

# Arrogance and Deep Disagreement

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Arrogance and Polarisation in Debate:  
Changing Attitudes in Public Discourse  
Cardiff University, November 6, 2017

# Outline

Virtues of Argument

Deep Disagreement

Arrogance

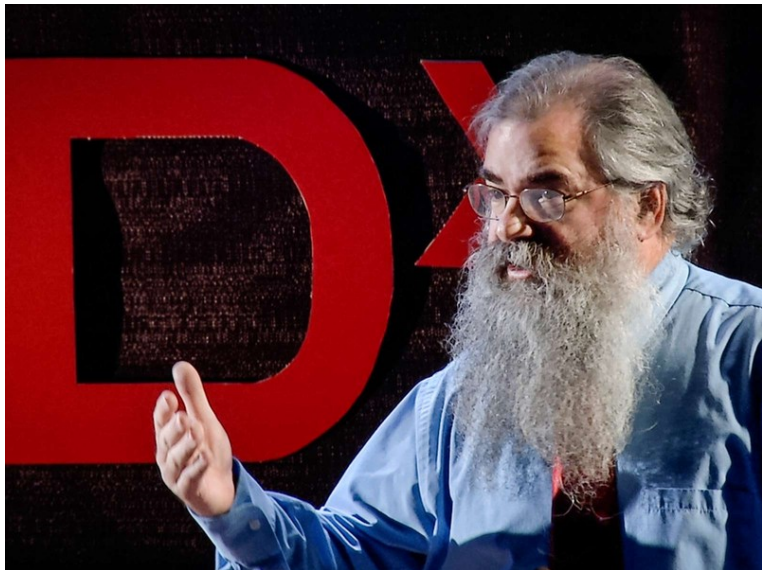
Courage and/or Perseverance

Conclusions



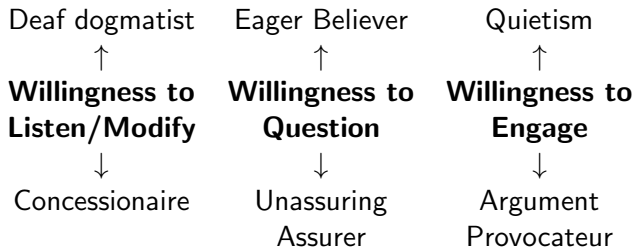
# Virtues of Argument

Daniel Cohen



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after Daniel H. Cohen, 2005, Arguments that backfire, *The Uses of Argument* (David Hitchcock & Daniel Farr, eds.), OSSA, Hamilton, ON.



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## Robert Fogelin on Deep Disagreement

A disagreement can be **intense without being deep**. A disagreement can also be **unresolvable without being deep**. I can argue myself blue in the face trying to convince you of something without succeeding. The explanation might be that one of us is **dense or pig-headed**. And this is a matter that could be established beyond doubt to, say, an impartial spectator. But we get a very different sort of disagreement when it proceeds from **a clash in underlying principles**. Under these circumstances, the parties may be unbiased, free of prejudice, consistent, coherent, precise and rigorous, yet still disagree. And disagree profoundly, not just marginally. Now when I speak about underlying principles, I am thinking about what others (Putnam) have called framework propositions or what Wittgenstein was inclined to call rules. We get a deep disagreement when the argument is generated by **a clash of framework propositions**.

Robert J. Fogelin, 1985, The logic of deep disagreements. *Informal Logic*, 7(1)



# Fogelin (& Wittgenstein) on Deep Disagreement

Claiming that deep disagreements exist does not mean that they are common. And again, a disagreement can be heated without being deep. But if deep disagreements can arise, what **rational procedures** can be used for their resolution? The drift of this discussion leads to the answer **NONE**.

Robert J. Fogelin, 1985, The logic of deep disagreements. *Informal Logic*, 7(1)

## Wittgenstein on Persuasion

I said I would 'combat' the other man—but wouldn't I give him *reasons*? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes *persuasion*. (Think what happens when **missionaries convert natives**.)

Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1969, *On Certainty*. New York.

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# David Godden & William Brenner on Deep Disagreement

People whose forms of life, and their attendant *Weltbild*, do **not sufficiently intersect cannot disagree**—not even deeply. As such, as much as such differences cannot rationally be repaired, it is no failure of rationality or rational argumentation that it cannot span a gulf which language itself cannot traverse. . . . Meaningful deep disagreements seem to occur either at the **intersection of two different but overlapping forms of life**, or within a single but **heterogenous** *Weltbild*, where different, similar but incompatible language games are in play.

David Godden & William H. Brenner, 2010,  
Wittgenstein and the logic of deep disagreement. *Cogency*, 2(2)

## Emo Philips on Deep Disagreement?

Once I saw this guy on a bridge about to jump. I said, “Don’t do it!” He said, “Nobody loves me.” I said, “God loves you. Do you believe in God?”

