

Holding One's Own

Scott F. Aikin

Published online: 4 January 2008
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2008

Abstract There is a tension with regard to regulative norms of inquiry. One's commitments must survive critical scrutiny, and if they do not survive, they should be revised. Alternately, for views to be adequately articulated and defended, their proponents must maintain a strong commitment to the views in question. A solution is proposed with the notion of holding one's own as the virtue of being reason-responsive with the prospects of improving the view in question.

Keywords Argumentative rules · Refutation · Tenacity · Fallibilism

There is tension between two regulative norms of argument's role in inquiry. On the one hand, there is what I will term the assessment rule (AR), which is that one's commitments must survive critical scrutiny, and if one's commitments do not survive scrutiny, one should revise one's views. On the other hand, there is what I will term the fiduciary/stability requirement, which is that for views to be adequately articulated and defended, their proponents must maintain a consistent commitment to the views in question. The problem is that one requirement yields a community of doxastic weather-vanes, constantly changing their orientation depending on the last gust of argumentative wind and never fully developing robust versions of views, and the other requirement yields a community of tenacious true believers. Each of these two intellectual virtues by itself yields vice. I propose a synthetic solution with the notions of *holding one's own* and that of *an experiment in bullet-biting*—such that one may maintain fidelity to views that have something going for them even in the face of serious criticism, but also such that this fidelity is held so that the view may have the best version of it available for rational scrutiny.

S. F. Aikin (✉)
Department of Philosophy and Religion, Western Kentucky University, 1 Big Red Way,
Bowling Green, KY 42101, USA
e-mail: scott.aikin@wku.edu

This fidelity is acceptable only on the conditions that one's attitudes will ultimately be directed by the outcome of that scrutiny.

1

A regulative requirement of arguments is that if the listener accepts an argument's premises and also finds the support those premises provide for the conclusion acceptable, the listener should accept the conclusion. Additionally, if an arguer cannot defend a view against charitable criticism, that arguer should no longer hold that view. The goal of arguments as cooperative enterprises is that the discussants resolve their disagreements and pursue the truth by the means of the exchange of reasons. If the discussants' views are not constrained by the results of argumentative exchange, then it seems they are not fully cooperating in argumentation. That we engage in argumentation in order to resolve disagreements or to promote acceptance of one view or another is widely accepted. However, that we pursue arguments for the sake of the truth is not as widely accepted. For example, many rhetorical theories of argument are posited on the view that truth is not a goal of argument, but that of eliciting audiences' adherence (e.g., Tindale 1999, p. 96). Two things are to be said here. First, the rhetorical view seems on the road to being self-defeating—surely *it* couldn't be the conclusion of an argument, then. Second, let us stipulate that the rule here constrains only discussants in inquiry—that is, those pursuing the truth. There are certainly other purposes for argument (e.g., showing off, making oneself a nuisance, amusement, and rhetoric) and the rule does not have to constrain people when they are engaged in those sorts of enterprises. That is, the constraints of truth obtain for arguers only so long as they want their commitments to come out (or take them already to be) true. However, if discussants don't care much about truth, then it's not clear why disagreements matter or arguments are their means to address them. I will have an argument later that will show that so long as we have beliefs and commitments, we care about truth.

The regulative constraint that one's commitments should reflect the overall state of dialectical play has been captured in a variety of ways. van Eemeren and Grootendorst articulate the requirement as the 9th Commandment for reasonable discussants:

Inconclusive defenses of standpoints may not lead to maintaining these standpoints, and conclusive defenses of standpoints may not lead to maintaining expressions of doubt concerning the standpoints (2004, p. 1).

So, in the concluding stages of arguments, pro- and antagonists of a view are bound by the results of arguments for and against the view. Differences of opinion cannot be resolved by argument if either side may, when the arguments do not go his or her way, refuse to respect the turn the argument has taken. Walton sketches negative rules of persuasive dialogue such that in the concluding stage:

A participant must not try to force the premature closure of a dialogue until it is properly closed, either by mutual agreement or by fulfillment of the goal of the dialogue (1992, p. 18).

In the case of argumentative persuasive exchanges, a resolution of the disagreement is the end, and proper closure of a dialogue as the completion of an argument (defense or refutation) that the other side cannot legitimately challenge is the means. Prakken (2006) has defined the regulative rule here in terms of “an argument game” wherein proponent and opponent of a thesis take turns making moves against each other’s positions such that:

A player has won if the other player has run out of moves. Now an argument A is defeasibly valid if the proponent has a winning strategy ... (pp. 309–310).

