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# VIRTUOUS DISAGREEMENT IN APOLOGETICS: VIRTUE RESPONSIBILISM AS AN APOLOGETICAL RESPONSE TO THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF DISAGREEMENT

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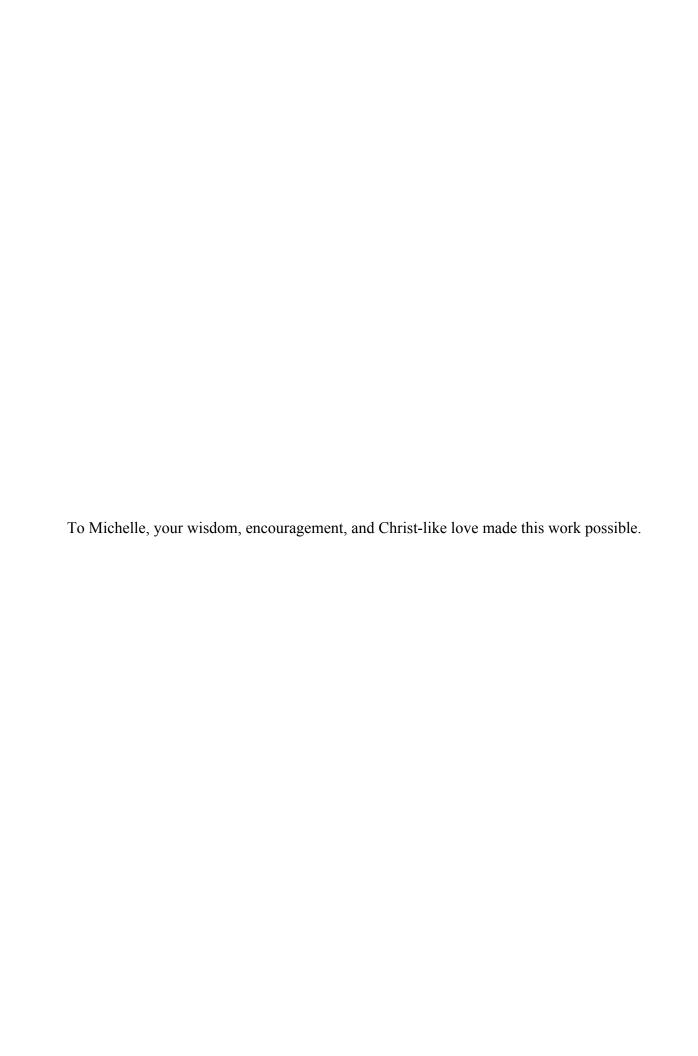
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# APPROVAL SHEET

# VIRTUOUS DISAGREEMENT IN APOLOGETICS: VIRTUE RESPONSIBILISM AS AN APOLOGETICAL RESPONSE TO THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF DISAGREEMENT

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#### **PREFACE**

Although I consider this work to be pure joy, it would be dishonest to say that it has not been a challenge. The Lord has enriched my life with this difficult challenge. He has provided me with an extended amount of time to mull over esoteric ideas, reflecting on how these concepts may benefit or challenge His church. I consider this to be a privileged position—one that I have not earned. It is a wonderful gift to be given the time to love the Lord through the intellect. It would also be dishonest to claim that I have solved all the difficult challenges presented within this work. My aim is to bring some assistance to others who may face similar challenges.

I have benefitted from several precious friendships, which have been the fruits of this work. My supervisor, Dr. Ted Cabal, has been a friend from long before I entered the PhD program. His friendship and supervision have helped refine how I approach philosophical and theological problems. Dr. Mark Coppenger has also served as a great influence and guide, both within this program and within the realm of academics in general. I am also deeply grateful to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for providing the means to explore ways in which to glorify the Lord.

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#### CHAPTER 1

#### INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades there has been a growing work dedicated to the epistemic status of disagreement. There is no question to the abundance of disagreement throughout the history of philosophy, revealing conflicts between the earliest philosophers. The first philosophers disagreed over the primary essence of nature. Thales

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>The questions on the nature of disagreement arose out of the field of social epistemology. In cases of disagreement, justification was held under a different respect when it came to "peer" disagreement. The broader scope of social epistemology questioned the possibility of an individual either passing or receiving justification through testimony. (The focus on disagreement questions how an individual could remain justified in the presence of disagreement with another individual.) Recently, the topic of social epistemology has received a significant amount of attention within epistemology. However, it would be wrong to label it a new discussion. C. A. J. Coady claims that the topic has been overlooked in the historical discussion on the sources of knowledge, receiving "philosophical neglect" for far too long. For a history of the discussion on social epistemology and testimony, see C. A. J. Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (New York: Clarendon Press, 2002). For a broad overview of the positions within testimony, see Joseph Shieber, Testimony: A Philosophical Introduction (New York: Routledge, 2015). Also, for a brief introduction to the epistemology of testimony, see Axel Gelfert, A Critical Introduction to Testimony (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014). And finally, one must not overlook Robert Audi's helpful and tacit analysis of testimony in Robert Audi, Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge (New York: Routledge, 2005). Numerous epistemologists have contributed to the burgeoning field of testimony as demonstrated in the following compilations on the topic: Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa, eds., The Epistemology of Testimony (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Adrian Haddock, Alan Miller, and Duncan Pritchard, eds., Social Epistemology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb, eds., Social Epistemology: Essential Readings (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). And more recently the Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective (SERCC) works along with the academic journal *Social Epistemology*, publishing contemporary research in testimony in the series Collective Studies in Knowledge and Society; these works include James H. Collier, ed., *The Future of Social Epistemology: A Collective Vision* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); Frank Scalambrino, ed., *Social Epistemology and Technology: Toward Public Self-Awareness Regarding Technological Mediation* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); and Patrick J. Reider, ed., Social Epistemology and Epistemic Agency: Decentralizing Epistemic Agency (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). In each of these recent publications, disagreement is treated within the context of the broadening field of social epistemology.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Despite their disagreement, the Milesians also agreed on a number of concepts. Gordon H. Clark identifies five areas in which Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes found concurrence: (1) All things in existence derived from a single substance. (Clark designates this substance as "nature.") (2) This single substance (nature) is "everlasting" in the sense that it is atemporal. (3) Nature is unrestricted. (4) Nature is the cause of the present world and of all worlds. (5) The generation of worlds is spontaneous. Gordon H. Clark, *Ancient Philosophy*, ed. John W. Robbins (Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 1997), 3-4. Clark concludes, "Though the three members of the Milesian School were in agreement upon the foregoing broad general principles, their philosophies diverged in many significant and striking details," ibid., 4. This sentiment highlights the complex nature of agreement and disagreement. Although the Milesians found agreement in such substantial concerns of ontology, the earliest thinkers also met with striking conflict.

maintained that the primary substance was water. His student, Anaximander, did not find Thales' conclusion to be satisfactory. Anaximander proposed that the primary substance was the *apeiron*, meaning that reality is without boundaries and indefinite. Ironically, Anaximander developed this concept based on the apparent conflict in nature.<sup>3</sup> The philosophical conflict did not end. His contemporary and possible student, Anaximenes, rejected his predecessors' thought, postulating that air was the ultimate.<sup>4</sup>

Another early source of disagreement, and perhaps more well known, is the conflict between Plato and Aristotle. Despite receiving an extensive education at the Academy for twenty years, Aristotle's works veer away from Plato's thought. Aristotle rejects the doctrine of the Forms. Aristotle disagrees with other philosophers as well. His analysis includes Thales, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Empedocles, and "the Pythagoreans." He faults their descriptions of first principles and ontological causes. Aristotle claims they have not accurately understood these causes, which he contends to have successfully identified. Aristotle claims that his position is superior because the earlier philosophers' thoughts were inchoate: "For the earliest philosophy is, on all subjects, like one who lisps, since it is young and in its beginning." What's more, he insists that this analysis of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>The conflict or "injustices" of nature has been understood to mean that nature takes on numerous forms, which conflict. Water can extinguish fire; yet, fire can evaporate water. Apparently, Anaximander also used the idea of equality to balance the opposing forces of nature. Aristotle alleges that Anaximander believed that the earth was centered in an equal position between two extremes, which explains why the earth did not "fall" or move in space. Aristotle, "On the Heavens," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. J. L. Stocks (New York: Random House, 1941), 432. Carlo Rovelli contends that this concept made Anaximander one of the greatest thinkers in history. Anaximander's influence was more than philosophical. Rovelli argues that Anaximander was a scientific thinker, but other philosophers who disagreed with his naturalistic ontology hindered his influence. Rovelli contends that naturalism is the essence of modern scientific thought. Carlo Rovelli, *The First Scientist: Anaximander and His Legacy*, trans. Marion Lignana Rosenberg (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2011). Rovelli's view on Anaximander is mentioned because it shows the fluctuating value of disagreement. What Rovelli's argument illustrates is that conflict can be valuable, but it can also be stifling. Whether or not his views on Anaximander are correct, Rovelli demonstrates the effects of disagreement in the history of philosophy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Of course, the debate over *Urstoff* pervaded ancient philosophy. One of the greatest tensions over reality consisted between Heraclitus and Parmenides.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>In his *Metaphysics*, he also identifies points where he agrees with Plato.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Aristotle, "Metaphysics," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 711.

philosophers aims at gleaning the truth from their positions, although he does not concede that they influenced his thought. The full context of the reference to the earliest philosophers' "lisps" suggests that they have missed the point.

This brief review emphasizes the nature of disagreement. One significant attribute is that disagreement occurs between notable thinkers in philosophy. Although these individuals were peers in a sense, they did not find the idea of disagreement to be problematic. It is also important to recognize that these philosophers did not take disagreement to be a challenge to their own position. Aristotle believed that his predecessor's entirely missed the point. It would also be a mistake to overlook the factor of influence philosophers have on each other. The earliest disagreements in philosophy occurred between teachers and their students. Plato influenced Aristotle even if he disagreed with some of Plato's conclusions, illustrating the social aspect of epistemology.

These themes have received some degree of attention in the literature on the epistemology of disagreement. It is curious, however, that the history of philosophy did not give much attention to the analysis of disagreement until very recently. It should also be noted that the type of disagreement is understood to be *genuine* disagreement. Genuine disagreement is distinct from apparent disagreement. Apparent disagreement may occur

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Aristotle claims, "It is evident, then, even from what we have said before, that all men seem to seek the causes named in the *Physics*, and that we cannot name any beyond these; but they seek these vaguely; and though in a sense they have all been described before, in a sense they have not been described at all. For the earliest philosophy is, on all subjects, like one who lisps, since it is young and in its beginnings." Aristotle, "Metaphysics," 711.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>The nature of epistemic peers will be further defined in chap. 2. For a definition of peers, refer to appendix 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>One of Rene Descartes' infamous remarks, aside from "cogito ergo sum," refers to the disagreement witnessed in his training. He insightfully observes that in his philosophical education he came to understand that the thinkers who disagreed with his positions were not necessarily uneducated, but they were his peers or even his superiors. In the same passage, Descartes also quips about the eccentricities of philosophers and their positions: "But I had been taught, even in my College days, that there is nothing imaginable so strange or so little credible that it has not been maintained by one philosopher or other." Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method and Meditations, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Mineoloa, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 12. Descartes goes on to admit that the diversity of opinions led him to adhere to his own ideas.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>For examples of these distinctions, see Richard Feldman, "Epistemological Puzzles about Disagreement," in *Epistemology Futures*, ed. Stephen Hetherington (New York: Oxford University Press,

when the speakers have conflated definitions or confused the essential point of the discussion. Apparent disagreement is connected with the idiomatic phrase, "talking past each other." Once the terms have been defined, the disagreement may be resolved. The parties may come to understand that their arguments do not conflict. In contrast, genuine disagreement occurs when both parties clearly understand the opposing position and still disagree. Another qualification for genuine disagreement is that it is a legitimate rift between the speakers. In other words, the nature of the disagreement is epistemic rather than pugnacious. One or more of the disputing parties is not disagreeing for the sake of argument, but the conflict is based on a legitimate distinction in premises or conclusion. In genuine disagreement, the disputing parties are in pursuit of the truth.<sup>11</sup>

# **Disagreement in Religious Diversity**

The epistemology of disagreement has advanced the debate over how individuals should respond to conflict with a trusted peer. However, these terms are not novel to the field of disagreement; nor is the question of one's response to disagreement. The terms and concepts that are common in disagreement have been discussed in the

