2) and so must reject a clearly good instance of MP or else he rejects it and must endorse the contradiction that (B) is both sound and unsound. Neither option is rationally acceptable. The argument (B) clearly must be condemned, but I have just shown that Robinson cannot condemn it for being either invalid or unsound. What we have here is a deduction that is clearly condemnable, but because it is sound if unsound and unsound if sound. We ought to condemn such arguments because they are *self-defeating*.[109]

The Liar[110]

Earlier I said that (B) is valid. But is it? Can Robinson reject (B) on the grounds that its self-referential second premise does not denote a proposition and that this renders the argument invalid?

To answer this question, first consider the traditional 'liar' sentence: "this sentence is false." Suppose Robinson were to deny that the 'liar' denotes a proposition because it is neither true nor false. Such a view relies on an assumption of bivalence. Under the assumption of bivalence, then, Robinson might reason as follows: "Since (2) cannot be true or false, (2) fails to denote a proposition. But since MP relates propositions to propositions, (B) cannot involve an instance of MP. But if (B) does not involve an instance of MP, then (B) is invalid. Thus, (B) is invalid."

---

[109] Silva (2013) offers a definition of what he calls 'epistemically self-defeating arguments'. "An argument is epistemically self-defeating when either the truth of an argument's conclusion or belief in an argument's conclusion defeats one's justification to believe at least one of the argument's premises." Silva. 2013. Epistemically self-defeating arguments and skepticism about intuition. *Philosophical Studies* 164: 579-89.

[110] Although I make the ultimate connection from argument (B) to the Liar, there may be intermediate steps through Curry's Paradox. Curry. 1942. The inconsistency of certain formal logics. Journal of Symbolic Logic 7: 115–117. One formulation of Curry's paradox includes a list of sentences, where one sentence—let's suppose the third sentence—says ''If the third sentence in the List is true, then every sentence is true.'' The paradox is generated in one's attempts to determine the truth value of the third sentence in the list. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

But this line of reasoning also depends on Robinson's acceptance of (1), which ultimately blinds him from seeing the possibility that (2) is true. As I have argued, there is a far simpler way to condemn (B): condemn it on the grounds that it's self-defeating. If I'm right, then (2) is true and I need not make any controversial claims about liar sentences and their connections (or lack thereof) to propositions.

The Mean

Aristotle's doctrine of the mean says that a virtue is the mean between two extremes: one, which is an excess, and the other a deficiency in a given magnitude.[111] In the first chapter of this dissertation, I hypothesized that we can extend this idea from moral practice to the practice of argumentation and say that a good *arguer* finds the mean between two extremes: dogmatism and skepticism.[112] The former is reflected in question-begging arguments, whose acceptance results in a deficiency of humility (or, equivalently, excessive confidence). The latter is reflected in self-defeating arguments, whose acceptance results in an excess of humility (or, equivalently, a deficiency of confidence). This conception might be endorsed by Sorensen, who posits a fallacy "opposite" to begging the question:

> Often my adversary has inferential resources that I lack. That means I can rationally persuade him by appealing to premises that I do not believe and inferential rules I do not accept. The argument will be rationally persuasive from his perspective, not mine. After all, the relevant resource base is his, not mine.[113]

[111] Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*: 1106a26-b28.
[112] In my (2018) paper "Breaking out of the Circle," I hypothesized that the second vice corresponding to open-mindedness is spinelessness. I have since changed my mind on this matter and now count spinelessness as one of the two vicious epistemic attitudes (along with stubbornness) that define three separate argumentative virtues – open-mindedness, sincerity, and creativity – each of which have a corresponding set of two vices. Spinelessness is replaced by the vice of skepticism.
[113] Sorensen. An empathic theory of circularity. 508-509.

But Sorensen fails to heed his own advice. He propounds an argument which is obviously unsound from Robinson's perspective, since the falsity of its premise is entailed by Robinson's position.

In contrast, I have followed Sorensen's advice (rather than his practice) by advancing an argument that utilizes resources that I lack but Robinson possesses, namely, the acceptance of (B)'s premise. The argument is rationally persuasive from his perspective because it undermines his position about what it is to properly condemn an argument. I have shown that his only rational option is to abandon his formal characterization of fallacious argumentation, and this leaves him with no obvious basis on which to deny the fallaciousness of begging the question.

4. Sincerity in Argumentation

Am I irrational in advancing argument (B) against Robinson, since I do not accept its (false) first premise? In response to this question, all I can say is that I am doing all I can do to embody Robinson's perspective, one that turns out to be irrational, in an attempt to persuade him to abandon his position. It is not always possible to propound a sound argument (or even a good argument) in order to rationally persuade someone. Sometimes, in our attempts to persuade, rationality requires that we simulate what are in fact irrational (or at least unsound) positions.

If we desire to interpret our audience as reasonable (and we do when engaging in discussions with others in good faith) we must find a balance between interpreting them as thinking exactly like us and interpreting them as thinking wildly different from us in a way that compromises their rationality. Sometimes this is impossible; our interlocutors place themselves in positions wholly incongruent with our way of thinking. But in some such

cases we are nevertheless justified in believing that their positions are faulty and we are rational in attempting to persuade them of this.

Being Sincere

Recall the example in which Sally's attempts to persuade Fran that chocolate ice cream is delicious, even though she knows Fran does not like chocolate. Now, suppose that Sally is well aware of Fran's distaste for all things chocolate, but nevertheless persists in her attempts to persuade Fran that she should try chocolate ice cream. Since Fran's palate is partly constitutive of her perspective, Sally's attempt to persuade Fran is bound to fail. She does not take into account how chocolate ice cream tastes to Fran, but she should. If she persists in her attempt to persuade, Fran can rightly call Sally irrational because she models Fran's cognitive states as too close to her own. In other words, her persuasive tactics are egocentric. And in the domain of taste, it is extremely plausible that the truth (and perhaps even the content) of our "taste" judgments are relativized to the agent making the judgment. The assertion that x tastes good is often shorthand or elliptical: a truncated way of asserting that x tastes good to those who share the relevant aspects of the speaker's aesthetic. If a speaker does not implicitly relativize her claim but states simply that x tastes good without any relativization, then what she says is either false (because there are no sensibility-independent facts of taste) or only relatively true: i.e. true relative to those who share the relevant aspects of the speaker's sense of taste and false otherwise. Because of this, we often should not attempt to persuade a dissenter of the judgments we make regarding whether such-and-such is delicious or disgusting. If we know they just have a different sensibility from our own—a sensibility on which the object of evaluation is not as we experience it to be—we ought to simply accept their judgment, knowing full well that they have privileged

access to their own mental states about how things actually taste to them. Any attempt to persuade someone along the lines of Sally's attempt to persuade Fran, then, will be irrational because unduly egocentric.

Just as the virtue of open-mindedness is the mean between two extremes, the virtue of sincerity can be defined as the mean between two extremes – mimicry and manipulation – where mimicry is an excess and manipulation a deficiency in coordination (or, equivalently, a deficiency and excess of self-reliance, respectively). Both extremes offer us a way of connecting with others, but at a price. Coordination requires giving up some control. Self-reliance requires taking control. If Sally really wants Fran to like chocolate ice cream, she only has two options: either force Fran to try it or hope that Fran simply gives in to the insistence. Neither tactic counts as persuasion, let alone rational persuasion, and both are clearly coercive. Now, I admit that advancing an argument that I do not accept in an effort to rationally persuade Robinson does have a "lawyerly air of insincerity" to it.[114] But unlike in the ice-cream case, the success of my persuasion does not rely on Robinson's giving in and accepting my argument. As I have argued, he cannot accept my argument.

Self-Serving Arguments

Why does Sally care that Fran like chocolate ice cream so much that she *insists* on it? Why does Sally care so much that she *persist* in this insistence? Why do we beg the question against each other? According to Sorensen,

> [Q]uestion-begging is a side-effect of the most efficient way of persuading one another. So it is an inelimenable tendency in human thought, and indeed any thought by thinkers operating under a constraint of scarce resources i.e. all physically possible thinkers. Given 'ought' implies 'can', the general tendency to circularity is an innocent feature of the human condition.[115]

[114] Sorensen (1999: 509).
[115] Sorensen (1999: 506).

But even if the "tendency to circularity is an innocent feature of the human condition," particular instances of the phenomenon can still be condemned on the grounds that they exemplify egocentricity and dogmatic insistence. A deep desire for connection might drive us to do whatever we can to make others like what we like. Some, even, may choose to use this fact about us to exploit us. There are countless examples in advertising where companies look to win over potential customers by insisting that their product is the best (Think here of McDonalds' "I'm lovin' it!" campaign.) Even worse, this fact can be used to take advantage of those who are relatively incompetent with regards to the issue at hand (for instance, some child who isn't aware that McDonald's is trying to sell something to them). If advertisements are arguments, then they are always self-serving.

Consider an even more pernicious example drawn from political discourse. In a press conference on the 15th of December, Donald Trump assured his audience that he knew a thing or two about words. Here is his statement in all of its glory:

President-~~Elect~~ Trump: "I'm very highly educated. I know words, I have the best words…but there is no better word than stupid."[116]

If we understand the above quote as an attempt by Trump to persuade his base to think that the word "stupid" is the absolute best word, and we take Trump to be giving reasons in good faith for them to do so, then we can see that his stated reasons were simply an appeal to (what Trump takes to be) his own (perceived) expertise. But assuring others that you know what you're talking about when they have no independent reason to trust you as credible provides them with nothing better than stubborn insistence. (And this is no accident in cases of people with a lot of power). Of course, if a person can back up their claims of

[116] Jones (2015, December 30). Yet another bold claim from Donald Trump: "I know words." Retrieved from http://gawker.com/yet-another-bold-claim-from-donald-trump-i-know-words-1750331997.

expertise by displaying or manifesting this expertise to their audience in some way – in this case by being a bit more eloquent at the absolute minimum – then they would have a better chance of rationally persuading their audience. When one's "demonstration" is a mere assurance, it's either no argumentative backing at all or an extremely poor one. Accepting an obviously self-serving, vacuous "argument" for expertise (e.g. Trump's ineloquent assertion of eloquence) is clearly irrational in the virtue theoretic sense I have identified in chapter 0 above.[117]

If an arguer's attempt to persuade through dogmatic insistence is unsuccessful, the arguer may resort to manipulation of other sorts. Suppose, for example, that Sally offers Fran some ice cream knowing that Fran will think it is coffee-flavored when in fact it is chocolate. Her neglecting to mention that the ice cream is actually chocolate could very plausibly be underwritten by a hope that Fran will finally come to admire the deep, exquisite, bold flavors of chocolate ice cream, perhaps so that when they are chatting over a cup of coffee and see a child with an ice cream cone melting under the sweltering sun they can share in their love of chocolate decadence. But though her insistence is an understandably human action, we can rightly say that she argues in an irrational manner when she uncritically reasons from her own aesthetic sensibility because doing so is egocentric and self-serving.