In the same way that flipping a coin to decide something (perhaps who gets the first touch in a soccer match) has the understood requirement that the losing side of a fair flip no longer has a claim, the game of reason-exchange opens with a similar understanding, namely that once a player has lost, that player should no longer hold the losing view. Let us call this regulative commitment *the assessment rule* (AR). The term ‘assessment rule’ is derived from the model for critical discussion wherein there are four stages of a critical discussion: confrontation, opening, argumentation, and concluding stages.¹ The thought is that one is bound by the assessments constituting the concluding stage. A rough and ready version of the rule runs:

(AR) If in an argumentative dialogue’s concluding stage an argument (A) for a view (p) is assessed by the disputants as successful, disputants may no longer reject p. If A is assessed as unsuccessful, disputants may no longer hold that p.

Again, AR is a regulative ideal for argumentative exchanges in light of the respective arguers’ pragmatic goal of resolving disagreements. The whole point of subjecting views to rational scrutiny is so that if one side survives the scrutiny and the other does not, we follow what has survived. If we fail to follow the rule, we might as well have just skipped all the talking and settled the matter with our fists.²

The first limitation of (AR), as noted earlier, is to discussants pursuing inquiry. A second limitation here is that the AR applies only to discussants that are part of the discussion, not to auditors, those merely listening in on a discussion. If one has had the chance to defend or criticize a view, then one should be bound by the results of those argumentative exchanges. However, if one has not had a chance to submit one’s arguments and has had to only listen, one is not bound by the results. For example, imagine someone (the auditor) who comes to a dissertation defense, and when the objections come to the paper, the dissertator cannot defend the view. The dissertation is failed and the thesis is deemed unsupported. The auditor, however, is aware of a response to the objections. She did not contribute to the discussion, because it is not auditors’ place to step in during dissertation defenses (as it is a test primarily of the dissertator). She, though, knowing a response to the objections is exempt from the requirement of having to reflect the current state of the dialectic.

¹ See Walton (1989, pp. 17–18), van Eemeren et al. (2002, p. 25), and van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004, pp. 59–61).

² This is clearly a false dilemma, as we may instead negotiate, vote, flip a coin, or let somebody else decide. However, once we commit to any of these other non-violent strategies of resolution, we do so with the agreement that the results of the method are binding. If we don’t operate on *that* agreement, then the only option seems avoidance or violence.

There is a further consideration that supports AR, and that is our own self-reflexive assessments of our beliefs. The pragmatic force of argument is that we change our minds on the terms of what we take to be good reasons, and this is reflective of a general rule of rationality—namely, that one takes oneself as having good reasons to believe (take this as an analogue of the practical rule that one’s actions should be dictated by good reasons).

Heysse (1998) captures the thought regarding the internal tension (or “oddness”) in assessments of the following sort:

With arguments u_1, u_2, \dots, u_n the speaker has convinced me that p (while I previously thought that not- p), but u_1, u_2, \dots, u_n are not sound arguments for p (p. 419).

We, as assessors of arguments, must face not only the pragmatic force of arguments to change our minds but also the epistemic claims that the arguments lay upon our beliefs. To be convinced by an argument is to assess it as epistemically sound. The internal epistemic claim of arguments explains why they can perform their pragmatic function, since they appeal to the rational standards and self-regulation of the disputing believers to fix their beliefs accordingly. As such, it is not only *pragmatically* or *instrumentally* irrational to persist in holding views in the face of what one assesses as sufficient criticism (or to hold doubts in the face of what one takes as conclusive evidence), it is *cognitively irrational*. This norm when taken to constrain *belief* is termed ‘evidentialism.’ *Such* dual assessments of beliefs and reasons bearing on them yield conflicted belief- and evidence-attributions like the following:

- (A1) I hold that p , but I do not have evidence for p that passes critical standards, and
 (A2) I do not believe that p , despite the fact that I am aware of evidence for p that passes critical standards.