He said, “Yes.” I said, “Are you a Christian or a Jew?” He said, “**A Christian.**” I said, “**Me, too!** Protestant or Catholic?” He said, “**Protestant.**” I said, “**Me, too!** What franchise?” He said, “**Baptist.**” I said, “**Me, too!** Northern Baptist or Southern Baptist?” He said, “**Northern Baptist.**” I said, “**Me, too!** Northern Conservative Baptist or Northern Liberal Baptist?”

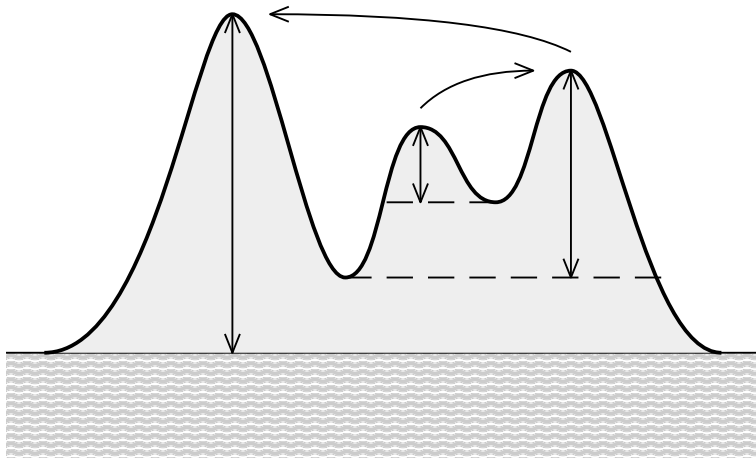
He said, “**Northern Conservative Baptist.**” I said, “**Me, too!** Northern Conservative Baptist Great Lakes Region, or Northern Conservative Baptist Eastern Region?” He said, “**Northern Conservative Baptist Great Lakes Region.**” I said, “**Me, too!**”

“Northern Conservative Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1879, or Northern Conservative Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1912?” He said, “**Northern Conservative Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1912.**” I said, “**Die, heretic!**” And I pushed him over.

Emo Philips, 2005, The best God joke ever – and it’s mine!  
*The Guardian*, Thursday 29 September

## Prominence/Drop

The prominence of a peak is the height of the peak's summit above the **lowest contour line** encircling it but **containing no higher summit** within it.



## Chris Campolo on Deep Disagreement

“Don’t give in to misology,” Socrates tells us, “we are not truly lost until we give up on argument—**keep trying.**” If we take Socrates to mean that we should never stop producing reasons, never recognize that some gaps are too large to close with reasons, then, if there are deep disagreements, we have to recognize it as **very bad advice**. It’s bad **in two ways**. First, it will lead us, if it leads us anywhere, to conclusions, and then actions, that have **no appropriate connection to our understanding**. Second, it will **seriously harm our reasoning skills**.

Chris Campolo, 2014, Argumentative virtues and deep disagreement.  
(D. Mohammed & M. Lewiński, eds.), *Virtues of Argumentation*.  
OSSA, Windsor, ON.

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## Alessandra Tanesini on Arrogance

The speaker is attempting to vouch for the propriety of his purported assertions **merely on the grounds that they are his** claims, without taking himself to be accountable to anyone else. The speaker does not wish to imply that his mere saying so makes the content of the assertion true, but he is convinced that the mere fact that the assertion is *his* somehow **secures its correctness**. However, unless one takes oneself to be infallible, the only way in which an assertion could be guaranteed to be correct simply because one has made it is if one delusively (and usually non-consciously) believes that one's asserting that things are so makes them so.

Alessandra Tanesini, 2016, "Calm down, dear": Intellectual arrogance, silencing and ignorance, *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, 90



## Alessandra Tanesini on Arrogance

There is a difference between **haughtiness** and **arrogance**. The first is manifested as **disrespect toward other speakers**; the second is an **unwillingness to submit oneself to the norms governing ordinary conversation and rational debate**. Despite their different natures, these putative vices are related and often go hand in hand. I suspect that haughty people will often manifest arrogant tendencies, and vice versa. Nevertheless, it seems at least possible for someone to have become so arrogant that he does not relate to other epistemic agents at all, not even to show disdain towards them. Conversely, it also seems possible for someone to have nothing but contempt for all other epistemic agents without being so arrogant to presume that his saying so makes it so.

Alessandra Tanesini, 2016, "Calm down, dear": Intellectual arrogance, silencing and ignorance, *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, 90

# Maura Priest on Humility

An interpersonal (anti-asshole) account

## Aaron James on Assholes

a person counts as an asshole when, and only when, he systematically allows himself to enjoy **special advantages in interpersonal relations** out of an entrenched sense of entitlement that immunizes him against the complaints of other people.

Aaron James, 2012, *Assholes: A Theory*. Doubleday, New York, NY.

a person is *intellectually humble* just in case he:

- ▶ **Respects the intellect of others** as his own, and so rarely feels immune to their complaints and criticisms.
- ▶ Systematically **declines intellectual advantages** in interpersonal relations because he feels no sense of entitlement.