<sup>2006);</sup> Graham Oppy, "Disagreement," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 68, nos. 1-3 (2010): 183-99; and Bryan Frances, *Disagreement* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Cognitive scientists and philosophers Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber have developed a theory that rejects this understanding of disagreement. Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, "Why Do Humans Reason? Arguments for an Argumentative Theory," *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 34, no. 2 (2011): 57-74. Their theory maintains that reasoning evolved in order for individuals to further their own positions. They claim that the meaning of reasoning is to argue. It is not aimed at truth, but at a sense of survival. Reasoning evolved in order to advance one's own position rather than to obtain the truth and avoid error. Inference is detached from reason; instead, it is guided by intuition. Mercier and Sperber posit, "All inferences carried out by inferential mechanisms are in this sense intuitive. They generate intuitive beliefs; that is, beliefs held without awareness of reasons to hold them." Ibid., 58. They conclude, "Skilled arguers . . . are not after the truth but after arguments supporting their views. This explains the notorious confirmation bias. This bias is apparent not only when people are arguing, but also when they are reasoning proactively from the perspective of having to defend their opinions. Reasoning so motivated can distort evaluations and attitudes and allow erroneous beliefs to persist." Ibid., 57. There are two mains points to highlight about this article and the theory. First, the authors do not attempt to reconcile the false dichotomy of assuming that because one argues for one's position, or searches for arguments to support that position, this means that the individual is not interested in truth. And second, the article perpetually refers to the arguments and reasoning of other scientists and philosophers. Mercier and Sperber do not attempt to apply their theory to itself, safeguarding the theory from self-refutation. It may be assumed that their counterargument would contend that these objections are not based on reasoning, but on intuition. Perhaps their book will address these matters, which will be published following the writing of this chapter. See Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, *The Enigma of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

challenge of religious diversity.<sup>12</sup> The literature on religious diversity appraises the justification of belief in the presence of disagreement, analyzing how one should respond to widespread religious disagreement and the effect it has on one's belief. This discussion is similar to the work on disagreement.<sup>13</sup> Another similarity is found in the concept of epistemic peers. In the focus on religious diversity, disagreeing interlocutors are viewed as rational individuals who adhere to different set of religious beliefs. This understanding of the reasonable disputant is the central trait of reasonable disagreement: Can two reasonable individuals reach different conclusions from the same evidence?

Gary Gutting claims the very presence of disagreement distinguishes philosophy of religion from other fields of study. 14 According to Gutting, philosophy of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>For an epistemic appraisal of religious diversity, see Peter Byrne "A Philosophical Approach to Questions about Religious Diversity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity*, ed. Chad V. Meister (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Amir Dastmalchian, "The Epistemology of Religious Diversity in Contemporary Philosophy of Religion," *Philosophy Compass* 8, no. 3 (2013): 298-308. Byrne outlines four responses to diversity concerning the problem of epistemic peer conflict, which is taken from David Basinger, Religious Diversity: A Philosophical Assessment (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002). Byrne states that there are at least four responses to the epistemic challenge of diversity: apologetic investment, atheism, agnosticism, and antievidentialism. Apologetic investment aligns with the projects of Richard Swinburne and Paul Griffiths, which intend to relieve peer conflict via apologetic engagement based on evidence and experience. Atheistic responses affirm the apologetic initiative that conflict obliges a response; however, atheists find no confidence in the apologetic project because it has not resolved all religious disagreement. Byrne states that the agnostic rests in his position due to ongoing peer conflict, while antievidentialism rejects an apologetical obligation that intends to mollify the disagreement. Dastmalchian's article surveys the perspectives of Richard Swinburne, Alvin Plantinga, William Alston, and John Hick in regards to four factors that concern the problem of religious diversity: epistemic obligations, religious ambiguity, epistemic parity, and religious incompatibility. These factors contribute to the way in which these philosophers respond to the challenge of diversity. For example, Swinburne's apologetic response concludes from his adherence to evidentialism/internalism, his opposition to religious ambiguity, and his belief in religious exclusivism. Dastmalchian points out that Hick's religious ambiguity informs his pluralistic response to the challenge of religious diversity. Dastmalchian, "The Epistemology of Religious Diversity," 303.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Two notable writings predate philosophy of religion's treatment of disagreement. Henry Sidgwick comments on the general nature of disagreement: "If I find any of my judgments, intuitive or inferential, in direct conflict with a judgment of some other mind, there must be error somewhere: and if I have no more reason to suspect error in the other mind than in my own, reflective comparison between the two judgments necessarily reduces me to a state of neutrality." Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1907), 342. Another source is Gideon Rosen's analysis of jury disagreement. Rosen contends that disagreement with peers can be reasonable. "It is obvious that reasonable people can disagree, even when confronted with a single body of evidence. When a jury or court is divided in a difficult case, the mere fact of disagreement does not mean that someone is being unreasonable." Gideon Rosen, "Nominalism, Naturalism, Epistemic Relativism," *Noûs* 35, no. 15 (2001): 71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Gary Gutting, *Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982). More recently, Gutting has contributed to the philosophy blog *The Stone* for the *New York Times*. In 2014, he interviewed several philosophers concerning their religious beliefs that were published on the blog's site. These were published in book form in 2017, including his personal reflections on the interviewes. The interviewees include Alvin Plantinga, Louise Antony, Philip Kitcher, Michael Ruse,

religion is comprised of an almost balanced dispute of assenters and dissenters. He does not find this level of disparity in other fields such as philosophy of science. Despite the degree of disagreement, Gutting offers an argument that religious belief can be justified.<sup>15</sup>

Gutting claims that religious belief requires justification when facing peer disagreement. This contention is directed at Plantinga's defense of the proper basicality of belief in God. Gutting maintains that it is not clear that theistic belief is a basic belief. The number of epistemic peers who dispute theism should cause one to reflect. It is wrong for individuals to remain confident despite peer disagreement and without justification. He holds that they are guilty of "epistemic egoism." On the one hand, Gutting holds that he can rightly dismiss solipsistic philosophers, but "the disagreement of substantial numbers of those who, as far as I can tell, are my *epistemic peers* (i.e., my equals in intelligence, perspicacity, honesty, thoroughness, and other relevant epistemic virtues) is surely another matter."

Peter van Inwagen also discusses the issue of religious disagreement. <sup>18</sup>
Contrary to Gutting, van Inwagen believes that the entire domain of philosophy resides in

and Keith DeRose. The book is noteworthy due to the respectful tone that persists throughout the interviews. It is also noteworthy because Gutting gives attention to the specific positions in the epistemology of disagreement, but he does not provide a full resolution to the puzzle of disagreement. He writes, "Deep and fundamental convictions—such as religious beliefs—are essential to a person's moral integrity; so it would be shameful for me to renounce my beliefs just because other people don't share them. Pick your favorite moral heroes—say, Socrates, Lincoln, or Gandhi. Does it make sense to say that they should have abandoned their core beliefs when they learned that there were epistemic peers who had contrary convictions? This remains an important question that extends to almost all of our most important beliefs." Gary Gutting, *Talking God: Philosophers on Belief* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017), 37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Gutting, *Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism*, 5. While he supports the use of arguments from experience, these types of arguments do not have the stamina to reach particular conclusions. Because arguments from experience do not point to specific conclusions, Gutting maintains that believers are left in position of religious skepticism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Ibid., 90. This is a term used by many philosophers. See appendix 1 for a definition.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Peter van Inwagen, "It Is Wrong, Everywhere, Always, and for Anyone, to Believe Anything upon Insufficient Evidence," in *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality: Philosophy of Religion Today*, ed. Jeff Jordan and Daniel Howard-Snyder (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 137-53, reprinted in *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Michael J. Murray (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 273-84. In a more recent article, van Inwagen enters the field of epistemology of disagreement. In "We're Right. They're Wrong," he further develops his original writing by looking at the puzzles of

disagreement. He writes, "Philosophers do not agree about anything to speak of." He finds agreement among philosophers to be uncommon. He focuses on religious disagreement within the context of Clifford's evidentialism. Van Inwagen questions how philosophers could continue to confidently hold a disputed belief, knowing that other philosophers disagree. He intends to demonstrate the inconsistency in the philosophy of religion among other philosophical fields. In philosophy of religion, religious belief is purported to be irrational when it does not abide by Clifford's evidentialism. Van Inwagen argues that it is untenable to restrict Clifford's principle to one area of belief. Philosophers in other fields should be held to the same standard.

Theologian Paul Griffiths also finds disagreement to be a challenge in the context of religious diversity.<sup>21</sup> Similar to Gutting and van Inwagen, he looks at the

disagreement. He claims that weak exclusivism (WE) in the belief p is inconsistent with other beliefs, and that it is rational to hold p. Strong exclusivism (SE) includes the perspective of WE, and extends the claim that those holding to any other belief other than p are irrational. The distinction between the two positions is that WE sees dissenting views adhering to something that is false. It does not adhere to the strong view of labeling other views irrational. However, van Inwagen concludes that WE implies SE. If it is rational to

labeling other views irrational. However, van Inwagen concludes that WE implies SE. If it is rational to conclude p then it is irrational to conclude p then it is irrational to conclude p. He claims that religions  $per\ se$  do not attend to SE; however, its observants may teach SE. Ultimately, he holds that the inference from WE to SE is wrong, but he cannot give a clear explanation for this conclusion. The opposition is against W. K. Clifford's ethical principle. Van Inwagen posits that if there are instances where one is privy to evidence that no one else may have access, then this would result in a question begging where one always has some privilege over others when faced with disagreement. Thus, he simply knows that it isn't the case that those who disagree with him are irrational, or he is irrational. Similar to Gutting's conclusion, van Inwagen concedes that he is unable to solve the puzzle. "I am unwilling to listen to the whispers of Clifford's ghost; that is, I am unwilling to become an agnostic about everything but empirically verifiable matters of fact. (In fact, I am unable to do that, and so, I think, is almost everyone else; as Thoreau said, neither men nor mushrooms grow so.) And I am unable to believe that my gnosticism, so to call it, is irrational. I am, I say, unwilling to listen to these whispers. But I am unable to answer them." Peter van Inwagen, "We're Right. They're Wrong," in Disagreement, ed. Richard Feldman and Ted A. Warfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Van Inwagen, "It Is Wrong, Everywhere," 274.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>He states that it is a double standard to hold disagreement to a higher standard in philosophy of religion, while accepting disagreement in other fields: "What I have said so far amounts to a polemic against what I perceive as a widespread double standard in writings about the relation of religious belief to evidence and argument. This double standard consists in setting religious belief a test it could not possibly pass, and in studiously ignoring the fact that very few of our beliefs on any subject could possibly pass this test." Ibid., 282.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Paul Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 14. Griffiths, a "Catholic Christian," proposes a modal form of open inclusivism as a response to the question regarding religious truth claims. Excluding claims about salvation, an inclusivist, in this aspect, believes that there are truths taught by other religious communities. A moralized open inclusive stance contends that it is possible that there are "alien" religions that could teach truths to the church. He believes that the modality is necessary—an unmodalized contention would be too strong. Ibid., 63. Griffiths rejects exclusivism on the truth claims grounds because it is too restrictive to affirm that there are no other truths

impact that diversity bears on one's confidence. The awareness of religious diversity raises two questions: "Does coming to know of religious diversity typically reduce or remove religious people's epistemic confidence in the religious assents they find themselves making? Second, normatively, under what conditions is it reasonable to think that it should?" Griffiths claims that the descriptive analysis should inform the normative response—the first question influences the second. Typically, individuals respond with reduced confidence when faced with disagreement *qua* diversity.