It makes sense that we would not want to excuse such behavior, whether in cases of disputes about how we ought to condemn arguments, about whether we should try some new food, or about whether we should take claims of expertise seriously. The tendency to circularity is a tendency we all have to get others to see the world like we see it so that we can better connect with them. But how we help others understand and share our perspectives

[117] In terms of disagreement, dogmatism precludes mutually recognizable epistemic peerhood. More on this in chapter 2.

matters. Self-serving arguments are elicit means to this laudable end. The virtuous arguer takes a higher road and never loses sight of the intrinsic value of rational argumentation. There may be consequentialist justifications of tricking people into conformity with reason. Indeed, I have resorted to something like trickery in my efforts to convince Robinson of the deficiencies in his formal scheme for evaluating arguments. More crucially, if rational discourse could not provide the means to avoiding Trump's reelection, and some non-rational campaign of "advertising" (or propaganda) could achieve this end, those of us dedicated to argumentative virtue would have to make an all-things-considered judgment as to whether this vicious means were warranted by the political end in view. But non-rational argumentation, that we know in advance to be unduly egocentric and manipulative, must always remain our last resort. Propaganda should never be employed without a special justification that can used to excuse or rationalize the techniques in question.

5. Conclusion

Sorensen's response does not hold up in the face of scrutiny, but his idea of perspective shift in argument helps shed light on the nature of the fallacious nature of begging the question. In section 1, I characterized the dispute between Sorensen and Robinson as being a dispute about the existence of the fallacy of begging the question. Something like: R: There is no fallacy of begging the question.

S: (A)

R: (A)'s premise is false (i.e., there is no fallacy of begging the question).

I said earlier that I think Robinson would be wrong to reject (A) by denying its premise. I *do* think this, but Sorensen's argument fails to show it. His response forces Robinson into a peculiar dialectical situation where the only rational thing for him to do is

reject (A)'s premise. But Robinson would be wrong in doing so, as rejecting (A)'s premise amounts to asserting (without argument) that there is no fallacy of begging the question. Robinson would display objectionable dogmatism if he were to reject (A)'s premise. He would, essentially, beg the question. Sorensen, of course, could not say this once he advanced (A), for his criticism would hold no weight from Robinson's point of view. But I can say this Robinson, because I am not committed to accepting Sorensen's argument, nor am I committed to accepting his argument to the claim that (A) does not beg the question.

Does that render Sorensen's argument superfluous? And if it *is* superfluous, is that bad? In an as-yet-unpublished paper, "Confessing to a Superfluous Premise," Sorensen generates a paradoxical argument and offers a diagnosis that he says helps "minimize [attributions] of meaninglessness [and enrich] our conception of superfluous information" (24). I do not intend to get into the details of this new argument here, but only want to diffuse a potential misunderstanding of the charge as one that criticizes Sorensen's argument as superfluous and thus meaningless. Although (A) might "not hold up in the face of scrutiny," it points the way forward. In the same paper, Sorensen says that "acknowledgements of superfluity are a natural side effect of working in stages. After I introduce an argument, I can confess that the argument has a premise that is expendable - relative to a newly appropriate standard. Scaffolding that was needed earlier becomes clutter" (21). Sorensen's argument was necessary scaffolding, which becomes clutter upon further investigation.

My response to Robinson's skeptical thesis about begging the question can be summed up in the following argument:

i. If there is no fallacy of begging the question, then Robinson's response to Sorensen is legitimate.

ii. Robinson's response to Sorensen is illegitimate.

iii. Therefore, there is a fallacy of begging the question.

The argument is valid and I see no reason why Robinson would ever dream of rejecting (i). It avoids self-defeat and it avoids inducing a paradox to the evaluator of the argument. What about the truth of (ii)? I've already argued that Robinson's asserting his position is his most rational response to Sorensen but that in doing so Robinson commits himself to an unstable position. Sorensen's argument forces Robinson into a state of overconfidence, one that is irrational even from Robinson's point of view. Thus, a rejection of (ii) just amounts to Robinson maintaining his overconfidence.

I have argued that Robinson ought to abandon his position about what it is to properly condemn an argument. If he were to abandon this minimalist position, no obvious obstruction would stand in his way of admitting that begging the question is fallacious. His attempts to evaluate my argument lead to contradiction because his position permits for the construction of faulty arguments whose faultiness cannot be detected from his avowedly minimalist perspective on the evaluation of deductions. If he realizes that my argument undermines his position and he wishes to be rational, he ought to abandon his position. Once he abandons his position, maybe he will be open to the idea that question-begging is more than just a 'rule of an old-fashioned competitive game,' that, in fact, it is an act of objectionable dogmatism associated with a failure to appreciate the perspective of others in

rational discourse.[118] And sometimes the only way of being rational is to simulate the irrational: we must break out of our circles so we can pull others in.

[118] One might object to my characterization of begging the question as objectionable dogmatism. Can't an audience reject a premise without justification without therein manifesting dogmatism? I hypothesize that in all such cases, there is some substantive reason why the audience cannot take the time and effort to inquire into the speaker's grounds, reasons and point of view. Pragmatic considerations often warrant our sacrificing discursive norms and ideals. As I've admitted above, dogmatism is sometimes the ''lesser of evils.''

CHAPTER 2. How to Disagree about 'How to Disagree about How to Disagree'

In this chapter, I examine the connection between dogmatism and disagreement to address ongoing debates over the proper response to peer disagreement. What is the rational response when we find that we disagree with one of our peers about some proposition p? According to the Equal Weight View (EW), we should suspend in p. I defend this ideal from two charges: (1) that it is self-undermining, and (2) that it renders its adherents "spineless." Adam Elga (2010) argues that EW is incoherent because it undermines itself in certain special epistemic situations (viz., when the proposition under disagreement is EW itself).[119] I argue that the Self-Undermining Problem is only apparent, and results essentially from a failure to appreciate EW's status as a rule of rationality. It is only in conjunction with premises about the believer's epistemic situation that EW entails she ought to suspend in EW. And the fact that one ought to give up belief in a view about disagreement in certain special evidential circumstances is not itself a problem for the view. Even widespread disagreement amongst peers wouldn't force those who endorse the equal weight view into persistent agnosticism. We needn't compromise conciliation and cooperation, even when we find ourselves arguing with dogmatists who reject these cognitive virtues.

What is the rational thing for one to do in a given evidential situation? How should a new piece of evidence affect the confidence one has in one's original belief?

[119] Elga, A. 2010. How to disagree about how to disagree, in *Disagreement*, Feldman R. and Warfield T. (eds.) 175-185. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

We typically desire our beliefs to be true.[120] If in taking into account a new piece of evidence in a given evidential situation we take the total evidence to support the truth of *p* to a sufficient degree, we *ought* to, rationally speaking, believe *p*. But the evidence we take to support a belief in *p* can be and often is misleading. Suppose Sally runs into her friend Fran who works at the library and asks Fran where she can find the books on epistemology. Sally, knowing that Fran has worked at the library for years and has a passing familiarity with the subject, trusts Fran's judgment when she says that one can find books on epistemology on the 5th floor of the library. Still, Sally might walk up four flights of stairs and find that the epistemology books are not on that floor.

Even though her belief was false, Sally was epistemically responsible in the way she formed her belief in response to the evidence. When Fran tells her where the books can be found, Sally's total evidence consists in her awareness of Fran's general reliability in the past and Fran's current belief that the books can be found on the 5th floor. At first Sally had no belief about where the epistemology books could be found, but after taking into account the evidence, she reasonably comes to believe that they can be found on the 5th floor. Evidence can be misleading and fully justified beliefs can be false.

Often our reasoning involves not just first-order evidence like the form of testimonial evidence in the above example, but higher-order evidence, evidence about the evidentiary strength of the first-order evidence. And just as we are sometimes misled by what we take to be the first-order evidence, we are sometimes misled by higher-order evidence. Suppose that after Sally talks to Fran, but before she reaches the 5th floor, she hears two librarians talking

[120] Sometimes, when these beliefs concern more or less subjective matters (like the deliciousness of chocolate ice cream discussed above), the truth we desire for our beliefs is itself relative or relational. (For example, I aim to believe that x is delicious just in case it is true that x is delicious relative to my sensibility.) But these complications for the claim that belief often aims at truth will not affect the discussion that follows.

about Fran's ineptitude at directing people to books. Sally's belief that the epistemology books are on the 5th floor is rational given the original evidence. But after hearing the two librarians talk about Fran's (alleged) ineptitude at directing people to books, the support for her original belief is undermined, as she now has good reason to doubt her original belief about Fran's reliability. Thus, it seems like the rational thing to do would be to suspend in the belief that the epistemology books can be found on the 5th floor.[121]

The above example is meant to be a very rough sketch of the kinds of reasoning involved when we are presented with new higher-order evidence that bears on the truth of a proposition. There is a special type of evidential circumstance that involves the acquisition of a particular sort of higher-order evidence. The circumstance involves someone who you regard as an epistemic peer and as having the same evidence reaches a contrary conclusion to the conclusion you have drawn from this same evidence. Does this new, higher-order evidence undermine the support for your original conclusion? My intuition – and the intuitions of those who advocate the *Equal Weight View* (*EW*) – is that the rational response to such cases of disagreement is to suspend belief in one's original conclusion.

In section 1, I explore the motivations behind two families of views – *Conciliatory* and *Steadfast* – that aim to respond to the disagreement question. This sets the stage for a clear presentation of my main concern, the *Self-Undermining Objection* to *EW*, in section 2. Adam Elga (2010) argues that belief in *EW* entails that in certain epistemic situations, viz., situations in which *EW*'s truth is the matter of disagreement, *EW* undermines itself and is thus incoherent. In section 3, I argue that Elga fails to appreciate *EW*'s status as a rule of rationality. Contrary to what he says, mere belief in a rule like *EW* does not lead to

[121] So long as we assume that Sally has no reason to ignore the librarians and no reason to think Fran is close to infallible.

incoherence. A problem only seems to arise in special cases. But it is not a problem for a view about the proper epistemic response to peer disagreement to entail, in conjunction with premises about the current epistemic situation, that one ought to give up belief in that very view, so long as those conditions do not obtain in the context in which the view is actually being advanced. In section 4, I argue that there is no obvious way to establish peerhood in the decidedly philosophical context in which the truth of *EW* is the subject of disagreement. If this is right, the rational thing to do when one finds out a supposed peer disagrees with one about *EW* is to suspend on one's belief about the status of their peerhood. In section 5, I square the conclusion made about the epistemology of disagreement with the virtue-theoretic approach to argumentation developed in chapter zero and make some closing remarks.

1. The Problem of Peer Disagreement

Consider the following scenario: Adam believes some proposition P on the basis of evidence E. When he runs into Tom, Adam finds out that although they have both gone through the same evidence, they have arrived at different conclusions regarding the truth of P. Given E, Adam and Tom disagree about P – Adam believes P on the basis of E whereas Tom believes ~P on the basis of E.