We believe because we think we have the truth, and the markers of truth are evidence. Believing contrary to evidence, then, is a failure to take seriously the intrinsic norms of having one’s beliefs fit the world.³ The argumentative rule is that beliefs failing the test of criticism are ones we may take as not living up to the truth. If one abjures this requirement, one then opens oneself to the absurd assessment of beliefs and their fit with the world captured by G.E. Moore with his paradox (1942, p. 543):

- (M) I believe that p , but p is false.

The norm intrinsic to belief is that beliefs be brought to fit the world—the truth of beliefs depends on their proper regulation with an eye to indicators of their truth. One’s reasons passing the critical scrutiny of charitable, helpful, and well-informed interlocutors is a good criterion for having the right kind of evidence. And the

³ See Anscombe’s (1957) of direction of fit for beliefs for an early articulation of this view. Recent applications of the general thought have been made by Adler (1999, 2002), Williams (2003), Misak (2004), and Aikin (2006) as a norm intrinsic to belief.

failure of one's reasons to pass that scrutiny, alternately, is evidence about one's evidence—namely, that it is not very good.⁴

One question may be whether the evidentialist norm governing beliefs bears on the assessment rule for commitments. The norms govern different things: cognitive states on the one hand, and public stances on the other. However, it seems clear that there is a close connection between belief and commitment—take, for example, the requirement of sincerity that runs that one's public assertions reflect one's beliefs. It follows that if one's beliefs are constrained by the evidentialist norm, then one's sincere commitments are constrained by the assessment rule.

The AR, then, is reflective of two components of our argumentative lives: one pragmatic and one epistemic. For pragmatic reasons, we should follow AR, because it is constitutive of our cooperative argumentative ventures with others. There is reciprocity to the expectations of persuasive dialogue—namely, that if we do everything right in the exchange of reasons, one of us will change his or her mind. For epistemic reasons, the AR constrains us, because we take the success or failure of a set of reasons in argumentative exchange to be indicators of the sufficiency or insufficiency of those reasons as evidence for one's view. Because our beliefs are pursuant of the truth, we would be irrational to hold beliefs we took not to reflect the truth. AR, then, it seems, has impeccable appeal.

2

There are views worth going to the mat for.⁵ The following happens regularly enough: a standpoint has got something going for it, but its articulations don't survive scrutiny. On AR, we shouldn't give a second thought to turning our backs on the view. But we often stick with them. I think we often do so for good reason.

First is a point about identity—namely, that part of our love for our beliefs is explained by our being caught up with them. If you think, perhaps, that everything is internally related to everything else, you will see yourself as part of a mind-bogglingly large whole. That view will be part of how you get around in the world by influencing how you see the antecedents and consequences of your actions. That view of yourself is part of who you are. So it's hard to let go of, since it's not just a re-arrangement of p's and q's on one's ledger of beliefs (or perhaps the mere addition of a tilde), but a re-arrangement of oneself. These sorts of considerations

⁴ See Kelly's "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement" (2005) for a similar assessment of higher-order evidence.

⁵ The expression 'go to the mat' is a sporting metaphor for argumentative exchange. It evokes wrestlers engaged in a match with each willing to risk being pinned and beaten to win. On the analogy with games, I will use sporting metaphors and vocabulary to help elucidate other elements of argumentative contexts. This risks two kinds of misrepresentations: one that argumentation is *merely* a game, and the other that argumentation must be *adversarial* with winners and losers. The former worry may be mitigated by the fact that game-analogies are not generally used to downplay the importance of the analysandum, as can be seen in Wittgenstein's use of 'language games.' The latter worry is one that the game analogy and a good deal of the vocabulary derived from it inculcate a combative or militaristic view of argumentative exchange. I, however, am not entirely averse to seeing arguments under such an aegis. Arguments are often the appropriate rule-bound alternative to bald aggression, but in being an alternative to bald aggression, the rules and their articulation do not have to require the aggression be sublimated or foregone.

don't score any points in discussions of cognitive-inquirational norms—they look more like exculpations than justifications. But there's still epistemic bread to bake (or argumentative fish to fry) with this point.

This identity point is that when we've got so much on the line with a view, we are more willing to make sacrifices for it. When we come out on the losing side of an argument with such a view, we are highly motivated to devise new defenses of it, more complete articulations that avoid the critiques, new versions that rebut the challenges. Only when we think a view is worthwhile is it reasonable to salvage it, stick with it, and work out these defenses.