Griffiths cites three factors in appraising how one should respond to disagreement. First, one should assess the initial degree of confidence—the strength one had *prior* to learning about diversity. Second, one must review the "perceived" trustworthiness in those who adhere to opposing beliefs. Third, one should attempt to discover the explanation behind the fact of diversity. Griffiths claims that Christians should moderately reduce confidence based on these variables. Christians should hold to a degree of openness in trusting adherents of other faiths. He finds the third variable more complicated. Sin could be the reason for diversity because it impairs people's judgements. Sin would then undermine the second variable.<sup>23</sup>

Robert McKim, who is professor of religion and philosophy at the University of Illinois, claims that individuals are obligated to respond to the presence of religious diversity. He believes that it is shortsighted to ignore the problem.<sup>24</sup> He also finds theistic and atheistic arguments to be at a stalemate. McKim questions if contrasting religious claims cancel out opposing beliefs. He claims that disagreement pushes individuals to

taught by other religions, e.g., there is a God, and humans have souls.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity*, 63.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Ultimately, Griffiths does not prescribe a full withdrawal, but a rational response would be a reduced confidence to some degree; viz., one would be more confident if he were unaware of diversity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>Robert McKim, *Religious Ambiguity and Religious Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). His work analyzes the problem of divine hiddenness. The first section of the text covers the many dimensions and responses to the problem.

examine their beliefs, while forcing religious belief to be held tentatively. This perspective is the "critical stance." It acknowledges human error, but balances fallibility with the pursuit of truth. <sup>25</sup> McKim's position is based on religious ambiguity, which claims that human fallibility produces religious claims that may be false. His argument does not intend to eliminate faith communities. Rather, McKim's critical stance attempts to make the case for belief rather than a self-destructive skepticism that would raze communities of faith. <sup>26</sup>

Philosopher David Basinger identifies religious disagreement as "religious epistemic peer conflict." <sup>27</sup> Peerhood is the central challenge of religious diversity. This

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>McKim writes, "Religion in accordance with the Critical Stance is religion that is conducted more in the mode of longing and aspiration than in the mode of confident declaration. It has progressed from 'knowing' that it is right to acknowledging how limited is our ability to know about religious matters, and responses to those circumstances. Yet it seeks to carve out a territory that permits faithfulness to a tradition." McKim, *Religious Ambiguity and Religious Diversity*, 142.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>In a review of the works of McKim, Griffiths, and David Basinger, Kevin Schilbrack applauds McKim's employment of the critical stance. Schilbrack's full quote is appropriate, given the title of his review ("Religious Diversity and the Closed Mind") and the nature of the discussion: "There is so much self-righteousness in people, including religious philosophers, that McKim's endorsement of the Critical Stance is healthy and laudable. He is right that it would lead to greater tolerance and respect for others. And he is right that being a practicing member of a particular faith and assuming the Critical Stance are not incompatible: there is nothing about being religious that requires closed mindedness. Nevertheless, though disagreement with people of integrity provides one with a reason to take the Critical Stance toward one's religious beliefs, it does not oblige one to do so." Kevin Schilbrack, "Religious Diversity and the Closed Mind" *The Journal of Religion* 83, no. 1 (January 2003): 100-17. Schilbrack applauds openness toward religious belief. Yet, his openness also involves a strong sense of close-mindedness, which results in an *ad hominem* by identifying the "self-righteous" nature of the practitioners in philosophy of religion. Furthermore, he supports the "critical stance" because it leads to greater tolerance and respect for others. This statement conflicts with his prior ad hominem. Finally, Schilbrack and McKim contend that closemindedness is not contradictory to being religious. However, it should be noted that being open toward other beliefs is being closed toward one's own religious tradition, according to several communities of faith that recognize a central authority. The appeal to authority appears to be the central objection in McKim and Schilbrack; however, this study does not have the space to develop that argument. Yet, it is notable that McKim appeals to Peter Berger's work, which argues that modernity has created doubts in religious positions. See Peter Berger, A Far Glory: The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity (New York: Free Press, 1992). Berger sees the main source of contention in diversity as the rise in pluralism. However, Berger's assessment is not entirely accurate. It would be incorrect to attribute pluralism's birth to the modern era. Christianity was born in a society that was engulfed in a tension between monotheism and polytheism. Early Christians were martyred for not worshiping other deities. Moreover, the biblical accounts record this tension. Luke's account of Paul's Areopagus speech is a prime example of disagreement. For an extended analysis on Paul's familiarity with pagan thought in Tarsus and its influence on his Areopagus speech, see J. Daryl Charles, "Engaging the (Neo)Pagan Mind: Paul's Encounter with Athenian Culture as a Model for Cultural Apologetics (Acts 17:16-34)," *Trinity Journal* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 47-62. Charles' article illustrates the perpetual conflict that is not a contemporary product. In addition, it is worth mentioning that Charles notes the apparent irony that the inclusivist Athenians rejected the "unknown god" that Paul describes. Charles argues that it may have been Luke's intention to portray Paul in a similar fashion to Socrates, who was also on trial for introducing "unknown gods."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>He qualifies peers as "individuals who seem to be equally knowledgeable and sincere."

type of conflict holds parties on an equal standing, assuming that they possess similar knowledge and integrity.<sup>28</sup> He focuses on the responses to this challenge: Can one respond by withholding peer status from other religious believers? Or, is one required to respond? Furthermore, if a response is required, is exclusivism a justifiable position?<sup>29</sup>

Basinger posits that theists should examine their beliefs when faced with diversity because peerhood obligates a response. He states, "If a religious exclusivist wants to maximize truth and avoid error, she is under a *prima facie* obligation to attempt to resolve significant epistemic peer conflict." Universalism attempts to ameliorate the problem by relativizing conflicting claims. Basinger objects to this position because it avoids the rule of pursuing truth. <sup>31</sup> For Basinger, apologetics assists in justifying

Basinger, *Religious Diversity*, 1. Peter Byrne expands on this concept of epistemic peer conflict to include the validity of religious experience, as well. "Religious epistemic peer conflict goes deeper than disagreements over questions of truth. Peer conflict over the truth of religious propositions implies, although does not entail, that there will be conflict about which religious believers have genuine religious experience and which believers are on a genuine path to salvation." Byrne, "A Philosophical Approach to Questions about Religious Diversity," 30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>This sort of disagreement is not restricted to religious belief. Basinger affirms the universality of peer disagreement. "Individuals who have access to the same information and are equally interested in the truth affirm incompatible perspectives on, for instance, significant social issues such as capital punishment, physician-assisted suicide, and the status of same-sex relationships; on political issues such as the best form of government or the rights of children; and on economic issues such as the most productive type of economic system and the extent to which government should regulate private enterprise." Basinger, *Religious Diversity*, 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Basinger qualifies exclusivism and pluralism in a manner similar to Griffiths' position. Basinger objects to a coarse-grained understanding of exclusivism that implies that there is no truth found in other belief systems. His position is fine-grained in that it restricts exclusivity to doctrinal beliefs rather than expanding exclusivity to subsume the entire structure of beliefs within one system. For instance, he distinguishes between individuals who are exclusivists in terms of soteriology but are pluralists concerning religious experience.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup>Basinger, *Religious Diversity*, 11. He labels this response the "Basinger Rule." The rule is *prima facie* obligatory because it is based on whether or not the exclusivist wants to maximize truth. Basinger holds that truth maximization and error avoidance is not always a requirement; although, he does hope that it is often the case.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>The rule also applies to polemical matters within religious communities. Disagreement is significant whether it is between two disparate systems of belief, or if there is internal disagreement. However, both forms of disagreement require the same response. Basinger emphasizes epistemic duty. When an individual neglects this duty, justified belief is forfeited. Disagreement *should* not be flippantly dismissed. He writes, "I do believe that once a religious exclusivist acknowledges epistemic peer conflict, for her to choose then to retain a purely defensive posture—for her to then claim she is under no obligation to consider the matter further—is for her to forfeit her right to claim justifiably that her perspective is superior." Ibid., 13. Because he finds parity in disagreement, he objects to appealing to the "internal witness of the Holy Spirit" in order to reduce peerhood. He states that this appeal is not invoked in intrasystem debates. Additionally, intra-system debates do appeal to persuasive arguments in order to convince their conflicting peers. He finds these restrictions to intra-system disagreement to be inconsistent; and thus,

contested religious beliefs. He supports the use of apologetics in order to persuade other individuals. Although he does not require the use of apologetics, it is necessary in order to maintain that one's position is "superior" to other perspectives. <sup>32</sup> In addition, Basinger claims that apologetics is useful in discovering the reasons for the disagreement.

## **Epistemology of Disagreement**

While the study of religious diversity witnessed the beginning of epistemological interest in the concept of doxastic conflict, disagreement is not exclusive to the arena of religion.<sup>33</sup> The literature on the challenges of religious diversity uncovers several concepts that are thematic in epistemology of disagreement. These themes have been developed and nuanced in the field of disagreement. For instance, Gutting's concept of epistemic peers is revisited in disagreement discussions. His initial reference did not fully expand on the concept of peerhood. Epistemologists working in the field of disagreement have given a more robust explanation of how individuals can qualify for peer status, or more importantly, how individuals can be disqualified from this status.

argumentative engagement in inter-system disagreement is an appropriate response.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>Basinger, *Religious Diversity*, 99.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>This claim is uncontroversial, but it can be argued that philosophy has overlooked the truth of the claim. For instance, van Inwagen illustrates this inconsistency in the field of philosophy of religion compared with the sciences. Disagreement in the sciences does not result in doxastic reduction—both parties of the disagreement do not view the disagreement per se to be an indictment on one's own position. Despite disagreement with colleagues who shared the same level of training, evidence, and reasoning, they held to their original belief. Furthermore, unlike philosophy of religion, a pluralistic account held no appeal to resolve the matter. However, Gutting's *Religious Skepticism* implied that the disagreement in philosophy of religion was distinct from other philosophical fields in their disagreement. Nevertheless, disagreement pervades philosophy of science. For an example on a continuing, internal debate in a particular field of science, see Carl Gillett, Reduction and Emergence in Science and Philosophy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Gillett's work attempts to resolve the apparent stalemate between emergentists and reductionists. It is particularly insightful for this dissertation because Gillett's historical outline of the debate illustrates how both sides of the discussion responded to the disagreement. It is not surprising that both parties in the dispute did not reduce confidence in their position. The disagreement between emergentists and reductionists is comprised of the conflicting explanations that are provided to explain the compositional content of entities. Gillett refers to these as compositional explanations. The debate has witnessed many competing claims. Gillett shows that neither party withdrew from their position. What is significant is that a third option is not offered in the discourse. In contrast to the discussion on religious diversity, there is no analogue to pluralism offered to settle the debate. What's more, Gillett's account of this debate is shows similarly with the aforementioned conflict among the Milesians. It is the continued disagreement about the nature of reality.

Another theme for disagreement is the consideration of how one *ought* to respond to disagreement. For example, McKim argues that peer disagreement reduced justified belief. In contrast, Basinger and van Inwagen argue that disagreement does not necessarily weaken one's justified belief; although, Basinger maintains that one should provide an apologetic response.

Epistemology of disagreement has refined the challenges identified in the debate in religious diversity. Epistemologists were unsatisfied with the general definitions applied to peers and evidential disagreement. The most critical development is the construction of the two positions on disagreement. The two positions are distinct in how they understand the impact of disagreement, which determines how one should respond to disagreement. The conciliatory view, or the conformist view, claims that peer disagreement should reduce the confidence one has in a belief. The steadfast position, or the non-conformist view, objects to this estimation given to disagreement. Steadfastness claims that there are situations in which one can retain confidence even in the presence of conflict with an epistemic twin.<sup>35</sup> They are also distinct in their response to reasonable

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>Although there are other nuanced positions, this dissertation refers to conciliatory and steadfast positions as either the standard positions or the traditional responses to disagreement. For an example of a nuanced position, Jennifer Lackey holds a "justificationist position." Similar to this dissertation, she argues that the traditional positions are defective. Unlike this dissertation, she grounds this response on a position of justification. She contends that the strength of disagreement (in any situation) can be explained by one's degree of "justified confidence" in the belief in question. See Jennifer Lackey, "A Justificationist View of Disagreement's Epistemic Significance," in *Social Epistemology*, ed. Adrian Haddock, Alan Millar, and Duncan Pritchard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Unfortunately, Lackey's position does not address the problems of social epistemology inherent in the two positions on disagreement. This dissertation's position is viewed to be a more satisfactory response because a virtuous response attempts to correct the inherent deficiencies of the standard positions.

other terms or phrases to indicate the qualification for peers. The use of "epistemic twin" is an amalgamation of the variant forms used in substitution for peers. For instance, Nathan Ballantyne and E. J. Coffman refer to peers as "evidential twins" to emphasize the symmetry of background evidence. Their use of the term resides in the challenge of the uniqueness thesis, which challenges the notion that two reasonable individuals would have disparate responses to the same evidence. However, the emphasis on evidence does overlook the epistemic character of the individuals. The disagreement debate requires a balanced view of external possessions as well as what is possessed internally. Jennifer Lackey makes this distinction by identifying the specific traits of peers as possessing "evidential equality" and "cognitive equality." She also draws a distinction between idealized disagreement that shares these traits of equality, and ordinary disagreement in which individuals consider themselves to be "roughly" equals when it comes to assessing the matter under dispute. An outstanding work about the complexities of this issue is Frances, *Disagreement*. It is the first textbook dedicated to the challenges of disagreement. See Nathan Ballantyne and E. J. Coffman, "Concilationism and Uniqueness," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 90, no. 4

disagreement. Reasonable disagreement contends that disagreeing partners can be rational in holding to a belief that the other does not hold. Conciliationism argues that it is unreasonable to persist in the contentious belief, while steadfastness holds there are occasions for reasonable disagreement.