In such a situation, what is the rational thing for Adam to do? On the one hand, Adam thinks he has pretty good reason to think he is right in reasoning from the (first-order evidence) E to P and adopting the belief that P. But he realizes that Tom thinks the same of himself. Now, if Adam had reason to doubt Tom's rational credibility – if, say, he had good reason to suspect Tom had taken a drug that affects his reasoning capabilities – then he would have good reason to remain confident in his original belief. But suppose that Adam has no reason to doubt Tom's credibility on this occasion. On the basis of reflecting on his

own fallibility, Adam might then believe that it would be irrational to completely ignore the fact that he and Tom disagree.

The driving intuition behind *conciliationism* in general is that in light of new (albeit higher-order) evidence against one's belief in some proposition *p*, one ought to become *at least a little* less confident in *p*. Suppose Adam went through the kind of reasoning described above and chose to be conciliatory. He therein takes Tom's belief in P as (higher-order) evidence against the truth of P and reasons that the rational thing to do is to become at least a little less confident in his original belief that P.

The first example I presented (i.e., Sally & Fran at the library) is just one of countless examples in which higher-order evidence seems to undermine one's original belief by giving one reason to doubt the strength of the first-order evidence in its support. Can the same be said in cases in which one's knowledge that someone disagrees with one takes the form of the higher-order evidence? It would, I think, be objectionably dogmatic to say that there are no circumstances in which one should become less confident that *p* is true based on the evidence that others disagree with one about the truth of *p*. To see this, consider the (extremely) plausible principle, *Minimal Humility* (*MH*):

> ***Minimal Humility****:* If S thought casually about whether P for 10 minutes and decided it's correct, and then finds out that many people, most of them smarter and more familiar with the relevant evidence and arguments than she, have thought long and hard about P, and have independently but unanimously decided that P is false, S should become less confident in P. [122]

[122]David Christensen. 2009. Disagreement as evidence: the epistemology of controversy. *Philosophical Compass*, *4/5*: 763.

If *MH* is true – and I cannot think of any reason to doubt such a principle – then there are at least some evidential circumstances in which one learns about disagreement where one should become less confident in one's original belief. And I do not think it is too much of a jump to say that a conciliatory response would be rational in a case where, say, one discovers she disagrees with only one person who is smarter and more familiar with the relevant evidence than she. But on what grounds can we say that Adam ought to take the conciliatory response as well when he is faced with a disagreeing "peer" rather than an epistemic superior or group of such?

The proper response to their disagreement clearly depends on the attitude Adam holds toward the proposition that Tom is, "smarter and more familiar with the relevant evidence than he." Adam might consider Tom to be incompetent. If he does, he probably should not give much weight to Tom's opinion. On the flip side, if Adam considers Tom to be an expert, with more knowledge and reasoning ability with respect to the target proposition than he, Ada, should give at least some weight to Tom's opinion and maybe even adopt this alternative belief. But suppose Adam believes Tom's epistemic credibility to lie somewhere in between incompetence and expertise. Indeed, suppose Adam thinks that he and Tom share roughly the same amount of knowledge and expertise with respect to the proposition under dispute. Intuitively, then, his response to the disagreement should lie somewhere in between complete deference and dismissal.

A view on peer disagreement is conciliatory if the view entails that one should become less confident in one's belief in *p* when one finds out one disagrees with someone who one takes as one's epistemic peer about some proposition *p* based on the same evidence

e.[123] Conciliatory views on peer disagreement can differ according to how much they say the newly acquired evidence counts against the original belief. One, particularly strong, conciliatory view – and the view I defend in this dissertation – is *The Equal Weight View* (*EW*), which councils us to weigh a peer's belief equally with our own when determining our doxastic attitude toward the proposition under disagreement.[124] In cases of peer disagreement, *EW* says that the disputants should suspend. More formally:

(*EW*): For all propositions *p*, S should suspend in *p* if S comes to find out she disagrees with her peer about *p* based on the same evidence.

Now, *EW* provides us with rational prescriptions on what to do in cases of peer disagreement. By giving equal weight to one's own and one's peer's belief with regards to some proposition, *EW* tells one to suspend. To get an idea of the kinds of cases that lend weight to *EW*, consider the following:

> *Racetrack*: Finn and Jake are at a horse-racing track. They attend many races and always sit as close as they can to the finish line so they can determine which horse won the race. Both are very adept at judging which horse won the race in a nose-to-nose finish. In fact, they consider each other as just as reliable when it comes to judging such things. Today's race ends in a dead heat between Seabiscuit and Secretariat. Finn is confident Secretariat won the race, but Jake is equally as confident Seabiscuit won the race.

[123]The term "conciliatory" is adopted from Elga (2010), though others have since taken up using the general notion of conciliationism to describe their views on peer disagreement. See Christensen (2007) and Feldman (2006).

[124]The *Equal Weight View* was first advanced by Elga (2007), although Elga has since given it up in favor of a partially-conciliatory view on disagreement, as can be seen in Elga (2010).

Should Finn hold on to his belief that Secretariat won the race? Finn has no better evidence for the claim that Secretariat won the race than Jake has to believe that Seabiscuit won the race because he has no reason to trust his own perceptual judgment over Jake's. Intuitively, then, Finn should give equal weight to Jake's belief as he does his own. In other words, the rational response in *Racetrack* lines up with being conciliatory in general and, more particularly, seems to line up with what *EW* says we should do in such a case. In giving equal weight to his own and Jake's belief, it seems clear that Finn should suspend judgment about which horse won the race. And this makes sense, since, given the setup, they consider one another to be peers with regards to judgments of which horse won the race in a nose-to-nose finish.

Epistemic Peerhood

Up until now I have remained cagey about exactly what it is that constitutes epistemic peerhood. In short, the notion of epistemic peerhood is meant to capture the middle ground between greater incompetence and more expertise than a given person or subject. In a case like *Racetrack*, it seems fair to assess Finn and Jake as epistemic peers *with regards to propositions concerning which horse won a race in a nose-to-nose finish*. By stipulation, they consider each other as just as reliable at judging which horse won the race in a nose-to-nose finish. We might even take this as reason to say that they are peers with regards to propositions concerning perceptual judgments in general.

But one driving force behind the epistemology of disagreement debate, and one of the main reasons philosophers have adopted views like *EW*, is to somehow inform us on what we ought to do in *philosophical* disagreements, in particular, philosophical disagreements that persist among seemingly rational interlocutors. For example, Peter van Inwagen helped

spark the contemporary debate over the proper response to peer disagreement by asking whether he and David Lewis are peers with regards to a controversial philosophical thesis concerning free will. In a widely cited passage, van Inwagen says,

> I ask you to consider the case of David Lewis and me and the problem of free will. I am an incompatibilist and David was a compatibilist. David and I had many conversations and engaged in a rather lengthy correspondence on the matter of compatibilism and incompatibilism, and, on the basis of these exchanges – not to mention his wonderful paper "Are We Free to Break the Laws?" – I am convinced beyond all possibility of doubt that David understood perfectly all the arguments for incompatibilism that I am aware of – and all other philosophical considerations relevant to the free-will problem...It seems difficult, therefore, to contend that, in this matter, he was in epistemic circumstances inferior to mine (23-24).[125]

Is van Inwagen reasonable in taking Lewis as his peer with regards to the issue of free will? Unlike in cases like *Racetrack*, how one might establish peerhood in debates as complicated and contentious as the compatibilism/incompatibilism debate is far from clear. Does Lewis really have the same evidence as van Inwagen? He surely doesn't have the same total evidence as the two philosophers surely differ in some of their background beliefs and knowledge. And what, according to van Inwagen, explains why Lewis draws a diametrically opposed conclusion from this evidence? If he does not conclude that it is bias, or error, or a distorting eccentricity, how can van Inwagen remain so confident that Lewis is in error? This is probably why most in the literature have relatively little to say about what constitutes epistemic peerhood with regards to particular philosophical issues. Most, however, believe we have enough of an informal grip on epistemic peerhood to endorse van Inwagen's belief that Lewis was his peer on the issue of free will's compatibility with determinism.[126] (Given

[125] Van Inwagen, P. 2010. We're right, they're wrong, *in Disagreement*,' Feldman R. *and* Warfield T. *(eds.)* 10-28. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[126] In "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement," Kelly lays out the conditions that must be met in order for two individuals to count as epistemic peers with regards to a particular question. First, they must be "equals with respect to their familiarity with the evidence and arguments which bear on that question." And second, "they are equals with respect to general epistemic virtues such as intelligence, thoughtfulness, and freedom from bias" (2010: 120). These conditions are extremely difficult, if not impossible to confirm in practice. For a

what he says about Lewis, it seems like van Inwagen might believe that Lewis is in fact his peer with regards to philosophy in general.) Still, though it is beyond the scope of this paper to say too much about how we might establish epistemic peerhood, we must remember that the notion plays an important role in answers to the disagreement question because it constrains the types of cases that might lead to application of a view such as *EW*.[127]

Conciliatory vs. Steadfast Views on Peer Disagreement

Opponents of conciliatory views like *EW* hold what we call "steadfast views" on peer disagreement. The most minimally steadfast view on disagreement says that there are at least some cases of peer disagreement in which one is rationally permitted to hold on to one's original belief.[128] A view of the proper reaction to knowledge of peer disagreement is steadfast to the degree that it permits or even requires entrenchment. A steadfast view councils conservatism permitting us to continue on as before, registering the differing views of an acknowledged peer without loss of confidence in the disputed claim.

In order to better understand the debate, let's look at two cases. First, consider the case of *Mental Math*:[129]

> *Mental Math*: Sally antecedently counts her friend as being just as good as her at mental arithmetic. They both think through the same arithmetical question (e.g., how much to tip at a restaurant), and find that they have arrived at different answers.

---

detailed account of how difficult it is to sustain judgments of peerhood and how this poses problems for the peer disagreement literature, see Bundy (2013).

[127] Let me say a word about why I have been and will continue to speak in terms of outright belief rather than credences. With regards to outright belief, the only attitudes we can hold about any proposition are belief (that the proposition is true), disbelief (belief that the proposition is false), or suspension. This is just for ease. For the purposes of this paper, whether we speak in terms of credence or outright belief does not matter. Speaking in terms of credence would complicate matters and the arguments from Elga on which I focus discuss beliefs only in terms of outright belief. Moreover, the same types of problems arise whether we speak in terms of outright belief or credence.

[128] For a defense of a steadfast view on disagreement, see Kelly (2005).

[129] My version of *Mental Math* is adopted from Christensen (2009:757).

Suppose Sally has been going out to dinner with Fran for years. Though they agree they should tip 20% of the bill upon receiving the check, every once in a while they come to find they disagree in their computations of the sum. On the occasions when they disagree, sometimes Sally is wrong and sometimes Fran is wrong. Assume that they disagree by a minor amount on an occasion on which they have antecedent reason to believe that neither of them is drunk nor cognitively impaired. What should Sally do when she finds out Fran disagrees about how much to tip?