Additionally, many arguments against a good number of philosophical commitments involve the opposition of the view with a series of other commitments. It usually runs in the following conditional: *If these plausible values and views are right, your view is false*. If we are highly motivated to defend the view in question, we are more likely to make sacrifices for it—as they say, one philosopher's *modus ponens* is another's *modus tollens*. Commitment to some views is not just assent, but a commitment in a fiduciary sense—one is responsible for the defense of and further articulation of the view. One is not only committed to the view's truth, but is entrusted with its defense and its clarification. And by that, one is committed to its continued representation in considerations relevant to it. Because a person may find herself drawn to a view, it seems reasonable to say that both for the sake of the view and all others interested in it, she should develop the view as best she can.

A similar view has been developed from a pragmatic perspective. For example, van Eemeren and Houtlosser show that *the norm* that discussants must not only contribute to a discussion in ways that will resolve the disagreement and *expectation* that discussants will contribute in ways that are pursuant of a resolution favorable to their own views are coherent (1999, p. 481). Further, Krabbe has argued that discussants have a *positive obligation* to employ the best argumentative strategies they can (2004, p. 6). The difference between my view here and these is that the pragmatic-strategic expectations and norms bear on the actions of arguers in the *argumentation stage* of a critical discussion—they are about how to make one's case. However, these norms do not bear on the actions of arguers in the *concluding stages*. They seem to be committed, since they bear on trying to *win* the argument, to the AR—you do your best not to lose, since you would have to change your views if you do. The fiduciary norm, however, is that some disputants nevertheless should maintain their commitments even after unsuccessful defenses.

Let me be clear about what I am *not* saying here. I am not saying that because some S's identity is on the line with her commitment to p, S is justified in maintaining that commitment in the face of evidence contrary to p and the failure of her argument A for it. Identity epistemology (the cognitive analogue to identity politics) is not my objective.⁶ In fact, precisely the opposite view—namely, that the

⁶ A further concern about identity in cognitive contexts, especially with one's identity hinging on a view, is that when others attack the view or even question it, one is more likely to take these challenges to the person. See Aikin and Anderson (2006, p. 19) for a Socratic argumentative norm underlying this concern. This problem of identity epistemology is clearly on display when those criticized describe the critics as those who "bash" the view, or those who are "haters". A further concern would be that all criticism would be *ad hominem abusive*.

more important p is to S , the more evidence S should have for holding it—seems more likely to be true. If the issue of whether p or not- p is of great import, the more evidence the better, and one should not decide issues on the basis of default reasons of identity (weak evidence if there ever was).

What I *am* saying is that fiduciary commitment yields cognitive goods. It allows us to make views more robust, it functions as a motive to further discussions and develop new strategies of defense. Argument is the main tool of inquiry, and what argument yields is an assessment of the balance of reasons for a view.⁷ But arguments need data to supply premises, and experiments (in experience, in the lab, in thought) yield a good bit of data. But now, I want to say that there are not only experiments that yield new data, there are experiments that yield new views. More complex, more robust, more defensible versions of earlier refuted views arise from, for the lack of better terms, *experiments in bullet-biting*. To continue the metaphor, we don't know which bullets will send their biters to the dentist and which ones won't, unless we have teams of people out there testing them with their teeth.

For views, especially as parts of larger intellectual programs to receive their full and deserved critical attention, there have to be people for whom their cognitive attitudes toward the view are relatively stable. This, instead of being a *motivational* point, is a *procedural* point. Again, take the analogy with experiments: for a research program to be genuinely useful, those running the program must have a kind of investment (the motivational point), and that investment must make it such that their commitments are stable enough to weather moments when impartial judges would give up on it (the procedural point). Holding a view, committing to an intellectual program, is a long term project.⁸ For those projects to bear fruit, they have to run uninterrupted. Surely those committed must be aware of and bound to *eventually* answer the current issues, but the span of an argumentative exchange, it seems excessive to require of them that they change their minds. Thinking up good reasons and defenses takes time, investment, and effort, and it's a simple fact that we aren't always at our best. Shouldn't we wait until we've coolly thought things over, given ourselves the time to think up the best responses we can, and so on, to require that disputants on the losing side of arguments revise their views? The fiduciary norm, then, may be rendered that views, even those that have the current dialectical considerations against them, should be developed into their best, most defensible, forms. Those that hold the view are those to whom the view is entrusted.