Philosopher Richard Feldman rejects the idea of reasonable disagreement. He identifies two problems in epistemic conflict. The first issue concerns the reasonableness of persisting in a belief that faces disagreement. The second issue asks if there can be reasonable disagreement. Despite how philosophers and other thinkers have responded to disagreement, Feldman's conclusion is skeptical. The knowledge of disagreement should weaken beliefs, resulting in a conciliatory position.<sup>36</sup> Private evidence, understood as individual insight or intuition, does not resist conciliating one's belief. In addition, private insight does not remain private when disagreement is exposed. Therefore, intuition between both parties is canceled. He rejects the freedom to choose a belief in light of balanced evidence. Feldman contends that there is no rational justification supporting a specific option and thus, suspending judgment is always the most rational choice.

In contrast, Thomas Kelly supports a steadfast position. He questions emphasizing the impact of disagreement:<sup>37</sup> Is disagreement evidence against one's confidence? He has argued that this is a matter of levels-confusion. First-order evidence is one's direct response to the evidence. In other words, first-order evidence does not consider how other responses. Higher-order evidence regards the evidence of how the

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<sup>(</sup>December 2012): 657-70; and Lackey, "A Justificationist View of Disagreement's Epistemic Significance."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>The challenge of disagreement first came to his attention when his students expressed tolerance toward other religions. His students believed that the disagreement between the pluralities of belief could be held with reasonable disagreement. See Feldman, "Epistemological Puzzles about Disagreement," in *Epistemological Futures*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>He writes, "Once I have thoroughly scrutinized the available evidence and arguments that bear on some question, the mere fact that an epistemic peer strongly disagrees with me about how that question should be answered does not itself tend to undermine the rationality of my continuing to believe as I do." Thomas Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement," in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, vol. 1, ed. Tamar Szabo Gendler and John Hawthorne (New York: Oxford University press, 2005), 170.

first-order evidence was treated. Disagreement occurs at the higher-order level. He argues that it is reasonable to retain belief in the presence of disagreement because the basis for the original belief was based on a reasonable conclusion according to the first-order evidence. If the first belief was reasonably based on the original evidence, then it cannot simply be omitted when considering how to treat the higher-order evidence. Kelly claims that conciliatory positions attempt to eliminate first-order evidence.

## **Intellectual Virtue and Disagreement**

In the literature on disagreement, it is commonly noted that peers share intellectual or epistemic virtues. <sup>38</sup> The literature on the epistemology of disagreement consistently refers to intellectual virtues. <sup>39</sup> Despite this fact, the literature fails to identify the nature of virtues, offering no extended discussion concerning the possession and use of these virtues. Peerhood is necessary for the debate on disagreement. In fact, peerhood complicates how one should respond to disagreement. This dissertation contends that the qualification of peerhood is vague. This section expands on these terms, specifically in the area of how peers are intellectually virtuous.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup>The notion of intellectual virtues has received attention from epistemologists working in the area of reliabilism. Ernest Sosa first called attention to virtue epistemology as an option concerning the problems arising in the theories of foundationalism and coherentism. Sosa later expanded on his concept of intellectual virtue as understood to be a faculty that reliably garners truth more than falsehoods. Alvin Goldman was also a progenitor in linking reliable processes with intellectual virtues. Goldman claims that his view of intellectual virtue and reliabilism is essentially the same, but he has "improved" upon the concept. Goldman contends that epistemic evaluators possess a list of virtues and vices. Specific methods of reasoning are considered to be virtuous because they reliably produce true beliefs; consequently, the employment of intellectual virtues justifies the belief. Vices betray reliable reasoning. In other words, "We initially use reliability as a test for intellectual quality (virtue or vice status)." See Ernest Sosa, "Knowledge and Intellectual Virtue," *The Monist* 68 (1985): 226-63; Ernest Sosa, "Reliabilism and Intellectual Virtue," in *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Alvin Goldman, "Epistemic Folkways and Scientific Epistemology," in *Epistemology: An Anthology* ed. Ernest Sosa and Jaegwon Kim (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup>The plural use of "virtue" is also indicative of the ambiguity in the literature. While an argument for a particular understanding of the virtues is made in chapter 4, the current use of particular virtues is congruent with the references to virtues in the field of disagreement. The conflict about the nature of virtue is, of course, an old debate. Socrates understood the virtues to be united, while Plato and Aristotle made distinctions in identifying particular virtues. For a basic survey of the historical discussion on virtue, see William J. Prior, *Virtue and Knowledge: An Introduction to Ancient Greek Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1991). For a case made for particular virtues operating under the higher-order virtue of practical wisdom (*phronesis*), see Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Gary Gutting's use of epistemic virtue was one of the first references to the relationship between virtue and disagreement. <sup>40</sup> His use of epistemic peers operates on the premise that peers share intellectual virtues. This expression was influential among epistemologists writing on the nature of disagreement. In the context of defining epistemic peers, Thomas Kelly attributes his use of the term to Gutting. <sup>41</sup> Kelly adds a qualification that peers share the same evidence. Unfortunately, his description of peers does not expand on the notion of virtue. The addition of evidential equality does not prescribe a virtuous response.

Furthermore, Richard Feldman and Ted Warfield assert a shared trait of intellectual virtue between peers in an "idealized" disagreement. It is idealized because the two individuals are equals in respect to known evidence and arguments as well as a sharing the "general intellectual virtues." Bryan Frances also analyzes the rationality of disagreeing with an epistemic superior in philosophy, claiming that the conflict occurs between "intellectually virtuous" philosophers. 43

In addition, philosopher Jonathan Matheson understands epistemic virtue to mean that one is adept or skilled in appraising evidence.<sup>44</sup> He further elaborates on the inequality of "possessed" virtues, identifying one of the specific virtues broached in virtue epistemology: "Typically, there will be differences in intellectual virtue and in the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup>Gutting, Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism, 83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>Kelly notes, "I will use the term in a somewhat extended sense. As I will use the term, the class of epistemic peers with respect to a given question are equals, not only with respect to their possession of the sort of general epistemic virtues enumerated by Gutting, but also with respect to their exposure to evidence and arguments which bear on the question at issue." Thomas Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement," 168n2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup>Richard Feldman and Ted A. Warfield, introduction to Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*, 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup>Bryan Frances, "Philosophical Renegades," in *The Epistemology of Disagreement: New Essays*, ed. David Christensen and Jennifer Lackey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup>This skill varies among peers: "My perceptual faculties are mine alone. No one else has my particular faculties. What equality in evidential processing does require is that the faculties of epistemic peers are equally good." Jonathan Matheson, *The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 22.

reliability of the relevant faculties. It is doubtful that any two perceivers are equally good, it is doubtful that any two inquirers are precisely as open-minded."<sup>45</sup> Despite this inequality, Matheson contends for conciliation.

Writing on disagreement, John Hawthorne and Amia Srinivasan's work comes closest to identifying the nature of intellectual virtue. Their work focuses on the normative question of how one *ought* to respond to disagreement. They express the notion that one's response to disagreement is difficult, if not impossible, to know. Hawthorne and Srinivasan maintain that epistemic habits should be a central concern when questioning the normativity of disagreement. For example, an epistemic superior should not consistently dismiss beliefs held by individuals who are not as informed or trained. The informed individual may be correct, but the bad habit of dismissing others places the person in a culpable position. Therefore, epistemic practices can be blameworthy even when the agent possesses knowledge. The informative contents are possesses knowledge.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup>Matheson, *The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement*, 116. Matheson uses notable terms in describing epistemic virtues. Whether it was intentional, he describes the nature of two stances in virtue epistemology. The two perspectives will be one of the main features of chap. 4, but I will simply indicate the terms here. Matheson refers to reliable "faculties," as well as to "open-mindedness." In chap. 4, the controversy regards the nature of the faculties and whether open-mindedness is a faculty or a product of the agent's character. In some cases, vision and memory are referred to as faculties, while open-mindedness is a character trait.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup>John Hawthorne and Amia Srinivasan, "Disagreement without Transparency: Some Bleak Thoughts," in Christensen and Lackey, *The Epistemology of Disagreement*. The discussion revolves around the "ought" question: what ought one do when faced with disagreement? They identify three forms of oughts. The bouletic ought is a modal articulation of what is possible or necessary based on the agent's desires. A deontic ought is grounded in legal or moral norms. And the epistemic ought is connected to evidence. For example, "because they left 20 minutes ago, they ought to be there by now."

dismissing the conflicting view of an epistemic inferior. Although the expert possesses knowledge, the authors contend that the expert is developing habits that are blameworthy—the normative perspective seeks to identify actions that are measured in epistemic "praise." The article does not explicitly articulate the terms of virtue theory. However, the implied notions are similar. In the case of the expert's bad epistemic habits, the authors claim that the problem of immediate dismissal is not found in the actual expertise and track record of the expert. The error is located in the development of vice; or habit. It is "a habit of boldly going on even in the face of disagreement, a habit that might easily lead him to disastrous consequences. Our nervousness about [the expert's] dogmatism, we would like to suggest, turns on our recognition that if [the expert] were in a case where he in fact didn't know how many struts were required, the habit he is instilling in himself in the case where he *does* know might easily lead him to act similarly dogmatically, thus building an unsafe bridge and threatening the lives of thoughts." Ibid., 19. Ultimately, the essay concludes on the "bleak" notion of the inability to decipher which response would be blameless and praiseworthy. Their article is relevant because it attempts to account for the normativity of disagreement. In addition, Bryan Frances' textbook, *Disagreement*, serves as an introduction to the various terms and concepts relevant to the field. It contains a small section on the normative question of responding to

While these examples use virtue to explain peers, other philosophers have described peers in more general terms. It is not clear if they would apply intellectual virtues to their definitions. For example, Feldman identifies conflicting speakers as those who are "intelligent and informed," "intelligent people," and "reasonable people." Similarly, philosopher David Christensen identifies intellectual peers as "apparently well-qualified others." William Wainwright, who specializes in philosophy of religion, also discusses the challenge of disagreement in terms of the quality of those who disagree: "One's confidence in one's own opinions and assumptions is often shaken when one finds informed, sensitive, and intelligent people who fail to share them."

#### **Challenges to Apologetics**

The focus of this study concerns the project of Christian apologetics from the classical perspective.<sup>51</sup> It must also be acknowledged that evidential and cumulative case views are also relevant to this study's position on peer conflict and reasonable disagreement.<sup>52</sup> In this way, this dissertation assumes the basic characteristics of classical apologetics such as providing reasons and arguments in order to persuade individuals

disagreement. However, Frances points to the response to evidence rather than the development of epistemic habits. See Frances, *Disagreement*, 77-78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup>Feldman, "Epistemological Puzzles about Disagreement," passim. Unfortunately, Feldman does not expand on the qualities of these character traits.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup>Christensen, "Disagreement as Evidence," 756.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup>William J. Wainwright, "Does Disagreement Imply Relativism?" *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 26, no. 1 (March 1986): 47.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup>All references to "apologetics" intend to denote Christian apologetics.