Sally, who antecedently believes that Fran is an epistemic peer regarding mental arithmetic, first becomes very confident that the correct tip is, say, $42. Fran then confidently announces that the correct tip is $43. Upon hearing this, Sally begins to put the pieces together. Because she believes that Fran is an *epistemic peer with regards to propositions concerning the answer to an arithmetical question*, she believes that she has no more reason to favor her own reasoning than Fran's. She will immediately lose some confidence in the correctness of her computation of the tip. If she's sophisticated, she might wonder precisely what attitude she ought to take toward the proposition she believed before hearing Fran's dissent: i.e. the proposition that the correct tip is $42.

Intuitively, it seems to me that the rational thing for Sally to do in *Mental Math* is to become much less confident that her original belief was correct. At any rate, the rationality of this reaction to peer disagreement is a natural implication of the virtue theoretic approach to epistemic evaluation I've been outlining in this dissertation. Dogmatism is a vice. Open-mindedness is a virtue. One could try to push back at this point and say that it is not rational for Sally to be much less confident in her original belief. One might even have this

"intuition." But I do not share this reaction to the case I've described. The conservative or steadfast stance seems to me to stem from dogmatism: an epistemic vice.

So Sally ought to be conciliatory. The conciliationist thinks that our judgments of what is rational for Sally to do in cases like *Mental Math* gives *prima facie* reason to generalize to other cases of peer disagreement. One might take the steadfast response and say that Sally has special reason to favor her own belief over her peer's. But notice, if Sally believes her peer is in general as good as her at mental arithmetic (and she does given the setup), she has no special reason to favor her own belief this time.[130] Sally cannot simply say that she favors her own belief because her belief is correct. Nor can she rationally believe that because Fran believes that the correct tip is something other than $42, Fran has made a mistake on this occasion. This is why a steadfast response in cases like *Mental Math* is so counterintuitive. If Sally were to appeal to her own belief in order to establish that Fran reasoned incorrectly, she would beg the question at issue in their dispute.

Absent any positive argument in favor of a steadfast response to *Mental Math*, there's no reason to think that a steadfast response is anything but dogmatic. A second case, however, has been offered as grounds for endorsing steadfast views on philosophical cases of disagreement. Consider the case of *Careful Checking*: [131]

> *Careful Checking*: Sally antecedently counts her friend as being just as good as her at mental arithmetic. They both think through the same arithmetical

[130] It seems natural that you should not privilege your own belief simply because the belief is yours. So, with regards to our original example of a disagreement between Adam and Tom, Adam's belief counts no more for the truth of *p* than Tom's belief counts against it. Intuitively, this is what *EW* advocates. See Kelly, T. 2010. Peer disagreement and higher-order evidence*, in* Feldman *and* Warfield *(eds.) Disagreement*, Oxford: Oxford University Press for one such view, the *Total Evidence View*.

[131] One might respond simply by noting that Sally should just go back to the written-out calculations in order to determine who was right. The rational thing to do if the original calculations were available would be to re-check the calculations on both sides. But in doing so, one should suspend until one finishes evaluating the original calculations of one's considered peer. For this example, however, suppose that they do not have access to the original written-out calculations.

> question (e.g., how much to tip at a restaurant) before carefully checking their respective conclusions with paper and on a calculator, and still find that they have arrived at different answers.

This case seems to lend support to the claim that in some cases of peer disagreement one need not be conciliatory. One might say that because Sally was diligent in her reasoning process, making sure to write her calculations down before checking them, double-checking them, and triple-checking them with a calculator, she thereby has reason to stand her ground on her original belief. Those who hold steadfast views on disagreement think that our purportedly shared intuitive judgments about such cases give us *prima facie* reason to generalize the steadfast response to other cases of disagreement. Whether or not they are right that these intuitions are widespread, one might think, that as a methodological matter, one's views on peer disagreement result from our generalizing from such intuitions. The difference between those philosophers who embrace conciliationism and those who endorse steadfastness can be attributed to a difference in intuition: what one thinks about the correct thing to do in cases of disagreements in general (and philosophical disagreements in particular) can be abstracted from one's judgments about what one ought to do, rationally speaking, in cases like *Mental Math* and *Careful Checking*.

The advocate of a steadfast view might say that Sally should be steadfast because she has reason to favor her own reasoning over Fran's. But just as in *Mental Math*, it seems like it would be irrational for Sally to infer that Fran must have gone wrong somewhere in her calculations because Fran's belief is incorrect. David Christensen (2009) argues that it is a mistake to assume that the only available reason for thinking that Fran did something wrong in this case relies on the reasoning that led Sally to her original belief. Instead, Sally could say that in such cases "[i]t would be incredibly unlikely for two people to clear-headedly go

through the sort of extensive checking described and come up with different answers" (2009: 759).[132] In such a case, Sally can more reasonably infer that something "screwy" didn't go on with her own reasoning. The reason is that (putting aside failures of self-knowledge) Sally has more or less direct access to her own reasoning process and on the basis of this she knows that she is not herself lying or being insincere, that she is not severely cognitively impaired, and so on. She has no comparable access to Fran's reasoning process as she must rely on what Fran says and does for information about how Fran calculated and recorded the results of her calculations. If this is right, Sally has reason to believe that Fran reasoned poorly in this case. Although Sally has better access to her own reasoning process in *Mental Math* as well, she cannot make the same inference. Mental arithmetic is more liable to error than the sort of process described in *Careful Checking* in which both disputants go through extensive double-checking.

The *Equal Weight* View theorist can account for our judgments about what Sally should do in *Careful Checking* without begging the question against the opponent. But *EW* need not admit that *Careful Checking* is a case of peer disagreement in which one should not suspend in one's original belief. Instead, one might say that Sally's belief that Fran reasoned poorly in this case gives Sally the new piece of higher-order evidence that bears on the truth of the proposition that *Fran is her peer with regards to careful calculations*. If after acquiring this new piece of higher-order evidence, Sally is rationally required to suspend in her belief that Fran is her peer in this sense, then the peer disagreement question does not arise. If Sally knows that Fran calculated and checked her calculations just as carefully as

[132]Christensen (2009: 759-760). Why can't we say the same for the case of *Mental Math*? Because it *wouldn't* be incredibly unlikely for two people to clear-headedly go through a mental arithmetic exercise and come out with opposing answers.

she did, then she should judge Fran a peer and suspend until further calculations can resolve the discrepancy. If Sally does not know this, she is not in a position to judge Fran a peer, and thus not in a position to apply (or follow) *EW*'s advice to suspend in cases of disagreement with a genuine epistemic peer.

2. Disagreement about Disagreement

I have thus far explored peer disagreements with regard to simple cases and have touched on how difficult applying a view on peer disagreement might be to disagreements in philosophy. In both types of cases, *EW* says that the rational response is suspension in one's original belief. But what does *EW* rationally require of us in cases of peer disagreement in which the disagreed-upon proposition is *EW* itself?

Consider the earlier case of peer disagreement between Adam and Tom. Suppose they have both become familiar with all of the relevant evidence and arguments that weigh on the truth of *EW*. Adam becomes convinced that one should suspend in one's original belief in response to a case of peer disagreement. That is, Adam comes to believe *EW*. Tom, on the other hand, has been moved by his steadfast intuitions to believe ~*EW*. What is the rational thing for Adam to do when he comes to find out that Tom disagrees with him about *EW*?

The natural thing to say here is that Adam should reflect on the view he actually holds and act in accordance with it. If Adam held a steadfast view that advised him to not take into account the opinions of his peers at all, no problem would seem to arise; Adam could simply hold steadfast in his belief in his view. But Adam believes that the correct view on disagreement is *EW*, which entails that he should give equal weight to Tom's belief as he does to his own. This would in turn seem to rationally require suspension in his original belief in *EW*, the very belief that spurred the disagreement with Tom in the first place.

A bit more slowly: Adam believes *EW*, and what *EW* says is that for all propositions *p*, S should suspend in *p* if S comes to find out she disagrees with her peer about *p* based on the same evidence. It seems as though one who believes *EW* is committed thereby to abandoning belief in its truth in certain special epistemic situations.

The Self-Undermining Objection

Adam Elga (2010) argues that we must reject *EW* because it cannot coherently account for cases of "disagreement about disagreement." Elga argues that *EW* is self-undermining because it "calls for its own rejection" in response to certain special cases of disagreement among peers like the one I described between Adam and Tom.[133] Call this the *Self-Undermining Problem*. As Elga puts it:

> The trouble is this: In many situations involving disagreement about disagreement, [*EW*] calls for [its] own rejection. But it is incoherent for a view on disagreement to call for its own rejection. So [*EW*] is incoherent. That is the argument (2010: 179).

To support his contention that there are "many situations in which [EW] calls for its own rejection," he relies on the *Consumer Reports* (CR) analogy, which is supposed to show why a view that sometimes offers inconsistent advice is incoherent:

> *CONSUMER REPORTS*: Suppose there are two magazines that offer advice on what home appliances to buy. One such magazine is *Consumer Reports* (CR). In addition to the advice it offers on which appliances to buy, CR offers advice on which consumer magazine's advice its readers should follow. Suppose that CR advises its readers to (i) "Buy only Toaster X" and (ii) "Follow the advice of *Smart Shopper* (SS)," whereas SS advises its readers to (iii) "Buy only Toaster Y."[134]

---

[133] The problem Elga alludes to is what he calls the *Self-Undermining Problem* which claims that the type of inconsistent/incoherent self-underminingness exhibited by conciliatory views (in cases of disagreement about disagreement) is "rationally unappealing." As it will become clear later, *EW* does not fall prey to *The Self-Undermining Problem*.

[134] Elga (2010: 180) presents the *Consumer Reports* example as adapted from Lewis's *Consumer Reports* analogy (1971: 55).

Suppose I typically look to *Consumer Reports* for advice on which appliances to buy. If I were to follow only the first piece of CR's advice, then I would buy only Toaster X. But I cannot cherry-pick which pieces of advice I follow and which ones I ignore. If I want to be as informed as possible in my toaster-purchase, I should take into account the total evidence available to me at this time that bears on the matter in question. Since CR also advises one to follow the advice of SS, which advises one to buy only Toaster Y, CR also indirectly advises one to buy only Toaster Y. So if I were to attempt to follow CR's total advice, I would be lost about which toaster to purchase; such advice is inconsistent advice as it's impossible for me to both buy *only* toaster X and *only* toaster Y. It seems incoherent, however, for a ratings magazine that purports to give its readers good advice on which appliances to buy, to offer such blatantly contradictory prescriptions.

Elga's idea is that similar reasoning can be applied to views on disagreement that purport to give good advice about how to respond to cases of peer disagreement. He claims that *EW* similarly "calls for its own rejection" by sometimes advising one to suspend in *EW* and thus takes this as reason to give up *EW* altogether.