This rule is distinct from that of *cognitive conservatism*, which is captured by the slogan *beliefs are innocent until proven guilty*.⁹ The conservative slogan compresses two norms—the first that believers do not have to have positive epistemic reasons

⁷ This, perhaps, is an overstatement. In many fields, the tools of inquiry are those of collecting data, tabulating results, and organizing information. However, all of these tools are mobilized for the sake of *making a case*.

⁸ Talisse and Aikin (2007, p. 662) have made a version of this argument regarding moral consequences of scientific research. It is an extension of Williams' (1963, 100f) argument that consequentialism cannot countenance long term moral projects. Psychological and anthropological research bears this out in the correlation between people having interests in some subject and their cognitive "category exhaustion" as a case for the division of labor (Keil 2005, pp. 145–147).

⁹ Exemplary are James (1897/1979), Harman (1986), and Quine and Ullian (1978).

for their beliefs, and the second that once counter-evidence is in, believers should revise their beliefs. The fiduciary norm is that believers may maintain their commitments to views they have investments in even in the face of failed defenses of the views. A market analogy seems appropriate since funds or stocks will have bad periods, but the crucial outlook is long-term performance, and the only way companies can have that is if their investors stick with them through the tough times.

3

Following either AR or the fiduciary norm exclusively seems clearly to lead to intellectual vice. Let's take each in turn. With those exclusively following AR, we do have a conscientious lot—they are fallibilists of an especially exacting sort. They must scrupulously assess the current state of dialectical play and fix their beliefs accordingly. In this enterprise, they must exhibit a real virtue in intellectuals in that they must have fidelity not to views but to *the argument*. One concern, though, is that this passive virtue of appropriate responsiveness to reasons has no correlate source of spontaneity. These inquirers *reflect* the current dialectical states, but they do not *direct* where things may go now. Following the argument is one thing, but taking it somewhere is another, so the virtue of following the assessment rule when it is untempered and not correlated with other virtues yields the vicious community of *cognitive weather-vanes*—their beliefs point the way of the most recent successful dialectical wind, and they leave no view well-developed.

Alternately, those following the fiduciary-stability rule are being virtuous inquirers in that they are giving the fullest and most complete version of their views they can. However, this virtue, if untempered, yields tenacity and unresponsiveness to reasons. Additionally, given the goals at stake, there may even be scorn put on those who *do* change their minds, since the goal is a kind purity of the view. Those who forego it are charged with apostasy. Such a setup very easily devolves into a simple competition between rival views not for argumentative superiority but for more complete converts. The fiduciary norm is on the road to a community of *true believers*.¹⁰ These true believers often see the situation as that of conflicting incommensurate traditions. “Pluralism” is often invoked as the explanation and justification of such a state, and the prescription is that it is worthless and even wrong to argumentatively engage the rival views, since each tradition is hermetically sealed from the others. No internal proof between traditions is at all possible. In fact, it is positively discouraged by the promoters of pluralism, since the regulative fiduciary commitment is that all criticism of views proceeds from misunderstandings of them. Given fiduciary commitments, this is the baseline defense. And it is an all-too-convenient refuge for those incapable of defending, but unwilling to change, their views. The consequence is intellectual balkanization, and such strategies undermine the original goal of developing views to their fullest—

¹⁰ See Hoffer's *The True Believer* (1963).

that of acceptable argumentative resolution, so that disagreements may be resolved, not deepened.

4

Let us remind ourselves that when a disputant comes out on the losing side of an argumentative exchange, the general rule captured with AR is that she should concede and revise her views accordingly. But it also seems reasonable that she may concede but *not* revise her view. We even have an expression that performs this task:

(H) I will have to think about that.

Statements like (H) are complex speech acts. First, (H) is a commissive-declarative that registers acceptance of an argument and concedes that the exchange has gone in the favor of the opponent. With it, the speaker announces that the other side has won the exchange. The felicity conditions for this speech act to be binding are that the concessions were achieved by legitimate argumentative means instead of by force, threats, or some other non-argumentative means. In this respect, (H) is no different from other speech acts used to close the assessments of argumentative exchanges. There is a second non-standard element of (H), though. With (H), the speaker announces that he will nevertheless maintain his commitment to the view, despite the fact that he has just conceded it has no current defenses. (H) has a reportive force that informs other speakers (and especially the other disputant) that the speaker has not and will not (at least in the *immediate* future) change his mind. I take it that we allow others to utter (H) after their views have been criticized and they presently have no answers. The question is under what conditions it is allowable that we do so.