<sup>52</sup>The study of apologetics has witnessed several contemporary analyses on its nature and disparate methods. See Stanley N. Gundry and Steven B. Cowan, ed., *Five View on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). The history of apologetics has also been the focus in works such as Avery Cardinal Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), and Aidan Nichols, *A Grammar of Consent: The Existence of God in Christian Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991). See also Matthew Levering, *Proofs of God: Classical Arguments from Tertullian to Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016). These works provide a broad overview of the apologetical landscape. For a more narrowed view that concentrates on contemporary apologetics, see Louis Markos, *Apologetics for the Twenty-First Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); and Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).

who do not accept Christian beliefs or those wrestling with Christian concepts.<sup>53</sup>
Additionally, the scope of this work is restricted to contemporary evangelical philosophers who have contributed to the field of apologetics. Because the focus of this dissertation is to demonstrate a response to the challenges of disagreement, it does not focus on particular apologetical arguments. However, arguments that have particular relevance to the epistemology of disagreement are taken into account. For example, the problem of religious diversity and the argument from historical variability are relevant because of their social nature. Objections to macro-evolutionary theory are also treated, but only from the aspect of how apologists disagree with experts.<sup>54</sup>

Regarding the challenges presented to apologetics, the conciliatory view appears to be inherently opposed to the practice and goal of apologetics. Conciliationism and apologetics differ in their view on reasonable disagreement. Reasonable disagreement is understood to be a disagreement between two parties of equal epistemic standing, including a shared comprehension of the evidence and arguments. Conciliatory views argue that this sort of disagreement is not reasonable because it reveals that one of the parties is in error. One should not assume that the other party performed the misstep. Because the disagreement cannot be resolved by simple peer reduction, the most reasonable approach is to conciliate or conform.<sup>55</sup> The conciliatory view understands peer

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup>This stance is somewhat similar to Dulles' approach in surveying apologetics that defend the "general credibility" of Christianity, omitting arguments internal to Christianity that may be relegated to denominational disagreements. See Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, xxi.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>I acknowledge that there is more work to be conducted on other social arguments in relation to the epistemology of disagreement. The argument from religious experience is particularly interesting when it comes to the arena of disagreement; this dissertation is not directed at any particular argument within Christian apologetics, though.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup>John Pittard offers a position that safeguards religious disagreement. He contends that religious belief incorporates the idea of epistemic credentials. Epistemic credentials are credited to those who are capable of reliably appraising a religious belief. This sort of epistemic credential is nonstandard. A standard epistemic credential is one that is conferred by a university or a consensus of peers that is noncontroversial. Religious systems are distinct in this respect. Nonstandard credentials are partisan and opaque. By nature they are partisan because the credential possessed is more than likely held by an individual who already assents. It is opaque in that it is not readily identifiable by others. In other words, peerage is a difficult matter for religious belief because a peer in religious belief is one who already affirms the belief. Therefore, peer conflict over the religious belief is incompatible with this understanding of a "credentialed" peer. See John Pittard, "Conciliationism and Religious Disagreement," in *Challenges to* 

disagreement to serve as a defeater. In contrast, apologists confront disagreement rather than withdrawing from it. Thus, the conciliatory position would indicate that the apologetic stance has no grounding because the disagreement has not been resolved.

The problem of peers is integral to the conciliatory position. Simply removing an individual or group from peer status can be identified as a form of "bootstrapping." This move happens when an individual privileges his position simply because it is *his* position. It would appear that much of apologetics is a case of bootstrapping. Another problem presented to apologetics in the realm of peers is the challenge of epistemic superiors. Epistemic superiors are in a better epistemic position in the disagreement due to background factors such as wealth of knowledge or extent of time dedicated to the issue. Not all superiors are considered to be experts, but all experts may be taken to be superiors. Apologetics faces this challenge in the areas of biogenesis, cosmology, and evolutionary fields.

A further challenge is the evidence of disagreement itself. The problem is stated in the equal weight view: intellectual integrity requires individuals to give equal weight to their epistemic peers.<sup>57</sup> When two individuals are considered to be of an equal epistemic standard, according to the equal weight view, the two cannot have a reasonable disagreement. The conciliatory view prescribes reducing confidence in belief or

*Moral and Religious Belief: Disagreement and Evolution*, ed. Michael Bergmann and Patrick Kain (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup>Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement," in Goldman and Whitcomb, *Social Epistemology*. Elga contends that it is merely bootstrapping for an individual to consider one's belief to be in a better position without any evidence other than it is one's own belief. Supposing that one's initial feeling is very good, one should reduce that security when faced with disagreement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup>The notion of epistemic peers is controversial in itself. The problem of peerhood essentially attempts to balance the disputants or level "the playing field." Ideal peerage (or "epistemic twin") is achieved when two individuals share background evidence, intellectual virtues, and current dispositional status. These qualifications indicate the complicated nature of human beings. For instance, peerhood would terminate if one of the disputants had missed lunch. The slightly malnourished individual may not be thinking clearly when in the presence of disagreement. See Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement"; Bryan Frances, *Disagreement*; Alvin Goldman, "Epistemic Relativism and Reasonable Disagreement," in Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*; and Ralph Wedgewood, "The Moral Evil Demons," in Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*.

withdrawing. These are relevant challenges to apologetics. The nature of apologetics is to remain firm despite peer disagreement.

Given the nature of these types of disagreement, the conciliatory stance appears to conclude that apologetics is in a fragile state. Apologetics faces conflict with peers who are familiar with the evidence and arguments. To a greater extent, the challenge of epistemic superiors and expert disagreement presents greater obstacles for apologetics. While nothing in the current literature on disagreement specifically addresses the field of apologetics, it can be safely assumed that conciliationism would prescribe an abrupt end to apologetics.

On the other hand, the steadfast or nonconformist position would appear to offer a different prescription. The steadfast position seems to support apologetics. The steadfast view and apologetics agree in their view on disagreement. Disagreement does not present a prima facie challenge to doxastic assent. The steadfast position affirms the possibility of reasonable disagreement. If it is possible for peers to reasonably disagree, then individuals can safely stand firm in their position. However, this dissertation argues that steadfast positions have an inherent weakness, which conflicts with the project of apologetics.

#### Thesis

This dissertation defends the thesis that the epistemology of disagreement is not a challenge to Christian apologetics because the two standard positions on disagreement are defective in how they operate on unsatisfactory views of social epistemology. The intellectual virtues described within virtue epistemology are fundamental to the method of apologetics and provide Christian apologetics with a satisfactory response to the challenges of disagreement.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup>For a recent example of apparent peer conflict, see *Debating Christian Theism*, ed. J. P. Moreland, Chad Meister, and Khaldoun A. Sweis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

The conciliatory approach appears to be inherently opposed to the goal and operation of apologetics. Given a particular setting, conciliationism would prescribe the full abandonment of apologetics. In contrast, the steadfast position appears to be the champion of the apologetical position. However, there are features of steadfastness that are also incompatible with the nature of the project. This dissertation will attempt to illustrate the internal deficiencies of both positions. The claim is not that the standard positions are wholly defective. Conciliationism and steadfastness do have something to offer to apologetics. Moreover, the traditional responses to disagreement lack a developed concept of intellectual virtue. This will present a model of intellectual virtue that attempts to satisfy this problem in both positions.

## Methodology

The critique of the two positions will be based on the field of social epistemology. Conciliationism and steadfastness possess an epistemically insufficient view of testimony. Conciliatory views have a notion of testimony, which holds that others' views typically supplant one's beliefs. This view is too dependent on others, excluding the value of "self-trust." Thus, conciliatory views are excessive in testimony and deficient in the self. Steadfast views have the opposite structure, which is also defective. Steadfast views do not have a high estimation of testimony. The low view of testimony is a result of a dominant view of the first-person perspective. It is inconsistent in that it betrays the reliance on testimony. I conclude that the two standard positions possess a defective epistemology. Thus, apologetics cannot adopt either approach.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup>The idea of "self-trust" has been argued in the literature on epistemic authority. Richard Foley has argued that one's trust in the self "radiates" outward to the trust in others. He argues for a balanced view of the self and testimony. Richard Foley, *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Other philosophers have made similar claims: Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *Rationality & Reflection: How to Think about What to Think* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Keith Lehrer, *Self-Trust: A Study of Reason, Knowledge, and Autonomy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Linda Zagzebski, "Ethical and Epistemic Egoism and the Ideal of Autonomy," *Episteme* 4, no. 3 (October 2007): 252-63; and Linda Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy in Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Another matter that is relevant to apologetics and the epistemology of disagreement concerns the intellectual virtues. The literature on disagreement appeals to the intellectual virtues, but it does not give a full explanation on the nature of these virtues. An elaboration on the nature of virtues would advance the perspectives in the field of disagreement. When an individual is seen to be in error, epistemologists utilize the language of vice in order to indicate the type of error committed. These are normative claims because the individual is accused of intellectual irresponsibility. The typical accusation from steadfast proponents is that conciliatory views are intellectually deficient while conciliationists accuse steadfast views as excessive. This dissertation argues that the virtue perspective supplies a coherent apologetical response to the challenge of the epistemology of disagreement.

# **Epistemic Authority: Testimony and Self-Trust**

Testimony, disagreement, and virtue are interrelated categories in epistemology. Epistemology has developed a growing interest in testimony as well as attaching an increasing value to it. Epistemologists understand that testimony is an essential ingredient in understanding knowledge. No matter one's epistemic appraisal of testimony, the contemporary discussion has proven the difficulty (if not impossibility) of removing testimony as a source of knowledge.

As the literature on testimony has continued to mature, the dialogue has ventured into different aspects that concern testimony. As a result of this development, questions regarding the nature of disagreement appeared in the discussion over testimony. Disagreement was a natural product and interest of testimony. These concepts were relevant to testimony and raised vital questions that were not broached in the literature on testimony. The field of disagreement analyzed the nature of epistemic peers. While the literature did not reflect back on analyzing how disagreement affected testimony, the discussion did focus on understanding how one *should* respond to genuine conflict. A

noticeable omission from the two positions on disagreement is the lack of reflection on the nature of testimony—when it should be accepted and when it should be rejected.

The study of virtue epistemology is a fitting topic for the response to disagreement. Virtue epistemology expands the study of knowledge to study the "knowers" as well. <sup>60</sup> The individual's epistemic performance is considered to be a valuable interest in epistemology. The performance extends to appraising testimony and responding to doxastic conflict. Because virtue is the central feature of this particular view of epistemology, it emphasizes a normative sense of knowledge. It should also be recognized that this normative sense is an important element in the epistemology of disagreement. Epistemologists have attempted to appraise how individuals respond to disagreement, prescribing and proscribing epistemic behavior. Therefore, it is suitable to adopt the approach of virtue epistemology in analyzing the epistemology of disagreement as well as the practice of apologetics.

Finally, apologetics is relevant for this discussion. Apologetics is already suited for the topic of religious disagreement. Despite the conflict over the acceptance of apologetics, apologetics seeks out disagreement in an attempt to resolve conflict. This trait is intriguing because it is a trait of conciliatory views. It is not surprising that apologetics would largely affirm the essence of steadfastness. The distinction rests in the apologists' attempt to disarm disagreement, which is the point where apologetics ventures away from the steadfast view and resembles conciliationism. Conciliatory views seek to resolve disagreement, which is the main objection to reasonable disagreement.

Reasonable disagreement appears to be unresolvable. Steadfast views affirm reasonable disagreement, letting epistemic conflict stand. Apologetics resembles both perspectives, remaining firm while attempting to resolve disagreement.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup>Laura Frances Callahan and Timothy O'Connor, eds., *Religious Faith and Intellectual Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6.

#### CHAPTER 2

#### THE CHALLENGE OF CONCILIATORY VIEWS

The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate on the concepts supporting conciliatory views. While the first chapter included a brief introduction to this view, this chapter will expand on these arguments. Conciliatory arguments present challenges to the project of apologetics. While there is no conciliatory literature that makes the case against apologetics, conciliatory conclusions can be applied to apologetics. This analysis of conciliation will be restricted to the work of only a few who propose conciliating. Other conciliation views will be given reflection as their work has further developed the view. The second half of this chapter will consider objections to conciliating. These objections will include a critical analysis from an apologetical view as well as a critique from the view of virtue. The conclusion will attempt to show the inherent problems of the view.

#### **Arguments for Conciliationism**

The epistemology of disagreement asks one fundamental question: how should one respond to disagreement? There are various factors that contribute to determining a response to disagreement. Given certain qualifications, some epistemologists have made the case for conciliating one's position because of the force of disagreement. The conciliatory view has had various monikers in the literature on disagreement. This study will use the traditional nomenclature of conciliation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Adam Elga's essay about disagreement is the first reference to the position as the conciliatory view. See Adam Elga, "How to Disagree about How to Disagree," in *Disagreement*, ed. Richard Feldman and Ted A. Warfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). David Christensen promulgated this label in David Christensen, "Disagreement as Evidence: The Epistemology of Controversy," *Philosophy Compass* 4, no. 5 (2009): 756-67. One of the first articles on disagreement was Richard Feldman's "Epistemological Puzzles about Disagreement," in *Epistemology Futures*, ed. Stephen Hetherington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). However, he did not label the position conciliatory. He identified it as the skeptical position because the prescribed stance toward "idealized" disagreement was to suspend

The main contention for conciliatory views surrounds the concept of reasonable disagreement. The definition of reasonable disagreement is not clouded in controversy. The point of tension within the epistemology of disagreement looms over the question of reasonable disagreement's occurrence. Conciliatory views are inferred from concepts that point to the irrationality of reasonable disagreement. These concepts evaluate the conditions of the disagreement—the disputant's background and competence in particular. Thus, disagreement serves as a defeater for the particular belief in dispute.