As we will see, Elga is mistaken in attributing such internal incoherency to *EW*. Contrary to what he says, *EW* does not "call for its own rejection," nor does *EW* give inconsistent advice. In fact, I will argue that it's unclear that CR is incoherent in the way Elga describes. But first I want to give Elga's purported solution to the objection that *EW* is incoherent.

Elga's Solution

Elga claims that the *Self-Undermining Problem* is only a problem for *EW* because it "requires one to be conciliatory about absolutely everything, even [its] own correctness"

(183).[135] Aiming to preserve the intuitively appealing notion of conciliation that grounds the *EW* and views of its ilk, but avoid the apparent pitfall of the *Self-Undermining Problem*, Elga offers a partially conciliatory view on disagreement that treats cases of disagreement about disagreement in a special way. By constraining his view so that conciliatory prescriptions are given only in cases of peer disagreement about matters *not* concerning disagreement itself, he believes he avoids the problem. Is this move arbitrary and/or ad hoc? Here's what Elga says:

> [T]he real reason for constraining conciliatory views is not specific to disagreement. Rather, the real reason is a completely general constraint that applies to any fundamental policy, rule, or method. In order to be consistent, a fundamental policy, rule or method must be dogmatic with respect to its own correctness. This general constraint provides independent motivation for a view on disagreement to treat disagreement about disagreement in a special way. (2010, 185)

The idea is this: the only way for a conciliatory view on disagreement to give consistent advice is if it treats disagreement about disagreement in a different way. And since *all* good epistemic views give consistent advice on how to respond to the evidence in certain situations, we have independent motivation for constraining a conciliatory view on disagreement such that it applies to all matters except disagreement.[136]

Problem Solved?

Elga's modified version of *EW,* which I call *Elga's Equal Weight View* (*EEW*), seems to have the built-in advantage of avoiding the type of incoherency that allegedly plagues a fully conciliatory view like *EW*. In cases of disagreement about anything other than disagreement (i.e., the "first level" of disagreement), *EEW* calls for the same response as *EW*

[135] Elga (2010: 183).
[136] Borrowing from Field (2000, appendix), Elga describes a fundamental method as a method "whose application is not governed or evaluated by any other method*"* (2010: 185, n.11).

- to suspend. In cases of disagreement about disagreement (i.e., the "second level" of disagreement), however, *EEW* calls for a dogmatic response and so does not "call for its own rejection" as *EW* allegedly does.

Let us grant for the moment that there is nothing ad hoc or arbitrary in the way Elga has restricted his view on the proper response to peer disagreement to propositions in domains other than disagreement. Nevertheless, there is independent reason to doubt *EEW*. In short, Elga's view implies the very unintuitive consequence that upon finding oneself in successive disagreements with one's peers about the topic of disagreement, one should remain absolutely certain that *EEW* is the correct view on disagreement. But this is implausible. To see why, consider the following scenario:

Adam and Tom take each other to be peers. Suppose they come to find out that they disagree about which view on disagreement is correct. Adam believes that *EEW* is the correct view whereas Tom disagrees. Since Adam holds *EEW*, and since *EEW* tells Adam to be dogmatic in cases of peer disagreement about disagreement, he does just that. A short while later Adam runs into another dissenter from *EEW* who independently came to believe that *EEW* is not the correct view on disagreement. Adam need not worry, since his view tells him to be dogmatic at the "second-level" of disagreement. But the dissenters keep on coming.

You get the picture. Following *EEW* leads to the unpalatable consequence that no matter how many peers disagree with Adam about the truth of *EEW,* he should, rationally speaking, remain just as confident as before with regards to its truth. This kind of stubbornness is the exact same type of stubbornness proponents of conciliatory views repudiate on the first level of disagreement. *EW*, on the other hand, runs into no such trouble

here, as one would suspend on *EW* after running into the first peer. Even if we were to grant Elga that there is no arbitrariness required in treating disagreement about disagreement in a special way, it seems like we have a different, independent reason for rejecting *EEW*.

3. Unraveling the Self-Undermining Objection

Elga's attempt to save the spirit of conciliationism from the self-undermining objection proves to be unsuccessful. The self-undermining "problem", however, is only apparent. Contrary to what Elga says, *EW* is not internally incoherent – it does not "call for its own rejection." Nor is he right to say that *EW* gives contrary recommendations in the same way CR does. For Elga fails to appreciate *EW*'s status as a rule of rationality that ranges over a very special, idealized set of evidential circumstances.

EW is not Internally Incoherent

A view might be incoherent by explicitly stating that it is not true. Suppose view *V* says '*V* is not true.' If *V* were true, the proposition expressed by '*V* is not true' would be true as well. But this is just the proposition that *V* is not true. So suppose that *V* is not true. Since this (that *V* is not true) is what *V* says, what *V* says is true. But this contradicts our assumption that what *V* says is not true. Thus, *V* is internally contradictory or self-undermining. A view that says of itself that it is not true is self-undermining in a clearly problematic way. Such a view is *internally incoherent.*

Is CR incoherent in this way? If CR explicitly recommended that one "Buy only toaster X and buy only toaster Y," then (given X≠Y) CR would be incoherent because it would offer obviously inconsistent advice. But CR does not offer such advice. CR advises one to "buy only toaster X" and to "follow SS." CR is incoherent only in conjunction with the fact that SS says, "Buy only toaster Y." CR (i) directly tells one to "buy only toaster X"

and (ii) directly tells one to trust SS, and it is only when these pieces of advice are conjoined with the *external* fact that (iii) SS directly advises one to "buy only toaster Y" that incoherence arises. CR is incoherent only insofar as advice (i) - (iii) are not jointly satisfiable, where (iii) is not internal to CR but external to it.

Consider again *V*, which says that '*V* is not true'. Suppose another view, *U*, says that '*V* is true.' If what *U* says is true, then *V* is true. But if *V* is true, then what it says is true, and what *V* says is that *V* is not true. *U* is not internally inconsistent or *self*-undermining. The advice *U* offers is inconsistent only because of the incoherent nature of *V*. The same point can be made at the level of argumentative practice on which I have focused in advancing an Aristotelian, virtue-theoretic account of good and bad argumentation. Suppose that S knows that R is a highly reliable and honest informant on some matter. Suppose, for example, that R has given driving directions to S that have always been accurate. Now suppose that S hears R give driving directions to Z but doesn't hear precisely what was said. If Z asks S whether she should heed R's directions, S would be rational to says yes on the basis of her past interactions with R even if R has made a mistake this time and the directions she gave Z are inconsistent. The irrationality in this case is entirely R's fault.[137]

CR is no more incoherent than *U*. (Indeed, it is in some sense less incoherent because SS is not incoherent.) Notice that *U* is incoherent because it says to follow *V* and *V* is self-undermining. CR says to follow SS, but SS is not incoherent, as there is no way for it to undermine itself by offering the one piece of advice it gives. The incoherence in the case

[137] An even simpler case: R is a world renown mathematician and S trusts that she (i.e. R) is right in asserting the truth of a complicated mathematical theorem T, which in fact implies a contradiction in a wholly non-obvious way. In this case, S is clearly not at fault, and her rationality in trusting R is in no way suspect even if she has endorsed a contradiction. Indeed, if the contradiction is sufficiently difficult to detect, the rationality of neither S nor R need be impaired in the case. The idea that endorsing a contradiction (or what entails a contradiction) is invariably irrational stems from the kind of overly formal approach to argument evaluation that I reject in this dissertation.

Elga describes resides in the conjunction of CR *and* SS, given the stipulated facts about the two magazines' advice. There is no incoherence in Mom's saying, "Stop!" and Dad's saying "Go!" One cannot infer from the facts so described that there is anything wrong with Dad's command nor can one conclude that there is something wrong with Mom's. The only incoherence in such cases arises when one tries to follow the advice of both Mom and Dad.

Is *EW* incoherent in any of these ways? Elga is wrong to say that *EW* is incoherent because it calls for its own rejection. Clearly *EW* is not incoherent in the way in which *V* is incoherent, as it does not say that '*EW* is not true.' *EW* is not incoherent in the way *U* is incoherent either, as it does not refer to another view which is itself incoherent. Elga's argument obviously relies on the analogy between CR and *EW*, so he must have meant that *EW* is incoherent in the third way described above. But *EW* is not incoherent in the same way that CR is incoherent.

EW does not say anything about its own truth value. Moreover, it does not say anything like 'S should always suspend in *EW*.' *EW* does not even say that 'S should sometimes suspend in *EW*.'[138] And it certainly does not say that 'S should sometimes both believe *EW* and suspend in *EW*.' All *EW says* is that for all propositions p, S should suspend in *p* if S comes to find she disagrees with a peer about *p* based on the same evidence. *EW implies,* in conjunction with one's beliefs about one's current evidential circumstances, that in certain special circumstances – that is, in cases of peer disagreement about *EW* – one should suspend in *EW*. But it's not incoherent for a view one currently holds, in conjunction

[138] One type of vicious incoherence a view might have is like that of the global skeptical thesis (when it is asserted rather than entertained as a mere doubt-inducing possibility). If the skeptical thesis is true – that we are not justified in any of our beliefs– then it seems like we wouldn't be justified in believing the thesis itself. There are no cases in which we can rationally believe that the skeptical thesis is true.

with one's beliefs about certain possible future circumstances, to imply that one would be rationally required to give up said view were such circumstances to obtain. In fact, such would be a virtue of the view insofar as it is indicative of open-mindedness in those who endorse it.

In sum, there are possible circumstances in which someone who believes *EW* would be rationally required to suspend in *EW*. Is this a problem? No; any view that tells us to be conciliatory in certain evidential circumstances has this feature. Not only are there potential circumstances in which one would be rationally required to give up one's belief in the intuitively plausible principle I called *Minimal Humility* above, but we can come up with such circumstances for virtually all epistemological views. If this were a problem for *EW*, it would be a problem for pretty much every other epistemological view. But it is not a problem at all, as those who currently endorse *EW* should regard such cases as potential cases of misleading higher-order evidence.

If I believe philosophical thesis T and then come to find out hundreds of philosophers who I take to be my epistemic superiors with regards to T have come to believe ~T, then I should suspend on T. This does not, however, show that T is false, as such circumstances might not obtain. And if they did, they might very well be cases of misleading higher-order evidence in which I rationally abandon belief in a true thesis.

4. How to Disagree about How to Disagree

Might the advocate of *EW* just say that Adam and Tom, who hold different views on disagreement, are not peers with respect to the topic of disagreement? One might say that simply discounting one as a peer (with regards to disagreement) upon finding out they disagree with one about *EW* is begging the question in favor of conciliationism. If it were

right to say that Adam could discount Tom as his peer in such a case, what would stop us from responding in the same way in any case of disagreement about a difficult philosophical (or otherwise) proposition? Can we refuse to acknowledge someone as an intellectual peer simply because they hold a different view? As Brian Weatherson (2007:56) puts it:

> If we declared anyone who doesn't accept reasoning that we find compelling not a peer, then the EW view will be trivial. After all, the EW view only gets its force from the cases...where our friend rejects reasoning we accept, and accepts reasons we reject. If that makes them not a peer, then *EW* view never applies. So we can't argue that anyone who rejects *EW* is thereby less of an expert in the relevant sense than someone who accepts it, merely in virtue of their rejection of *EW*.[139]

If, in order for Adam to call Tom his peer in the "relevant sense" – i.e., with regards to issues concerning disagreement – Tom must adopt the same belief as Adam about the particular topic in question, *EW* would never be applied. Adam can only apply *EW* in any situation if he considers Tom a peer.