I take it that the felicity conditions for (H) to have legitimate commissive-declarative and reportive force consist of two crucial elements: one dependent on the view and the arguments against it, and the other dependent on the speaker uttering (H). I will take each in turn.

One way to allow another, even after refuting his present articulation of a view (p), to utter (H) is to make the following concession:

(O) I think you're onto something with p.

With (O), the speaker does not commit to the view that p, and may even maintain its falsity. But a speaker surely can acknowledge the appeal of an opponent's position, even one she holds is nevertheless false. The crucial thing is to first note that there are views that are appealing and those that are not, and only views that are worth developing in their own rights are worth sticking with when it currently looks like they are false. Some views are simply irretrievably stupid, or so demonstrably false that no more development will do them any good. Often, this situation is revealed precisely by the argumentative actions occasioning (H), which should, instead of yielding (O), yield:

(C) And then you'll change your mind.

The fact of the matter is that some views are just losers, and sometimes it takes a while for those who hold them to get that. So we should weaken (AR) even for cases where the view isn't even worth further defense, because we want the refutation to sink in, and for the resolution to be permanent. If the one holding the refuted view is allowed to go think it through himself, it seems more likely that the refutation will stick than if we hold his feet to the fire with it presently. Moreover, there is the problem of direct doxastic voluntarism—we don't have that kind of control over our beliefs. We do have indirect control, though, and for someone to go and think over a refutation is one way for her to exert control over her beliefs, because she does so on the presumption that she should have her beliefs reflect her reasons. Weakening AR so that there can be a reasonable period of time between the close of the argumentative exchange and the view's change is what is required here.

So the question returns—when it is appropriate to respond to (H) with (O)? The following will have to be just a rough and ready sketch of some properties a view can have by virtue of which it has enough in its favor to make biting bullets for it worthwhile. First, the view may have a *simplicity* or *elegance* that makes it appealing—if it were true, some truths would be understandable in terms of a tight little deduction or a few causal connections. Second, a view may be *fecund* in that it may connect up with other interesting areas of inquiry and thereby unify them. And third, the view may uniquely capture some *appearance* or *intuition* we have and which we find difficult to do without. Given these virtues of the view, one has a reason to invest one's time in articulating and defending it, and in this case, biting bullets for it.

The second element of correctly allowing (H)-statements is that they must be uttered by the right kinds of speakers—ones of whom it's reasonable to think that they are capable of contributing to the view's development. Not only must the view not be stupid, but the inquirer must not be stupid either. That is, it seems clear that there are cases where the proper response to (H) should be in effect:

(Y) *Your* thinking any more about that won't do any good.

Surely this expression doesn't live up to any requirements of etiquette, but something like (Y) seems appropriate to *judge* of the other speaker. Face-saving techniques may be necessary here, and perhaps the strategy of distracting the interlocutor with some other interesting topic (or shiny object) may suffice. Given that the fiduciary dialectical norm obtains in light of the good consequences likely in giving inquirers a pass on the assessment rule, those for whom those consequences are *unlikely* should have less of claim on such a pass. There's reciprocity between losers as inquirers and losers as views—stupid cognizers make views (even ones that may have something going for them) look worse, and stupid views tend to further stultify those who have the misfortune of holding to them. If a disputant doesn't have the cognitive goods to improve a view that's been criticized, giving that person a pass on belief-revision makes both the disputant and view worse. For their own sake and for the sake of the view, it's important not to let the incompetent off the hook.

Only inquirers who can *hold their own* should be allowed the pass on the assessment rule. That is, only inquirers who have the promise of a cognitive return on their investments should be allowed the exceptions. Here, what it is to hold one's own will here have to be something rough and ready. First, let me say what it is *not*. Holding one's own doesn't mean that one comes out as a winner in any particular argumentative exchange. Take the analogy with sports, again. A player can hold her own in a game and still lose. The key is not to lose badly or get "schooled," that is, have one's inexperience and ineptness regularly and repeatedly exploited. Arguers that get "schooled" don't get the pass with (AR), and such schooling would be that of exposing their tendency to make elementary errors, operate ignorantly of standard moves in the debates, fail to represent the opposing views appropriately, and insufficiently motivate their own views.¹¹

Those who hold their own, positively, exhibit a cognizance of and facility with standard moves in the debate, take interlocutors seriously, and respond cooperatively with their arguments and objections. This means that when the other side, again on the game analogy, scores points on them, they readily acknowledge this and are capable of proper scorekeeping in the argument game. Additionally, there is a feature of intellectual autonomy or self-possession with the virtue—one does not rely on the authority of others, but takes up the case oneself.