## No Reasonable Disagreement

In "Reasonable Religious Disagreement," Richard Feldman sets the stage for understanding reasonable disagreement.<sup>2</sup> Reasonable disagreement requires *genuine* disagreement. Genuine disagreement requires reflection on the opposing beliefs rather than flippantly rejecting them. In this way, there is an equal display of respect. Furthermore, genuine disagreement holds to an objective epistemic notion of truth. Disagreement cannot be dismissed merely on relativistic grounds. Objectivity is directed toward the evidence and the positions. Because of this view, a genuine disagreement is

judgement. Despite the differences in terms, the essence of the view remains the same. Jennifer Lackey labels it the conformist view. See Jennifer Lackey, "A Justificationist View of Disagreement's Epistemic Significance," in *Social Epistemology*, ed. Adrian Haddock, Alan Miller, and Duncan Pritchard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). She qualifies proponents of the conformist view as "those who hold that disagreement itself possesses enormous epistemic significance." Ibid., 300. Catherine Elgin labels it the "spineless" view. See Catherine Elgin, "Persistent Disagreement," in Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*, 54. James Kraft identifies the conciliatory position as a "reductionist" view in light of the challenge of disagreement, which causes one to reduce confidence in the particular belief. James Kraft, *The Epistemology of Religious Disagreement: A Better Understanding* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>His article is influenced by two events. The first occasion was an undergraduate course he instructed titled, "Rationality, Relativism, and Religion." The students had differing beliefs concerning theism. Feldman acknowledges the fact that the students displayed a level of tolerance to the diversity of opinions. What Feldman found interesting was that the students also conceded that the difference in beliefs constituted genuine disagreement—they did not appeal to relativism. The second occasion was Feldman's reaction to an opinion piece by Cal Thomas, whom Feldman qualified as "a widely syndicated columnist whose foolish and simplistic words regularly disgrace my local newspaper." Richard Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreement," in *Social Epistemology: Essential Readings*, ed. Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 138. According to Feldman, Thomas' article was intolerant to other beliefs. The intolerance offended Feldman's dedication to critical reasoning: "Dismissing without argument the views of those with whom you disagree is of no intellectual value. Given all the time and energy I've put into teaching critical thinking, I react strongly to things that represent such small-minded departures from it." Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreement," 138.

held between two incompatible positions.<sup>3</sup> The incompatibility clause concludes that both parties cannot be right. Despite these criteria, a reasonable disagreement holds that two individuals can disagree and reasonably hold the contested belief. Feldman argues that reasonable disagreement is unreasonable. When the disagreement is held between symmetrical parties and there is no evidence to push the disagreement into asymmetry, skepticism is the most reasonable position.

Full disclosure of evidence and argument is the most fundamental qualification for Feldman. He does not reject the idea of reasonable disagreement in isolation. His objection to reasonable disagreement rests in the idea of conflicting parties acknowledging balanced disagreement. The evidence of disagreement reveals that something has gone wrong. Feldman contends, "Evidence of evidence is evidence." In other words, disagreement serves as evidence supporting the other position as well as evidence against the rationality of one's own position. An evidentialist perspective supports this view. He claims that individuals who appeal to reasonable disagreement have abandoned evidentialism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Relativism is rejected. Feldman's harangue on relativism is worth quoting: "Relativists shy away from acknowledging that there really are disagreements. Relativists wonder why there must be just one right answer to a question and they often say that while one proposition is 'true for' one person or one group of people, different and incompatible propositions are 'true for' others. I think of this view as 'mindless relativism.'" Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreement," 140. David Christensen notes that the focus of the epistemology of disagreement does not dispute "the factuality of the subject matter," suggesting that objectivity is assumed. Christensen, "Disagreement as Evidence: The Epistemology of Controversy," 766n1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>For Feldman, there are two stages of disagreement. The first stage is isolated disagreement. In this stage, the parties have examined and reflected on similar evidence or arguments. They reach disparate conclusions in isolation. The second stage is "full disclosure" where evidence, reasoning, and conclusions are shared. Feldman, "Epistemological Puzzles about Disagreement," 219-20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Ibid., 223. For a nuanced position that considers counter examples, but ultimately affirms the principle, see Eyal Tal and Juan Comesaña, "Is Evidence of Evidence Evidence?" *Noûs* 51, no. 1 (2017): 95-112.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Feldman's evidentialism is fleshed out in Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, *Evidentialism: Essays in Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). In response to disagreement, he has defined his position: "A doxastic attitude is justified for a person if and only if the attitude fits the person's evidence: When one's evidence is counterbalanced, suspension of judgment is the justified attitude. When the evidence better supports a proposition than its denial, belief is the justified attitude; when it is the denial that is better supported, disbelief is justified." Richard Feldman, "Evidence of Evidence Is Evidence," in *The Ethics of Belief: Individual and Social*, ed. Jonathan Matheson and Rico Vitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 286.

According to Feldman, evidentialism provides the solution to the puzzles of disagreement. Following the evidence, individuals will understand how to respond. It should be noted that Feldman's conciliatory stance does not call for reducing confidence in every disagreement. The evidence may indicate that one's disputant is not qualified. It may be the case that one's interlocutor did not carefully consider the evidence or argument. When the conflict occurs between equally qualified individuals, one must reasonably suspend judgment. The skeptical position is based on the awareness that an esteemed individual has come to disparate conclusions. This knowledge serves as evidence that undermines one's position.

## **Epistemic Peers**

As the field of disagreement developed, the focus was advanced in other directions and the concept of reasonable disagreement did not receive as much attention. The concept of epistemic peers received further attention. The notion of peerhood has been a complicated theme in disagreement. In the previous chapter, one's epistemic peer was taken to be a basic idea.

Princeton philosophy professor Adam Elga claims an agent can be considered an epistemic peer based on the degree of agreement; he contends that it is "a great deal of agreement." A peer is one who shares the same evidence; analyzed the evidence; and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Feldman, "Evidence of Evidence is Evidence," 287.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Suspending judgment is the reasonable attitude to take when there is no tiebreaker. The inclusion of expert opinion would serve as a tiebreaker. Evidence points to the experts or it will reveal that it is not possible to identify the experts. "If the evidence really does identify experts, then agreeing with those experts will be the reasonable response for all. If it does not, then there will [be] no basis for anyone to prefer one view to the other and suspension of judgment will be the reasonable attitude for all." Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreement," 153. As a result, the absence of experts leads to suspending belief. The notion of experts and epistemic superiors will be the focus of chapter 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>The literature about reasonable disagreement is more expansive than Feldman's contributions; however, other contributions derive from the steadfast position. Steadfast responses to reasonable disagreement will be considered in the next chapter.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>Adam Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement," in Goldman and Whitcomb, *Social Epistemology*, 177. The sort of agreement is also identified as "background agreement." Ibid., 178.

has the approximate identical capacity in appraising the evidence.<sup>11</sup> Philosopher Earl Conee notes the difficulty in finding a genuine peer, and thus, attempts to relax the standard. He qualifies peers as having "the same justified attitudes. These epistemic peers must have identical total evidence, or they must have identical reasons, reasoning abilities, and inclinations to reason."<sup>12</sup> He also acknowledges that these are extreme conditions.

Conee's definition broadens the understanding of epistemic peers. He allows for two fundamental similarities. The first factor is transparency in regards to the reasoned attitude toward the belief: "People have thoroughly shared rational bases when either their bases do not differ, or, if they do, the differences are mutually known." Secondly, "People are *epistemic peers on the topic of a proposition* when they have a thoroughly shared basis and capacity for reasonable doxastic attitudes concerning the proposition." Thus, the qualifications for peerhood involve divulging evidence and sharing similar epistemic talent.

Given the nature of peerhood, conciliatory views argue that a peer should receive the same amount of credence that is given to one's own position. It question begging when an individual gives more weight simply because it is his or her own view. Conciliationists maintain that there is no justification in giving one's position "extra weight" over a peer's position. In fact, reason requires that a peer should be given the same amount of credence if the definition of peerhood is accepted.

In order to illustrate the problem of the "extra weight" view, Elga presents a scenario of two individuals placing bets on horse races. Elga holds that it is merely

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement," 163.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Earl Conee, "Rational Disagreement Defended," in Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*, 68.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Ibid., 70. Conee claims, "Genuine epistemic peers are ideal cases." Ibid., 71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Ibid.

"bootstrapping" to consider one's belief to be in a better position. In the case of multiple races, it is multiple disagreements. It is bootstrapping to believe that one remains secure in the belief that one's position is correct. Elga claims, "The disagreements between you and your friend are no evidence that she has made most of the mistakes." In addition, it is irrelevant who has actually judged the outcomes correctly *prior* to learning the results. Learning the results qualifies as evidence. The disagreement does not support steadfastness; in fact, disagreement weakens one's doxastic strength. He states, "When you find out that you and your friend have come to opposite conclusions about a race, you should think that the two of you are equally likely to be correct." Elga labels it the *extra weight view*—giving one's view priority over another's view in the absence of additional justification or independent support.

The equal weight view emphasizes the epistemic impact of disagreement. It takes into account the nature of peers and their shared evidence. Jonathan Matheson claims that the disagreement between peers does not provide clear support for either party. The only justified position is to give the conflicting view the same amount of credence. He states,

What the shared evidence supports is not perfectly transparent, and neither party occupies a 'God's-eye' view of the evidence. In fact, in an idealized disagreement, neither party is in a better epistemic position on the matter . . . since your evidence supports that the other party is in no better or worse of an epistemic position on the matter, you should give your peer's opinion equal weight. <sup>17</sup>

Conciliationists also hold to the idea that peers are similar to measuring devices; peers provide standards of truth. Testimonial knowledge applies to this analogy because individuals are treated as "truthometers." Disagreement from either second or

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement," 167.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Jonathan Matheson, *The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 74.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>David Christensen discusses the complications of treating others as "accurate truthometers." David Christensen, "Conciliation, Uniqueness, and Rational Toxicity," *Noûs* 50, no. 3

third person perspectives should see others as measurements of truth. Concerning this metaphor, Clayton Littlejohn of King's College London contends for peers to be treated as "*mere* truthometers. As such, you should treat them as mere instruments. Knowing this, you cannot endorse others treating you as something more than a mere Truthometer or a mere instrument."

While the equal weight view is a weaker claim than the *truthometer* principle, it can be taken from these two conciliatory concepts that the challenge of disagreement rests with one's peer. If an individual can be eliminated from peerhood status, then the challenge of disagreement is eliminated. Epistemologists have raised the issue of proper ways of reducing peerhood. Some epistemologists maintain that the "independence principle" is a justified means of removing peer status. The nature of independence restricts individuals from fallaciously eliminating peers due to conflict. This concept is similar to the objections against bootstrapping; however, it goes further in describing how an agent could potentially reduce a disputant who was formerly considered an epistemic peer. It is maintained that independence gives justified grounds for this reduction.