But Weatherson is just wrong that this is a problem for *EW*. It might be wrong for Adam to believe that Tom is "less of an expert" (and so not his peer) based *merely* on the fact that Tom rejects *EW*. But it certainly seems like Tom's belief should count at least a little against the truth of the claim that Tom is his peer with regards to philosophical issues. Imagine Adam came to believe Tom was his peer with regards to philosophy when they were back in graduate school. Then, 20 years later he comes to find out he and Tom disagree about a number of philosophical matters. There must be *some* point at which the higher-order evidence defeats the first-order evidence that supported his belief that he and Tom are peers in the technical sense at issue, which, if you recall, implies that they have all the same

[139] Weatherson, B. 2012. Disagreements, philosophical and otherwise, in *The Epistemology of Disagreement*, David Christensen D. and Lackey J. (eds.) 54-75, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

evidence or reasons with respect to the claim at issue. If Tom has come to accept a dogmatic approach to disagreement in the 20 year time period in question, while Adam has come to believe in the virtue of conciliationism, Adam would reasonably suspect that Tom has missed some of the relevant evidence or reasoning: i.e. the evidence or reasoning that lead him (i.e. Adam) to embrace the conciliationist approach.

The Difficulty in Establishing Peerhood (with regards to philosophical issues)

The fact that we find ourselves in genuine peer disagreements regarding perceptual beliefs (e.g., *Racetrack*) and mental arithmetic (e.g., Mental Math) is unsurprising because the evidential bases and reliability on which we based epistemic peerhood are relatively easy to establish in such cases. In hypothetical cases of peer disagreement, it is stipulated that the two people involved are equally reliable when it comes to judging propositions concerning the issue at hand. In *Racetrack*, one can appeal to one's own and one's peer's track records of perceptual belief formation in order to establish peerhood. In *Mental Math*, one can appeal to one's own and one's peer's track record of forming beliefs on mental arithmetic. One can only appeal to track records, however, if one first has a determinate way of ascertaining who was in fact right in the past. In both cases, we need only wait for new evidence, which is often readily available, that bears on the truth of the proposition under disagreement in order to determine who was right. In the perceptual case, one can check whether one judged correctly by simply waiting for a slow-motion replay of the race or an announcement by the racetrack officials. And one can determine whether one's mental arithmetic was correct by simply checking with a calculator once the server returns with the check and comparing it to one's original response.

We have no obvious avenue for determining one's status as our peer with regards to philosophical issues. Philosophical theses are intricate knots of many claims making it difficult to determine where to ground the evidential bases of the claim that a person is one's peer with regards to issues concerning philosophy. Sarah McGrath (2007) discusses the difficulty in determining genuine *expertise* with regards to issues in the domain of morality.[140] In order to determine who is an expert in some domain, she says we must first have some way of gauging their rational credibility. The same point holds for identifying those who are our epistemic peers in some domain. In certain cases we might simply take for granted someone's credibility, as is the case when we trust a weather forecaster when we want to know what the weather will be like. But in this case there are many institutional markers of the expertise in question. We trust that this person wouldn't be paid to forecast the weather and his forecasts wouldn't be broadcast, unless he had the relevant expertise. Often, however, as McGrath points out, "in actual, real-life cases, others do not typically wear their relative levels of competence on their sleeves" (97). In most cases, "identifying those with genuine expertise in some domain will be most straightforward when we have some kind of independent check, one not itself subject to significant controversy, by which we can tell who is (and who is not) getting things right" (98). For instance, if his expertise came into doubt, we could determine whether the weather forecaster is credible by comparing his weather predictions to the actual, recorded weather. In cases like *Racetrack* and *Mental Math*, we can determine the rational credibility of our alleged peers by appealing to an independent check like past track records.

[140] McGrath, S. 2007. Moral disagreement and moral expertise, in R. Shafer-Landau (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, 3: 87-107.

McGrath recognizes the difficulty in determining the rational credibility of others with regards to more complicated issues. In particular, she inquires about how we might identify *moral expertise*. Clearly we have no obvious independent check for determining some moral theorist's rational credibility, as we do in the simpler cases. She suggests that perhaps "the possession of certain academic credentials, or professional concern with ethics, is good evidence that one possesses reliable moral judgment" but concludes that at most this would be a "relatively meager basis on which to conclude" that one possesses reliable moral judgment (97-8).[141] A similar point can be made when it comes to establishing peerhood with regards to philosophical issues, since the type of disagreements with which we are concerned often involve very well-respected philosophers (e.g., Van Inwagen and Lewis). How we might establish peerhood with regards to philosophical issues for philosophers very familiar with the material is much less clear than in the simple cases presented in the literature. In order to determine whether they are peers with regards to a metaphysical thesis, we must determine their relative rational credibility when it comes to evaluating metaphysical theses. This is much more easily said than done.

Respecting EW's Status as a Rule of Rationality

EW implies one should suspend belief in *EW* only in conjunction with premises about one's current epistemic situation. This involves not only recognizing *EW* as a rule, but applying and following it as well. In order to apply the rule one must reason about one's

[141] One might argue that knowledge of moral theory is irrelevant. To check someone's moral expertise we must evaluate her past judgment and behavior to see whether she's given what we take to be good advice on moral matters in this past and whether she's regularly displayed what we take to be moral excellence in her interactions with others. But even if we adopt this anti-theoretical or non-theoretical stance toward moral expertise, the excellence will remain more difficult to verify than expertise in say math or surgery. Intuitively, there will be more unclarity, vagueness, and indecision in our efforts to make an assessment of the moral quality of a person's past advice and behavior than will arise when we try to assess the quality of her mathematical proofs or medical surgeries.

current evidential circumstances. In failing to appreciate *EW*'s status as a rule, Elga leaves out some important evidence.

Suppose Adam, who holds *EW*, antecedently takes Tom to be his peer with regards to philosophical issues and takes this as reason to count Tom as a peer with regards to issues concerning peer disagreement. When he runs into Tom, the total evidence consists in (i) Adam's belief in *EW*, (ii) Tom's belief in ~*EW* and (iii) Adam's belief that Tom is his peer with regards to peer disagreement. What is the rational response? One option is that he applies *EW* to itself and suspends in *EW* on this basis. As I have argued, there is nothing wrong with this kind of response. But there's another option: in taking into account the new evidence that Tom believes ~*EW*, Adam suspends on his belief that Tom is his peer with regards to issues concerning the epistemology of disagreement. Before he found out that Tom disagreed with him about *EW*, he counted Tom as a peer with regards to propositions concerning peer disagreement. But he only did so because he took the fact that Tom is his peer with regards to philosophical issues as reason to count Tom as a peer with regards to issues concerning peer disagreement. Thus, respecting the evidence requires Adam to reassess the original reasoning that led him to the belief about his and Tom's (apparent) peerhood.

Adam knows something he did not know before. He now knows that Tom disagrees with him about *EW*. This surely counts as evidence against the fact that Tom is his peer with regards to propositions concerning peer disagreement. (And we can say this without saying that Fran's divergent result in mental math provides strong evidence that she isn't Sally's peer with respect to computing a tip.) The fact that Tom disagrees with him so starkly on the proper response to peer disagreement might even give Adam good reason to doubt that he

established peerhood correctly in the first place. First, Adam might have mistakenly reasoned that he and Tom are philosophical peers. Second, he might have mistakenly inferred from the first fact to the fact that he and Tom are peers with regards to peer disagreement. After all, if Tom has published papers denying the truth of *EW*, he now has extra-evidential or pragmatic reasons to deny its truth: professional credibility, an aversion to retraction, etc. Either way, Adam seems to have little, if any, reason to believe that he and Tom are peers with regards to peer disagreement at this point.

Should Adam suspend in *EW* or should he suspend in his original belief that he and Tom are peers with regards to propositions concerning peer disagreement? I think that as the case currently stands, Adam ought to suspend in the latter. Sure, Tom's peerhood on the matter at hand seemed plausible to Adam absent any evidence against it, but given new evidence about how they reason with regards to (actual cases of) peer disagreement, Adam should doubt the conclusion of the original reasoning that led him to believe he and Tom were peers on this issue. In reassessing the evidentiary basis of one of his beliefs by reflecting on it and his newly -acquired evidence, Adam (and so *EW*) respects the evidence. Unlike *EEW*, Elga's partially conciliatory view, which builds in an arbitrary restriction, *EW* is not vulnerable to a charge of dogmatism. Adam does not beg the question against the opponent; he does not refrain from suspending in *EW* because *EW* tells him to do so. Rather, Adam ought to refrain on suspending in *EW* because he has no better reason to suspend in *EW* than reason to suspend in his belief that he and Tom are peers with regards to peer disagreement.

What is the rational response in cases of disagreement about disagreement? Non-conciliatory, steadfast views tell us to be dogmatic at both levels of disagreement (i.e.,

dogmatic in cases of disagreement about disagreement and in cases of disagreement about anything else). I find that such views are lacking in evidential support. I have been concerned with how a conciliatory view might answer the question, a view which at first glance seems to be committed to one of two options. Either the correct (conciliatory) view on disagreement rationally requires us to suspend on both levels (like *EW*) or else to suspend on the first level while remaining dogmatic at the second (like *EEW*).

According to Elga, a view that recommends the former option – as a fully conciliatory view like *EW* does – is self-undermining. Elga chooses instead to amend *EW* such that the resulting rule says that one should be dogmatic in cases of disagreement about *EW* itself. His solution seems ad hoc because it is ad hoc. He fails to appreciate *EW* as a rule of rationality and mistakenly assimilates *EW* to self-undermining theses like *V*. But as we have seen, *EW* is neither internally incoherent nor even self-referential. It remains entirely silent on its own truth value.

Does *EW* lead to Philosophical Spinelessness?

Some have criticized *EW* on the grounds that belief in it leads to the seemingly unacceptable conclusion that we must give up many of our most deeply -held philosophical beliefs.[142] In other words, belief in a view like *EW* forces us into a kind of philosophical *spinelessness*. Now, it's true that not every philosopher who argues in favor of some view or another actually endorses that view, but in many (if not most) cases the arguer seems to hold a firm belief in a proposition that expresses his or her view. And for a great number of issues, there are philosophers on both sides. Take your favorite contentious philosophical thesis and you are bound to find very smart, very credible philosophers who genuinely

[142] Elga (2007: 10).

respect each other's opinions on both sides of the debate. Insofar as the disputants know of the disagreement and insomuch as they believe one another to be peers, it seems like if the disagreement persists, then they are being less than fully rational. If they follow *EW*, therefore, they should lower their confidence in their original beliefs until the disagreement no longer persists.