Further, though this may only be my own philosophical prejudices showing, but clarity is central to the virtue of holding one's own, especially if it is to be a condition for appropriate fiduciary commitment. The articulation and defense of views swimming against the argumentative current must not be left to those who are content with obscurity. Obscurantist apology for any view is a double curse. First, obscure formulations of views imply that prior criticisms are posited on misunderstandings of the view, and as such, regularly evade the dialectical requirement of response to criticism. As a consequence, the obscurity of a formulation of a view is inversely proportional to the interest any critic of the view will take in its articulation, since it will reek more of evasion than engagement. Obscurity is the hallmark of criticism-aversion.¹² Second, unclear work does not contribute to the development of the view, because if it is unclear, there are no demonstrable relevance-relations between the articulation and any discussion, objection, or other articulation. As a consequence, it is not pursuant of the regulative commitment behind the fiduciary norm—that of view development. Unclear writing, speaking, or thinking is no way to develop a view, and the more the view has going against it argumentatively, the more its proponents should strive to be clear, not unclear.

This said, there is some room to be made for obscurity in restricted circumstances. New ideas sometimes need space for their development, and an intolerance of obscurity with some ideas may prevent serious consideration and appreciation for innovation. So there may be a sliding scale. The older a view, the more chances the view has had to be refined and clarified. So there should be a

¹¹ Two famous examples of such 'schooling' in the history of philosophy are Socrates' exchange with Parmenides in Plato's *Parmenides*, and Wittgenstein's conversations with Gottlob Frege, after which, Wittgenstein told his friends that Frege "wiped the floor" with him (Monk 1990, p. 36).

¹² See Cohen's "Deeper into Bullshit" for an account of the vices of unclear writing (2006).

lower tolerance for obscurity. However, the newer a view, the less likely all of its features have been thought through, so a higher tolerance for obscurity should be employed. But, again, the particular thinker's tendencies should figure in these judgments, and it seems unwise to leave innovative ideas to those with the bad habit of articulating them in ways no one can understand, much less submit to criticism.

Those who can hold their own argumentatively with some issue, then, have cognizance of and facility with the standard moves, seriousness with their opponents, awareness of the rules of argument, and clarity in articulating even failing views. The thought here is that these virtues are extendable, so that if we are to entrust the further development of the view, the biting of bullets and reformulations of the commitments, to those inquirers, we must have reason to believe that their findings will further the debate by improving the view as best as it can be against present (and future) criticism. Even if the view is hopeless in the end, we want *the very best version of it* refuted, and this requires that we make sure we entrust the view only to those who will contribute to the development of that best version, not those who will make the view worse.

One feature of the tension between the assessment rule and the fiduciary norm is that the only values of inquiry driving the considerations in their favor are those of consensus and truth. However, there are intermediate norms of inquiry, when those aspirational goals are beyond our reach. We may look for a richness in our intellectual communities so that there is a dialectical depth to the views constituting that community. We want not only the truth, but to understand. Engaging with questions and challenges is a means to that end. Further, the truth may surprise us in the end, so we mustn't be all too quick to toss appealing views into the dustbin—we should cast our nets as widely as we can for views that have something going for them and for those who find them appealing to develop them as best they can. As a consequence, a systematic value for a community of inquirers arises not just in the consequent diversity of *views*, but the diversity of *questions* and *challenges* the views pose to one another.

This said, we must formulate an appropriate response to (H) with those who can hold their own. It is clear that one should give a disputant some time to see the force of the refutation and some time to think her way through the problem, but one must still hold her accountable given the current state of the discussion. That is, again on the game analogy, it is her turn to make a move. She has all the time she needs to think it through, but she still bears the responsibility of eventually responding. Additionally, we want to have an acknowledgement that the answer to the standing argument may be sufficient (this *is* someone who can hold her own, and we may have made a wise investment). So we need something with the effect:

(W) I'll be waiting.