David Christensen describes the essence of independence as a means of restraining faulty attempts to reduce peerhood. The fact that disagreement is present in a particular field of study would seem to conclude that individuals in the field are not reliable in accessing the evidence. If they were reliable, then disagreement would not occur. The principle requires independent evidence to reduce peerhood and overcome the challenge of disagreement.<sup>20</sup> Christensen contends that the reasons for peer reduction

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<sup>(</sup>September 2016): 584-603.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Clayton Littlejohn, "Disagreement and Defeat," in *Disagreement and Skepticism*, ed. Diego E. Machuca (New York: Routledge, 2013). Littlejohn's advancement of the Truthometer case is an objection to the argument made for epistemic egoism in David Enoch, "Not Just a Truthometer: Taking Oneself Seriously (but Not Too Seriously) in Cases of Peer Disagreement," *Mind* 119, no. 476 (October 2010): 953-97.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>He states, "Absent some such principle, a practitioner would seem to be able to use her own views in the field to support the claim that while most practitioners are indeed quite unreliable, she was an exception, as evidenced by her having figured out so many issues correctly." Christensen, "Disagreement

must be "dispute-independent" or "dispute-neutral."<sup>21</sup> These reasons, which reside outside the terrain of the conflict, indicate how the other individual in the disagreement went wrong or miscalculated the evidence. When independent reasons are missing, it is not clear who made the mistake; likewise, it is not clear who is correct.<sup>22</sup>

One final factor for conciliating should be considered. The "uniqueness thesis" is used to justify conciliation or suspending belief. It is also used to oppose reasonable disagreement. Uniqueness has a firm grounding in evidentialism. Richard Feldman has argued for a strong view of evidentialism, claiming that evidence is a reliable guide to truth and it would not lead to two opposite conclusions. In this way, Feldman supports the uniqueness thesis. He contends,

As I think of things, our options with respect to any proposition are believing, disbelieving, and suspending judgment. The Uniqueness Thesis says that, given a body of evidence, one of these attitudes is the rationally justified one. If the Uniqueness Thesis is correct, then there cannot be any reasonable disagreements in cases in which two people have exactly the same evidence. That evidence uniquely determines one correct attitude, whether it be belief, disbelief, or suspension of judgment.<sup>23</sup>

Feldman shows how the uniqueness thesis presents challenges for theists and atheists by considering two propositions: (1) God exists. (2) The shared evidence supports "God exists." Feldman argues that the theist must *accept* both and the atheist must *reject* both. Based on the uniqueness thesis, the theist cannot accept (1) and reject (2). Likewise, the atheist cannot reject (1) and accept (2). The evidence supports only one position.

as Evidence," 759.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Christensen, "Disagreement as Evidence," 760.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Christensen's case of "mental math" is widely referenced in disagreement literature. See David Christensen, "Epistemology of Disagreement: The Good News," *Philosophical Review* 116, no. 2 (2007): 187-217. This scenario considers a conflict between two peers who calculate a restaurant bill, arriving at different sums. They can acknowledge peerhood because they have calculated the bill before, having identical sums. Christensen claims that dispute-independent evidence is needed to claim that the other miscalculated. The evidence points to someone's error, but it is not clear which calculation is wrong.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreement," 148.

Jonathan Matheson also supports the uniqueness thesis, although, he has made semantical revisions to the thesis. Matheson objects to the use of "reasonable" in the uniqueness discussion. In a dispute, the two held in disagreement can be reasonable or rational.<sup>24</sup> Matheson claims that this use confuses two states. The individuals may possess a rational disposition; that is to say, that they are normally reasonable or have the proclivity to be rational in most circumstances. He claims that the terms, "reasonable" or "rational" in the case of disagreement is not directed at the temperament, but toward "the epistemic status of the resultant doxastic attitudes." In other words, just because the two are rational does not conclude that their respective positions are rational; even if one is holding the true belief, it is irrational to remain steadfast in peer disagreement.

## **Conciliatory Conclusions**

The arguments for conciliating are built on the views that peers cannot be reduced without an independent defeater. An appropriate response to evidence concludes that legitimate epistemic peers would reach the same, unique conclusion when responding to identical evidence. Assuming the truth of these principles, epistemologists have concluded that the burden of disagreement requires individuals to conciliate their belief. Reasonable disagreements are untenable because disagreement shows that one position is not reasonable. The consequence of disagreement is that "we are much less epistemically justified" in holding particular beliefs; and "we often are not epistemically justified in holding them at all."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>The reference is to Gideon Rosen's claim for reasonable disagreement in the context of jury conflict. Rosen cites other cases of reasonable disagreements. "Paleontologists disagree about what killed the dinosaurs. And while it is possible that most of the parties to this dispute are irrational, this need not be the case. To the contrary, it would appear to be a fact of epistemic life that a careful review of the evidence does not guarantee consensus, even among thoughtful and otherwise rational investigators." Gideon Rosen, "Nominalism, Naturalism, Epistemic Relativism," *Noûs* 35, no. 15 (2001): 71-72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>Matheson, *The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement*, 55. See also Jonathan Matheson, "The Case for Rational Uniqueness," *Logos & Episteme* 2, no. 3 (2011): 359-73.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>Matheson, *The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement*, 2.

Although the conclusion is to conciliate, epistemologists have posed different responses to how one should conciliate. This study has already discussed Feldman's response. He calls for a skeptical response by suspending judgment. Other proponents of conciliation argue that skepticism is not the default response to every disagreement. For example, David Christensen supports the case for "splitting the difference." This principle calls for both parties to move closer to the other position. It does not demand skepticism nor does it require parties to abandon belief entirely. Christensen claims that splitting the difference assists in gauging how one should respond to disagreement given one's strong stance in a position. He states, "When I have excellent reason to think that the explanation in terms of my own error is every bit as good as that in terms of my friend's error, I should come close to 'splitting the difference' between my friend's initial belief and my own."

In order to split the difference, belief has to be understood in a fine-grained manner, which means that belief comes in degrees. On a scale of 0-1, where 0 represents no confidence and 1 represents full confidence, individual beliefs can reside anywhere on that scale. Thus, splitting the difference occurs on a scale. For example, an individual whose confidence stands at .75 finds himself in conflict with a peer whose confidence in a particular belief is very weak at .25. Splitting the difference calls for both to come

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>Christensen, "Epistemology of Disagreement"; see also David Christensen, "Higher-Order Evidence," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 81, no. 1 (2010): 185-215; and David Christensen, "Disagreement, Question-Begging, and Epistemic Self-Criticism," *Philosopher's Imprint* 11, no. 6 (March 2011): 1-22. Other epistemologists who support a conciliatory stance have argued for splitting the difference; see Matheson, *The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement;* Littlejohn, "Disagreement and Defeat."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>Keith Lehrer has made the case that reasonable disagreement is "impossible" between expert communities. He claims, "Actual disagreement among experts must result either from an incomplete exchange of information, individual dogmatism, or a failure to grasp the mathematical implications of their initial stage. What is impossible is that the members of some community of inquiry should grasp the mathematical implications of their initial state and yet disagree." Keith Lehrer, "When Rational Disagreement Is Impossible," *Noûs* 10, no. 3 (September 1976): 331. The obvious distinction in Lehrer's case is the assumption of experts concerning mathematical or quantified data. In these sorts of cases, Lehrer contends, "Disagreement is irrational." Ibid., 327. Given their expert status, Lehrer additionally supports a converging conclusion that resembles splitting the difference.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Christensen, "Epistemology of Disagreement," 203.

closer to .50 degree of confidence. One's confidence is too strong and should be reduced, while the peer's confidence is too weak and should be strengthened.<sup>30</sup>

# **Steadfast Objections**

There have been several objections against the conciliatory view. In this section, three of the main objections will be considered. These responses are preliminary challenges set against conciliatory views. The three challenges include skeptical conclusions, the self-refuting nature of the conciliatory conclusion, and the objection from higher-order evidence.<sup>31</sup>

While Jonathan Kvanvig has not been at the forefront in the disagreement discussion, he has directed objections to the conciliatory case.<sup>32</sup> He sees the conciliatory position calling for compromise, but finds this simplistic. Compromise cannot be isolated to the source of contention because the conflict permeates throughout the individual's view of the evidence. Given this consideration, Kvanvig argues that compromise must be

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup>Matheson labels this the "doxastic taxonomy." *The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement*, 6. There are two forms under doxastic taxonomy. The fine-grained understanding of belief holds to the concept that beliefs are held in degrees. The split the difference principle is congruent with the fine-grained stance. However, there are epistemologists who hold to a "coarse-grained" perspective. This stance understands belief to be an "all-or-nothing" sense. Alvin Goldman has referred to it as the "tripartite classification," which includes belief, rejection, and withholding. See Alvin Goldman, "A Guide to Social Epistemology" in Goldman and Whitcomb, *Social Epistemology*. The tripartite classification presents an obstacle for splitting the difference. Thomas Kelly has indicated this problem by referencing the disagreement between an atheist, an agnostic, and a theist. The agnostic is not obligated to split the difference. See Thomas Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence," in Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*. Christensen also holds that there are cases where no belief revision is required. In an alteration of the "mental math" scenario, he sets up the conflict to be in stark contrast. In earlier versions of "mental math", the concluding sums were relatively close. In "Extreme Restaurant Case," two peers tally the shares of the check and arrive at \$43 and \$450, where \$450 is greater than the amount of the entire check. In this case, Christensen concludes that it is obvious that one can persevere in the original calculation of \$43. See Christensen, "Epistemology of Disagreement," 199-200.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>Another main objection concerns the possibility of reasonable disagreement. It will, however, be treated in a section considering the apologetical critique of conciliation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *Rationality & Reflection: How to Think about What to Think* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Disagreement is not the central theme of this work. His main investigation in *Rationality & Reflection* is locating a distinction between the norms of epistemic appraisal and the evaluative sense of epistemic appraisal. The norms are obligatory in an epistemic sense, while the evaluative is not. The normative tells us what we should do, while the evaluative uncovers what is best or what will produce the best results. Kvanvig attempts to discover a theory that informs an approach that respects the *perspectivality* of life. The perspectival concept is the distinction between what is meant by the normative and the evaluative. In this search, Kvanvig addresses the concept of rational disagreement.

ruled out and the only rational position left is for a change of view. Thus, the conciliatory view cannot split the difference, but only offer the stronger claim of changing one's view. The stronger claim then leads to skepticism about a number of controversial beliefs.<sup>33</sup>

Linda Zagzebski holds that splitting the difference results in undesirable beliefs. Moving closer to the opposing belief leads to beliefs that no one held prior to the conflict.<sup>34</sup> Alvin Plantinga makes a similar claim against the notion of compromising belief in order to eliminate the challenge of disagreement. He argues that the motivation behind a conciliatory view is understood to be that one should defer belief when in the face of disagreement.<sup>35</sup> There will be others who disagree with the newly revised position. Therefore, a conflict-free position is a chimera. Conciliation cannot achieve its

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>Matheson, a proponent of conciliating, would accept Kvanvig's conclusion for the stronger claim. At the same time, Matheson disagrees that splitting the difference is untenable. It is also worth mentioning Kvanvig's view on reasonable disagreement because it involves his perspectival theory. Concerning the normative claims of epistemology, Kvanvig claims that we cannot argue that one ought to believe the truth because this is the conflation of evaluation and normativity. He states, "While it is a good thing, perhaps the best thing from a purely intellectual point of view, to believe the truth, it is simply false that we ought to believe the truth." Kvanvig, Rationality & Reflection, 98. He argues in this manner because the obligation to believe the truth does not uphold his notion of perspectivality. Obligating truth is too great a standard. The normative factor is perspectival and offering a standard is too rigid. Therefore, "What is right to do or think is deeply perspectival, whereas what is best isn't." Ibid, 99. In other words, the evaluative dimension is rightly positioned as a fixed standard, while responsibilities rest on particular standards. Because Kvanvig holds to the perspectival position of normativity, he argues that rational disagreement can occur. There are differing standards, and therefore, disagreement can be rational. In a similar stance on epistemic norms, John Pollock contends that epistemology is concerned with how one knows. He suggests the field should be called "doxastology." Epistemic norms concern what is epistemically permissible. "A justified belief is one that is 'epistemically permissible' to hold. Epistemic justification is a normative notion. It pertains to what you should or should not believe, but it is a uniquely epistemic normative notion." John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1986), 7. Similar to Kvanvig's thesis, Pollock draws a distinction between different types of "should." There are prudential norms and epistemic norms, where epistemic norms are "reason guiding" and norms based on prudential terms are driven by goals.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>Zagzebski compares doxastic compromise with the "three-fifths compromise" of the Philadelphia Convention of 1787, where slave states argued for fair representation and therefore the comprise was to consider slaves as three-fifths of a citizen. She claims that there is no argument to make a case for a slave's status as three-fifths of a citizen. If that argument were put on the table prior to disagreement, no one would accept it. Linda Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy in Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 206. She claims, "I think this is a common problem with the reasonableness of theoretical compromise. A middle ground between two opposing principles is supported by neither principle, so it is theoretically worse off than either of the two extremes." Ibid., 207.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup>Alvin Plantinga, "Pluralism: A Defense for Religious Exclusivism," in *The Philosophical Challenge of Religious Diversity*, ed. Philip L. Quinn and Kevin Meeker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

purpose in attempting to resolve epistemic conflict. Revising one's view will not settle all disagreement.