It is worth noting that the claim that widespread reasonable disagreements among peers exist is consistent with both the approximate truth of *EW*, and the viability of a policy of conciliation with peers over both first-order issues and the viability of *EW* itself. It's not enough that one believe in the existence of such disagreements; one must believe one is currently in such a disagreement before *EW* kicks in. Someone who accepts *EW* is rationally required to suspend in her original belief if and only if she knows (or rationally believes) that the conditions of a peer disagreement are met. In particular, one must have good reason to believe that the other person is one's peer with regards to the matter in question even after one learns of the disagreement. But it is consistent with the claim that widespread reasonable disagreement among peers exists that we are rarely in the place to rationally assess the status of our peerhood with regards to propositions concerning philosophical issues. As we have seen, it is relatively easy to establish peerhood in some domains, but it is not clear how we might go about establishing peerhood with regards to philosophical issues.[143]

If we cannot establish peerhood, then the disagreement question does not arise. Even if one antecedently counts someone as one's peer with regards to propositions concerning

[143] Is it possible that this is true by definition? If a question is scientific, experimental evidence should resolve it or leave us in agreement as to why it can't be resolved. But we don't call a question "philosophical" unless its answer can't be entirely settled with experiments. So it may be that if the question is philosophical equally reasonable, intelligent people can draw incompatible conclusions from the same evidence by taking different directions within the substantive space of admissible answers insured by our appropriately labeling it "philosophical."

peer disagreement, then taking into account the new piece of evidence that this person disagrees about the truth of *EW* might defeat the original evidence that led one to establish peerhood in the first place. In such cases, *EW* could not be applied and so the disagreement question would not arise.

Even if we did have a reliable and consistent method for establishing peerhood in philosophical disagreements, this would not be a problem for *EW*. Suppose that tomorrow a group of philosophers comes up with a reliable and consistent method for establishing what they all agree is philosophical peerhood, amongst each other with regards to some philosophical issue on which they are equally expert: e.g. pick your favorite example.. With this new method in mind, S discovers that many of the disagreements she finds herself in with her mutually acknowledged fellow "experts" are in fact genuine cases of peer disagreement in the idealized sense sketched above: i.e. they actually share exactly the same body of evidence and are equally adept at applying it to the philosophical questions they are trying to answer. In these cases where S regards someone as her philosophical peer even after she comes to find out she disagrees with them about philosophical thesis Q, if S holds *EW*, the rational thing to do is to suspend in Q. But this does not mean that going forward the rational thing to do is remain agnostic about the truth of Q. Given the current evidence, of course, S ought to suspend in Q. Absent any new evidence that bears on the truth of the disagreed-upon proposition, S ought to remain agnostic. But it is not as if S is stuck in a state of agnosticism. There are many ways in which S might come to adopt belief in Q once again. For instance, S might try to adduce new evidence. Or she might try to reason in new ways from the total relevant evidence that (*ex hypothesi*) she and her peer disagree on. In

short, she might continue investigating, thinking, and reasoning about the matter at hand. For surely she can do things while suspending belief in the matter at hand.

Simply being conciliatory based on the belief that the total evidence does not favor Q or ~Q is not an epistemic vice. Philosophical spinelessness is an epistemic vice because it seems to lead to skepticism about philosophical theses in general, something that is not entailed by following *EW*.

In fact, we can actively avoid persistent agnosticism by reflecting on the original evidence even if we hold and follow *EW*. If you and I disagree about some philosophical issue, we can re-evaluate the support for our original beliefs independent from one another. Of course, there might be little reason to think we would find something we had not already thoroughly considered. Still, we could re-evaluate the evidence together (surely two minds can be better than one!) and try to explain exactly how it could be that two peers independently came to contrary conclusions based on the same evidence. We would be speaking from importantly unique perspectives; I was originally moved to believe that Q (and you ~Q) based on the very same evidence. Perhaps we can help each other see the evidence in a new light. Even better, we could attempt to reconcile the disagreement by asking someone who both of us consider as our epistemic peer (in the way that you and your colleagues take each other to be peers) for a new, unbiased perspective. The claim that one should, rationally -speaking, further one's investigation as such into the truth of the disagreed-upon proposition is consistent with the truth of the *Equal Weight View*.

5. Conciliation as a Virtue

An enticing model of the virtue of open-mindedness might appeal to talk of experts and incompetent people: to exercise open-mindedness in cases of disagreement in such a way that the virtue manifests itself in complete deference (or as near to complete as reasonable) to

the experts in cases of disagreement between non-experts and experts, complete dismissal (or as near to complete as reasonable) of the incompetent in cases of disagreement between the competent and the incompetent, and conciliation in peer disagreement. A failure to capitulate to the experts results in the epistemic vice of dogmatism, i.e., someone who is deficiently humble and excessively confident. On the other hand, a failure to dismiss someone judged to be incompetent in the face of a disagreement results in the epistemic vice of skepticism: she is overly humble, not confident enough.

But when S1 considers S2 an *epistemic peer* with regards to propositions like P, and S1 finds out she disagrees with S2 as to whether P, and sincere, empathic argumentation has failed to resolve the disagreement, the epistemically appropriate action to take is *conciliation,* a response that is captured by *EW*'s advice to weigh one's own opinion and one's peer's opinion equally. On this picture, we ought to give extra weight to our interlocutors' opinions proportional to their level of expertise and little to no weight to incompetent opinions. Just as we can conceive of conciliation as the middle ground between complete deference and complete dismissal, we can conceive of the notion of *epistemic peerhood* as the middle ground between incompetence and expertise.

The idea behind conciliation is that it allows one to take seriously the opinions of others, not because they are right (or because one's own are wrong) but because they are beliefs held by a rational agent who argues in an effort to get at the truth. This makes sense only if one assumes that one's interlocutor is arguing in good faith; only then is one able to hit the mean between deference and dismissal. The most conciliatory view on peer disagreement councils one to weigh a peer's belief equally with one's own when determining one's doxastic attitude toward the proposition under disagreement. A minimally *steadfast*

view on disagreement says that there are at least some cases of peer disagreement in which one is rationally permitted to hold on to one's original belief. The steadfast view, then, says that it is at least sometimes okay to completely dismiss one's peer.

There are no doubt people we may reasonably judge as experts and people we may reasonably judge as incompetent with respect to some matter. Expertise comes from research, practice and good habits and incompetence comes from ignorance and bad habits, among other things. Under a traditional understanding of expertise, then, it makes sense to say that sometimes it is rational to defer to an expert. However, I think the attempt to hold expertise as the ideal foments more of what divides us in the first place, privileging those who are already considered experts. Instead, we should attempt to conceive of epistemic peerhood itself as an ideal to work towards. Doing so would promote our supporting one another to improve, epistemically speaking. It would make sense of our deference to and trust in experts, since deferring to the experts would in practice bring us closer to them. It would make sense of our dismissal and distrust of manipulators, since dismissing them would separate us from them. It would make sense of the existence of reasonable disagreements, since, after all, experts who disagree on some matter are sometimes epistemic peers. And, most importantly, it would make sense of the requirement for active participation in our cooperative endeavors to improve our epistemic standings through rational argumentation.

Blind deference and paternalistic dismissal are vices we must attempt to avoid. Suppose S1's belief B is put into question when S2 advances a good argument A against B. S could (i) blindly accept A and revise beliefs/actions to maximize coherency or (ii) completely resist the undermining force of A (e.g. by ignoring it). But both options would be irrational. In (i), S1 relinquishes her ability to process the information for herself and in

effect compromises her own rationality. S1 exemplifies the epistemic vice of mimicry, a form of insincerity. In (ii), S resists the uptake of information that would improve her epistemic status. S1 would be stagnant, a vice of creativity. What S1 should do is consider the argument and try to better understand it from S2's perspective. This involves getting input from S2 and simulating S2's position (and perhaps much more) before S1 (iii) engages in the cooperative activity of rational argumentation.

Closing Remarks

When a disagreement arises between two individuals (or groups) about which attitude we should take, rationally speaking, with respect to a given proposition, and the participants to the dispute attempt to rationally persuade one another, they engage in the activity of rational argumentation. Typically, success in the activity is thought to exist only if at least one person advances an argument that rationally commits the other person to revise their beliefs in the direction of the successful arguer's circle of opinions. Conciliation, it might be thought, precludes this type of rational persuasion, since it calls for a change in attitude to both participants to the dispute. But to think that rational argumentation serves its purpose only in cases where one of the participants "wins" and the other "loses" precludes the type of sincere, open-minded, and creative attempts at persuasion that constitute virtuous argumentation and real intellectual progress. Even in cases where both parties to the dispute give ground to one another by, say, suspending in their original beliefs, rational persuasion is achieved just in case suspension is the rational attitude to take after learning of the peer disagreement.

The steadfast view is dogmatic because it leads to the stubborn dismissal of one's peer in so many cases. But its spineless cousin is not *EW*. The skeptical correlate to the steadfast view would be a view that advises its proponents to at least sometimes defer

completely to one's peer in the face of a disagreement. But conciliationism on peer disagreement (of which EW is a special kind) is the open-minded alternative, the mean between dogmatism and skepticism. The virtue of such views can be derived from the fact that dismissal of and deference to one's interlocutor in the face of a peer disagreement is rationally condemnable.

Creativity is defined as the mean between two vices: stagnation and instability. Sincerity is defined as the mean between manipulation and mimicry. If one always capitulated to one's peers when finding out they disagreed with one in such a way that one replaces one's original belief with the belief of one's peer, one exemplifies the spineless vices associated with these virtues. Such behavior would be irrational because excessively critical of one's own ability for creative construction. It is not epistemically excellent to rely entirely on others when it comes to what one believes. On the other hand, if one always stood one's ground in the face of a dissenting peer, then one would be rightly judged as irrational because one's overly dogmatic, conservative behavior exemplifies the stubborn vices associated with sincerity and creativity. Such behavior is irrational because it undermines the type of coordinative critique that ought to be the first step in resolving our disputes.

Both instability and stagnation lead to the erosion of one's capacities to creatively construct perspectives different from their own, the former because empathy requires a stable starting point and the latter because empathy requires adaptability. The erosion of these capacities in turn contributes to the further entrenchment of the vices themselves. If we don't get moving, we're doomed to spin in circles.

References

Aberdein, A. 2010. Virtue in argument, *Argumentation* 24: 165-179.

Aberdein, A. 2007. Virtue argumentation, in F.H. van Eemeren, A. Blair, Ch. Willard & B. Garssen (eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth Conference of International Society for the Study of Argumentation* (pp. 15-20). Amsterdam: SicSat.

Aberdein, A. .2014. In defence of virtue: the legitimacy of agent-based argument appraisal, *Informal Logic* 34(1): 77-93.

An, Y. 2004. Western 'sincerity' and confucian 'cheng', *Asian Philosophy* 14 (2):155 – 169

Annas, J., & Barnes, J. 2000. *Sextus Empiricus: outlines of skepticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, second edition.