Maura Priest, 2017, Intellectual humility: An interpersonal theory. *Ergo*, 4(16)

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## Maura Priest on Arrogance

We see that for conceptual purposes, intellectual arrogance is grounded upon **disregard for intellectual autonomy**. Behaviors commonly associated with this disregard include **deception and manipulation**. In an important sense manipulators and deceivers attempt to control. Salient examples are found in cults and extremist political parties. These groups not only disregard intellectual autonomy, they act to undermine it via engagement in the following:

- (1) Attempt to **manipulate** persons into holding certain beliefs (truth need not matter).
- (2) Will try to achieve (1) regardless of the **evidence**.
- (3) Will try to achieve (1) without concern for the **intellectual process** of manipulated agents.

Maura Priest, 2017, Intellectual humility: An interpersonal theory. *Ergo*, 4(16)

## Nancy Potter on Uptake

To give uptake rightly, then, it is not enough simply to receive another's speech act with the conventional understanding. One must **appreciate and respond to the spirit** in which something is expressed, and one must **take seriously** what the speaker is trying to say and the **speaker's reasons** for saying it. One must have the appropriate emotional and intellectual responses, engaging one's whole heart. Furthermore, one must recognize the responsibility attending social and political privilege. Indeed, giving uptake properly is partly **constitutive of the kind of person** one is—it requires cultivation of a certain kind of character.

Nancy Potter, 2002, *How Can I Be Trusted? A Virtue Theory of Trustworthiness*.  
Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD.

## Matthew Feinberg & Robb Willer on Moral Reframing

We found that both liberals and conservatives composed persuasive messages that **reflected their own moral values**, not values unique to those who typically would oppose the political stance (Studies 1 and 2). Furthermore, these moral messages framed in a manner consistent with the moral values of those already supporting the political stance were **less persuasive than moral arguments reframed to appeal to the values** of the intended audience—**those who typically oppose** the political position that the messenger is arguing in favor of (Studies 3-6).

Matthew Feinberg & Robb Willer, 2015,  
From gulf to bridge: When do moral arguments facilitate political influence?  
*Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(12)

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## Heather Battaly on Intellectual Perseverance

In sum, given that these four views [Montmarquet, Zagzebski, Baehr, Roberts & Wood] are on the right track, we have a prima facie case for thinking of the virtue of **intellectual courage as a sub-set** of the more general virtue of **intellectual perseverance**.

My proposal is that it [intellectual perseverance] involves dispositions:

1. to make **good judgments** about one's intellectual goals;
2. to **reliably perceive obstacles** to one's intellectual goals;
3. to respond to obstacles with the **appropriate degree of confidence and calmness**;
4. to **overcome** obstacles, **or otherwise act** as the context demands; and
5. to do so **because one cares appropriately** about epistemic goods.

Heather Battaly, 2017, Intellectual perseverance.  
*Journal of Moral Philosophy*. Forthcoming.

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## Heather Battaly on Intellectual Perseverance

Character virtues are not canned responses. Agents with the character virtue of IP don't always behave in the same way. They typically and *characteristically* overcome obstacles to their intellectual goals. But **they also give up**, in the face of obstacles, **when it is appropriate** to do so. In short, they respond to obstacles, as appropriate, in the given context. To put the point differently, there is a sense in which agents with the character virtue of IP hit the mean in their actions. The character virtue of IP lies in something like a **mean** between a vice of excess—call it **recalcitrance**—and a vice of deficiency—capitulation.

Heather Battaly, 2017, Intellectual perseverance.  
*Journal of Moral Philosophy*. Forthcoming.

# Daniel Cohen's Argument Provocateur

The Argument Provocateur is someone with whom you **invariably end up arguing**. He or she is someone who has an uncanny knack for drawing you into an argument. Even when you agree with an argument provocateur, you end up arguing.

In some circumstances, arguing is bad form. If we are too sensitive to that, we can become . . . *gun shy* about arguing. Argument Provocateurs are **not gun shy about arguing**. Nor are they deferential about including sacred cows in their gun-sights.

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# Maimonides on Courage

Maimonides suggests that there are two extreme approaches to handling secret matters, both of which are deficient: the **cowardly** and the **rash approaches to writing**. . . . Maimonides advocates that the correct approach is a form of **courageous writing**, just as courage is the proper mean between cowardice and rashness. This is writing through **parables and hints** that have a meaning both for the ordinary reader, which will not lead him astray, and a separate meaning for the philosophic reader, who can read between the lines and learn the secrets from these parables and hints

Alexander Green, 2015, Maimonides on courage. *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, 22(2).

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- ▶ Arrogance can **deepen disagreements**.
- ▶ Arrogance **impedes disagreement amelioration** strategies.
- ▶ Courage + persistence is essential to the defence of **unpopular views**.
- ▶ Courage — persistence is essential for the proper **acknowledgement of defeat**.
- ▶ Disagreement amelioration strategies require close attention to **virtues of argument**.
- ▶ The virtues of argument may ease the way to **mutually acceptable resolution**.



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