Again, etiquette may require that we put it more gently than that. One may say, "Okay, good—and after you've thought about it, tell me what you've come up with." The crucial thing is to emphasize that it is the other disputant's responsibility to make the revisions and get back to the matter once the revisions are made.¹³

¹³ Thanks to Mason Marshall for help formulating the outline of this exchange.

A further concern is that those who can hold their own have more resources at their disposal by means of which to blind themselves to the force of a refutation. Smart people are excellent rationalizers, and with (W), we hope that the rationalizations are also submitted to scrutiny. Getting the pass on revision in light of criticism is not a lifetime pass, even for smart people. Or, perhaps, *especially* for smart people. Additionally, one utters (H) with the confidence that the view is worth defending and that though one cannot come up with an adequate defense *now*, it is likely that a defense will come in the future.¹⁴ (H) is a statement of cognitive optimism, and in these cases, (W) is a reminder that the response, when it comes, will also have to pass the critical test.

References

- Adler, Jonathan. 1999. The ethics of belief: Off the wrong track. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 23: 267–285.
- Adler, Jonathan. 2002. *Belief's own ethics*. Boston: MIT Press.
- Aikin, Scott F. 2006. Modest evidentialism. *International Philosophical Quarterly* 46: 3.
- Aikin, Scott F, and Anderson, Mark. 2006. Argumentative norms in Republic I. *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 13: 18–23.
- Anscombe, G.E.M. 1957. *Intention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, G.A. 2006. Deeper into bullshit. In *Bullshit and philosophy*, eds. Gary Hardcastle and George A. Reisch. Chicago: Open Court.
- Harman, Gilbert. 1986. *Change in view*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Heyse, Tim. 1998. Transcendence, truth, and argumentation. *Inquiry* 41: 411–434.
- Hoffer, Eric. 1963. *The true believer*. New York: Time Inc.
- James, William. 1897/1979. The moral philosopher and the moral life. In *The will to believe and other essays in popular philosophy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Keil, Frank. 2005. Doubt, deference, and deliberation: Understanding and using the division of cognitive labor. In *Oxford studies in epistemology* (Vol. I), eds. Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne, 143–164. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kelly, Thomas. 2005. The epistemic significance of disagreement. In *Oxford studies in epistemology* (Vol. I), eds. Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne, 165–196. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Krabbe, Eric. 2004. Strategies in rhetoric and dialectic. In *Argumentation and its applications: CD-ROM Proceedings from the Conference of the Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation*, eds. Hans V. Hansen, Christopher Tindale, J. Anthony Blair, Ralph H. Johnson and Robert C. Pinto, Windsor, ON: Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation.
- Misak, Cheryl. 2004. Making disagreement matter. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 18: 9–22.
- Monk, Ray. 1990. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The duty of genius*. New York: The Free Press.
- Moore G.E. 1942. A reply to my critics. In *The philosophy of G.E. Moore*, ed. P.A. Schilpp. Chicago: Northwestern University Press.
- Prakken, Henry. 2006. AI, law, and argument schemes. *Argumentation* 19: 303–320.
- Quine, W.V.O, and Ullian, Joseph. *The web of belief*. New York: Random House.
- Talisso, Robert B., and Scott F. Aikin. 2007. Kitcher on the ethics of inquiry. *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38: 654–665.
- Tindale, Christopher. 1999. *The rhetoric of reason*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- van Eemeren, Frans, Rob Grootendorst. 2004. *A systematic theory of argumentation*. . New York: Cambridge University Press.
- van Eemeren, Frans, Rob Grootendorst, and Francisca Snoeck Henkemans. 2002. *Argumentation: Analysis, evaluation, presentation*. Mawah: Erlbaum.

¹⁴ Thanks to the anonymous reviewer for this point.

-
- van Eemeren, Frans, and Peter Houtlosser. 1999. Strategic manoeuvring in argumentative discourse. *Discourse Studies* 1: 479–497.
- Walton, Douglas. 1989. *Informal logic*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, Bernard. 1963. A critique of utilitarianism. In *Utilitarianism: For and against*, eds. J.J.C. Smart and Bernard Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, Bernard. 2003. *Truth and truthfulness*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.