Aristotle, & Crisp, R. 2000. *Nicomachean ethics*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press.

Aristotle. 1928. *The works of Aristotle translated into English*, ed. W. D. Ross. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baehr, J. 2011. The structure of open-mindedness, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 41/2: 191-214.

Bayes, T. 1764. An essay toward solving a problem in the doctrine of chances, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 53, 370-418.

Beall, J. & Restall, G. 2006. *Logical pluralism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Biro, J. and Siegel, H. 2008. In defense of the objective epistemic approach to argumentation, *Informal Logic* 26/1: 91-101.

Bundy, J. 2013. *The epistemic significance of disagreement with others* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing database. (UMI No. 3602013)

Burge, T. 1993. Content preservation, *Philosophical Review*, 102: 457–488.

Camerer, C., Loewenstein, G., and Weber, M. 1989. The curse of knowledge in economic settings: an experimental analysis, *Journal of Political Economy*.

Caravello, J. 2018. Breaking out of the circle, *Argumentation* 32/1: 25-35.

Carruthers, P. 1996. Simulation and self-knowledge: a defense of theory-theory, in *Theories of Theories of Mind*, Carruthers & Smith (eds.) 22–68.

Carter, J. and Gordon, E. 2014. Open-mindedness and truth, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 44/2: 207-224.

Christensen, D. 2007. Epistemology of disagreement: the good news, *Philosophical Review*, 116:187–217.

Christensen, D. 2009. Disagreement as evidence: the epistemology of controversy, *Philosophical Compass*, *4/5*: 756-767.

Cohen, D. 2007. Virtue epistemology and argumentation theory, in *Dissensus and the Search for Common Ground*, D. Hitchcock (ed.), OSSA.

Cohen, D. 2009. Having an open mind and having a sense of proportion as virtues in argumentation. *Cogency* 1(2): 49-64.

Cohen, L. J. 1992. *An essay on belief and acceptance*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Collins, Patricia Hill (2004). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of black feminist thought. In Sandra G. Harding (ed.), *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*. Routledge, 103-126.

Currie, G. 1995. Visual imagery as the simulation of vision. *Mind and Language*, 10(1–2): 25–44.
Currie, G. & Ravenscroft, I. 1997. Mental simulation and motor imagery. *Philosophy of Science*, 64(1): 161–80.
Curry, H. 1942. The inconsistency of certain formal logics. *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 7: 115–117.
Davidson, D. 1973. Radical interpretation. *Dialectica*, 27: 314–28.
Ditto, P., Pizarro, D. and Tannenbaum, D. 2009. Motivated moral reasoning. In Daniel M. Bartels, Christopher W. Bauman, Linda J. Skitka, and Douglas L. Medin, editors, *The Psychology of Learning and Motivation, Vol 50*, Burlington: Academic Press, pp.307-338.
Dretske, F. 1970. Epistemic operators, *Journal of Philosophy*, 67: 1007–1023.
Easwaran, K. & Fitelson, B. 2015. Accuracy, coherence, and evidence, in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, 5: 61-96.
Elga, A. 2007. Reflection and disagreement, *Noûs*, 41: 478–502.
Elga, A. 2010. How to disagree about how to disagree, in *Disagreement*, Feldman R. and Warfield T. (eds.) 175-185. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Feldman, R. 2006. Epistemological puzzles about disagreement, in *Epistemology Futures,* Stephen Hetherington (ed.) 216–236. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Field, H. 2000. Apriority as an evaluative notion, in *New Essays on the A Priori*, Boghossian P. and Peacocke C. (eds.) 117–149. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
Forbes, G. 1983. Thisness and vagueness. *Synthese* 54: 235–59.
Fricker, M. 1994. Against gullibility, in *Knowing from Words*, Matilal and Chakrabarti (eds.) Kluwer Academic Publishers, 125–161.
Fricker, M. 2007. *Epistemic injustice: power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Gascon, J. 2016. Virtue and arguers. *Topoi* 35 (2): 441-450.
Goldman, A. 2003. An epistemological approach to argumentation, *Informal Logic* 23/1: 51-63.
Goldman, A. 1996. Simulation and interpersonal utility, In L. May, Michael Friedman & A. Clark (eds.), *Ethics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. pp. 709-726.
Goldman, A. 2006. *Simulating minds: the philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience of mindreading*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Goodman, N. 1953. The new riddle of induction, in his *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Gordon, R. 1986. Folk psychology as simulation, *Mind and Language* 1 (2):158-71.
Hamblin, C. L. 1970. *Fallacies*, London: Methuen.
Harding, S. (ed.). 2004. *The feminist standpoint theory reader: intellectual and political controversies*. Routledge.
Harding, S. 2004. Introduction: standpoint theory as a site of political, philosophic, and scientific debate. In Sandra G. Harding (ed.), *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*. Routledge, 1-16.
Harman, G. 1986. *Change in view*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Hazlett, A. 2006. Epistemic conceptions of begging the question, *Erkenntnis* 65: 343-63.
Heal, J. 1994. Simulation vs theory-theory: what is at issue? in Christopher Peacocke (ed.), *Objectivity, Simulation, and the Unity of Consciousness: Current Issues in the*

Philosophy of Mind (Proceedings of the British Academy, 83), Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 129–144.
Heath, C. & Heath. D. 2006. The curse of knowledge, Harvard Business Review.
hooks, bell. (2004). Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness. In Sandra G. Harding (ed.), *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*. Routledge, 153-160.
Hume, D. 1888. *A treatise on human nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Jaquette, D. 2003. The soundness paradox. *Logic Journal of the IGPL* 11 (5): 547–556.
Jones, A. 2015, December 30. Yet another bold claim from Donald Trump: "I know words." Retrieved from http://gawker.com/yet-another-bold-claim-from-donald-trump-i-know-words-1750331997.
Joyce, J. 1998. A nonpragmatic vindication of probabilism, *Philosophy of Science*, 65(4):575-603.
Kant, Immanuel, 1724-1804. 1997. *Prolegomena to any future metaphysics that will be able to come forward as science; with selections from the Critique of pure reason*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
Keeley, B. 1999. Of conspiracy theories, *The Journal of Philosophy* 96: 109-26.
Kelly, T. 2010. Peer disagreement and higher-order evidence," *in Disagreement*, Feldman R. *and* Warfield T. *(eds.)* 111-174. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Kripke, S. 1980. *Naming and necessity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Kwong, J. 2016. Open-mindedness as a critical virtue, *Topoi* 35 (2):403-411.
Kwong, J. 2017. Is Open-mindedness conducive to truth? *Synthese*: 1-14.
Kyburg, H. 1961. *Probability and the logic of rational belief*, Middletown, CT.: Wesleyan University Press.
Lamar, K. 2015. Alright. On *To pimp a butterfly.* [MP3 file] Santa Monica, CA: Aftermath Entertainment.
Lewis, D. 1971. Immodest inductive methods, *Philosophy of Science*, 38: 54–63, 1971.
McGrath, S. 2007. Moral disagreement and moral expertise, in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics Volume III*, Shafer-Landau (ed.) 87-107. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Moran, R. 2006. Getting told and being believed, in Lackey and Sosa: 272–306.
Paul, E. and Kaufman, S. 2014. *The philosophy of creativity: new essays*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Pierce, C.S. 1877. The fixation of belief, *Popular Science Monthly*, 12: 1-15.
Priest, G. 1979. The logic of paradox, *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 8: 219-241.
Ramsey, F. P. 1926. Truth and probability," in Richard B. Braithwaite (ed.), *Foundations of Mathematics and Other Logical Essay*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1931, pp. 156–198.
Ritola, J. 2006. Yet another run around the circle. *Argumentation* 20: 237-44.
Robinson, R. 1971. Begging the question *Analysis* 31: 113-17.
Russell, G. 2008. One true logic? *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 37 (6):593 - 611.
Russell, G. 2015. The justification of the basic laws of logic. *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 44 (6):793-803.
Sainsbury, R. 1995. *Paradoxes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 1.
Sanford, D. 1972. Begging the question, *Analysis* 32: 197-99.

Silva, P. 2013. Epistemically self-defeating arguments and scepticism about intuition, *Philosophical Studies* 164: 579-89.
Sorensen, R. 1991. `P, therefore, P' without circularity, *Journal of Philosophy* 88/5: 245-66.
Sorensen, R. 1991. Rationality as an absolute concept, *Philosophy* 66/258: 473-486.
Sorensen, R. 1996. Unbeggable questions, *Analysis* 56: 51-55.
Sorensen, R. 1998. Self-strengthening empathy, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58/1: 75-98.
Sorensen, R. 1999. An empathic theory of circularity, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77: 498-509.
Sorensen, R. 2004. Charity implies meta-charity, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 68: 290-315.
Sorensen, R. 2016. Fugu for logicians, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 92/1: 131-144.
Sosa, E. 2007. *Apt belief and reflective knowledge, volume 1: a virtue epistemology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Talbott, W. Bayesian epistemology, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/epistemology-bayesian/>.
Teng, N. 1997. Sorensen on begging the question, *Analysis* 57: 220-22.
Truncellito, D. 2004. Running in circles about begging the question, *Argumentation* 18: 325-29.
Van Eemeren, F.H. and R. Grootendorst 1995. *Fallacies: classical and contemporary readings*, edited by Hans V. Hansen and Robert C. Pinto, pp. 130-144.
Van Inwagen, P. 1996. It is wrong, everywhere, always, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence, in *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*. Stump E. and Murray M.J. (eds) 273-284. New York: Blackwell.
Van Inwagen, P. 2010. We're right, they're wrong, *in Disagreement*, Feldman R. *and* Warfield T. *(eds.)* 10-28. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Walton, D. 1994. Begging the question as a pragmatic fallacy, *Synthese* 100: 95-131.
Walton, D. 1995. *A pragmatic theory of fallacies*, Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
Walton. D. 1998. *The new dialectic: conversational contexts of argument*, Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.
Weatherson, B. 2012. Disagreements, philosophical and otherwise, in *The Epistemology of Disagreement*, David Christensen D. and Lackey J. (eds.) 54-75, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
West, C. 1989. *The American evasion of philosophy*: *a genealogy of pragmatism*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
Wittgenstein, L. 1969. *On certainty* (*ed. Anscombe and von Wright*). Harper Torchbooks.
Woods, J. 1992. Who cares about the fallacies? in *Argumentation Illuminated,* F.H. van Eemeren, et al. (eds.), 23-48. Amsterdam: SicSat.
Wright, C. 2000. Cogency and question-begging: some reflections on McKinsey's paradox and Putnam's proof, *Noûs* 34: 140-63.
Wright, C. 2002. (Anti-)Sceptics simple and subtle: G. E. Moore and John McDowell, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 65: 330–348.
Zagzebski, L. 1996. *Virtues of the mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zimmerman, A. 2018. *Belief: a pragmatic picture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.