Another challenge for the conciliatory stance is the problem of self-defeat. If one disagrees with the conciliatory view, then it is self-defeating. In other words, a conciliationist should conciliate his position on conciliating. Philosopher Brian Weatherson has made a case for the self-defeating nature of the conciliatory position in light of its support of the equal weight view. Weatherson shows that the conciliatory nature presents absurd conclusions regarding one's view of giving equal weight when facing disagreement about the truth of the equal weight view. Given the equal weight view, one must fully accept it in order to give equal weight to a disputant who rejects the view. Thus, in order to give equal weight, one must both fully accept it and partially reject it in the case that one's peer rejects the equal weight view.

Some philosophers also object to conciliation on the grounds of higher-order evidence. For instance, Thomas Kelly objects to the weight attributed to a dissenting peer.<sup>38</sup> The evidence of disagreement is distinct from one's beliefs drawn from the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>While the equal weight view will receive more attention in another section, the present objection is being considered because it is connected with the self-defeating claim. As Elga has pointed out, the conciliatory stance could be applied to itself, but he holds that the self-defeating claim does not apply to conciliation. He concludes that one can be conciliatory in all areas *except* the epistemology of disagreement; and thus, the conciliatory stance does not apply to itself. See Elga, "How to Disagree about How to Disagree." It should be noted that Elga violates the *self-excepting fallacy*. In an essay concerning conceptual relativism, Maurice Mandelbaum introduces the self-excepting fallacy. Mandelbaum argues that relativism falls prey to the self-excepting fallacy by applying relativism to all other perspectives except itself. Mandelbaum concludes that the relativist faces a dilemma. If the relativist view is true, then it cannot be premised on objective claims. If objectivity were true, then relativism is false. The same fallacy can be charged against the conciliatory position and Elga's argument: If the conciliatory position is true, then one's confidence in conciliating should be reduced in the face of disagreement. If the steadfast position is true, then conciliationism is false. See Maurice Mandelbaum, "Subjective, Objective, and Conceptual Relativisms," *The Monist* 62, no. 4 (1979): 403-28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>Brian Weatherson, "Disagreement, Philosophical and Otherwise," in *The Epistemology of Disagreement: New Essays*, ed. David Christensen and Jennifer Lackey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). Kvanvig claims that Plantinga's "Pluralism: A Defense of Religious Exclusivism" also presents an argument for the self-defeating nature of conformist views. However, it is not explicitly articulated in Plantinga. See Kvanvig, *Rationality & Reflection*, 104. Kvanvig also contends that the self-defeat charge does not have a large presence in the literature on disagreement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup>Thomas Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement," in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, vol 1, ed. Tamar Szabo Gendler and John Hawthorne (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). See also Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence," in Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*. In the latter article, Kelly makes a charge against the equal weight view.

evidence prior to disagreement. Kelly states that the awareness of disagreement is not qualified as first-order evidence. Rather, the knowledge of disagreement only pertains to higher-order evidence. He claims that individuals do not cite their own beliefs as supporting evidence about a proposition. First-order evidence does not include beliefs or interpretations about a belief. Instead, higher-order evidence is the collection of those beliefs and interpretations. Therefore, support for a belief comes from first-order evidence.

In this way, Kelly maintains that the evidence of disagreement does not factor into one's first-order evidence, which is the category that supports beliefs. Because disagreement is higher-order evidence, it does not affect one's doxastic confidence.

According to his view, peer disagreement only cancels out higher-order evidence. When this evidence is eliminated, the only remaining evidence is the original first-order evidence. Thus, the only evidence that remains is the original evidence that supported the helief <sup>39</sup>

## **Challenges to Apologetics**

Conciliatory views present challenges to the project of apologetics. While it may be obvious how these two concepts are in conflict, this dissertation does not intend to assume the nature of the conflict. While the literature on disagreement has not explicitly opposed the practice of apologetics, conciliatory claims can be applied to apologetics.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup>Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement." Linda Zagzebski also discusses the distinction between first-order and higher-order evidence. In her work on epistemic authority, she discusses deliberative reasons for belief. See Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*. She maintains that deliberative reasons are first-person reasons that individuals assess in order to accept or withdraw a particular belief. These reasons are connected to "me and only me," while theoretical reasons are third-person connections to reasons that are objective and can be shared. Ibid., 64. Zagzebski claims that deliberative reasons are exclusive to the individual whereas theoretical reasons are "on the table" for all to see. Concerning disagreement, one's reason for belief includes self-trust and deliberative reason; it is not theoretical. Thus, one's belief is not an additional theoretical reason for belief. It cannot be "laid on the table" as evidence for accepting a belief, which means that one cannot add another's belief into the theoretical reasons for belief. Zagzebski argues that testimony cannot be counted as evidence because their testimony is based on trust, which is inferred from self-trust. Self-trust is not evidence, but counts as first-person reason for belief.

One difference between the disagreement literature and apologetics is how the scenario is constructed. The method of apologetics assumes disagreement. In other words, it is downstream from disagreement. In most cases, apologetical argues are used to respond to disagreements. Harold Netland writes, "Christian apologetics is the attempt to respond to critiques of Christian claims in a biblically faithful, intellectually sound, and culturally appropriate manner. It actively seeks to persuade those who are skeptical to accept Christian beliefs." Along these lines Francis Beckwith states that apologetics responds to "challenges and offering reasons for one's faith." Beckwith states that the challenges are those outside the church. Thus, there is obviously disagreement.

J. P. Moreland's approach presents arguments in order to help individuals understand the problems of secularism and see the coherence of Christianity. 44 George

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup>In a festschrift honoring the work of Norman Geisler, Josh McDowell claims, "Apologetics is simply to defend the faith, and thereby destroy arguments and every proud obstacle against the knowledge of God (2 Cor 10:5). It is opening the door, clearing the rubble, and getting rid of the hurdles so that people can come to Christ . . . Norm says apologetics, then is just an attempt to get answers to everybody's questions in order to tear down the obstacles keeping them from Christ." Josh McDowell, "Preface," in *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*, ed. Francis Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 9. In this case, apologetics is not merely used to challenge those who disagree with the premises of Christianity; apologetics is useful in assisting Christians (those in agreement) who are wrestling with doubt, as well.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>Harold Netland, *Christianity & Religious Diversity: Clarifying Christian Commitments in a Globalizing Age* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), 242.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup>Francis Beckwith, "Introduction," in Beckwith, Craig, and Moreland, *To Everyone An Answer*, 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup>He contends that apologists offer these arguments as reasons so that they *may be* able to fulfill the imperative given in 1 Pet 3:15. "This command is just as relevant today as it was during the days of the first-century church." Ibid. There are similarities and differences in the challenges, but the general principle remains untouched. The church is commanded to give a defense for its faith and hope.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup>Moreland speaks of apologetics as a training or pedagogical project. In this way, authority and testimony are necessary for apologetics. The apologetical project presents the Christian worldview in contrast to a secular understanding of reality. For the most part, individuals do not possess the skills in perceiving the influence of their ideological background. "Some people cannot see patterns in a great work of art even though they are staring at the canvas, because they have not been trained to see those patterns. Similarly, some people cannot see God at work in the world or understand and appropriate certain features of the Bible because they have not be trained to see those patterns. Instead, they view the world through secular glasses. Their subconscious structures cause them to interpret events and statements in ways that stifle growth. Apologetics can focus attention on some of these secular structures, call them into question, and release the self to view the world in a way more compatible with a Christian worldview." J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987),

Mavrodes' approach also gives reasons and evidence for the faith because theistic belief is rational and, more importantly, Christian belief is rational.<sup>45</sup>

In contrast, the conciliatory position analyzes the effects of disagreement on beliefs formed before the realization of the conflict. However, conciliating belief is based on a view that places a significant weight on disagreement itself. It can be said that the different perspectives on the order of disagreement does not preclude apologetics from the discussion, but presents an interesting case. Unlike conciliation, apologetics is not moved to deference, but is motivated by disagreement.

#### **Problem of Peers**

The nature of epistemic peers can potentially present an obstacle for apologetics. The challenge of peers can be understood from facing disagreement with individuals who have full philosophical knowledge about the arguments for God's existence. Disagreement can occur between two philosophy professors, where one supports the classical arguments and the other opposes them. <sup>46</sup> This scenario is similar to Hilary Kornblith's work on disagreement between philosophers. <sup>47</sup> According to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup>George Mavrodes, *Belief in God: A Study in the Epistemology of Religion* (New York: University Press of America, 1970). See also George Mavrodes, "Jerusalem and Athens Revisited," in *Faith and Rationality*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1983).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup>Of course, this scenario is not a hypothetical thought experiment. Many philosophers have full knowledge of these arguments and believe that theistic arguments do not have the force that other philosophers believe. The historical disagreement need not be retraced here, but a contemporary instance can be highlighted. In his work *Arguing about Gods*, Graham Oppy traces through the classical arguments for God's existence. He concludes that there is no compelling argument for the orthodox belief in a monotheistic God. See Graham Oppy, *Arguing about Gods* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Oppy is one among many philosophers who reject the persuasive nature of the arguments. Richard Gale, coming from a Kierkegaardian stance, also objects to the arguments' strengths. See Richard Gale, *On the Nature and Existence of God* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). In my own personal experience, I have found myself in disagreement with a "peer" concerning the classical arguments. I teach a course on philosophy of religion that covers the traditional arguments. Another philosopher professor who teaches the same course is convinced that the arguments have no force. He is an atheist, and he is also a trained philosopher who has full knowledge of the arguments.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup>Kornblith also cites Gutting as the origin of epistemic peer. He defines a peer as "just as smart as I am, just as well informed, and have thought about the issue just as long as I have and just as carefully." Hilary Kornblith, "Belief in the Face of Controversy," in Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*, 31.

Kornblith, he does not consider general agreement to be a factor for epistemic peerage. He contends that two disputants can disagree on a wide range of related topics and still qualify as peers. He states that the philosophical field is characterized by widespread disagreement about related issues; however, Kornblith considers other philosophers to be his peers.

The critical element for Kornblith is that the disagreement is localized or exclusive to "related" matters. This disagreement is situated against a background "agreement about the important issues in epistemology, about which positions are worth taking seriously, about what counts for and against various views, and so on."<sup>48</sup> Kornblith endorses suspending belief in contentious areas of disagreement. He also considers suspending belief to be reasonable when expert opinion is split. In this view, peer disagreement is evidence that should be taken into one's account when assessing the belief. He ultimately concludes that peer disagreement should result in suspending belief. If applied, this claim would require an end to the project of apologetics.

# Uniqueness

The uniqueness principle accentuates the challenge of peers. Peers have full knowledge of the arguments presented in apologetics. The uniqueness thesis extends the problem by claiming that there can only be one unique position. In contrast, apologists make claims that betray the thesis. George Mavrodes maintains that arguments are propositional concepts. Apologetical arguments are person-relative because they entail psychological aspects, including belief, doubt, questions, and proof. These are personal

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup>Kornblith, "Belief in the Face of Controversy," 51.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup>Kornblith writes, "That my epistemic peers disagree with me on this question is surely relevant evidence that I ought to take into account. It is indirect evidence . . . but it is important evidence nonetheless." Ibid,. 31.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup>Mavrodes, *Belief in God*, 36-37.

positions, which attach to subjective concepts. Subjective concepts can be believed as well as doubted.<sup>52</sup> Some individuals will find defects in particular apologetical arguments that are relative to the individual. Arguments are contextual and person-relative. Some individuals find the arguments convincing, while other individuals reject them. This distinction illustrates the "personal variability of the arguments."<sup>53</sup>

Likewise, Ronald Nash claims that the person-relativity of the arguments makes it "highly unlikely that there is any such thing as a proof for God's existence that will convince everyone." Nevertheless, theistic arguments should not be abandoned. David K. Clark's approach to apologetics uses objective evidence and reason, but allows for the assessment of the evidence and reason from individuals with disparate agendas. 55 Uniqueness rejects this framework and approach.

# **Apologetic Response to Conciliation**

The challenge of peers will be shown to have its own challenges. If the nature of peers finds difficulty, then the equal weight view will be weakened. What follows is that the uniqueness thesis is disarmed as well, leading to the case for permissivism. The final section will appeal to virtue<sup>56</sup> in order to demonstrate the internal excesses and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup>"This is because 'p is believed' may be expanded into 'p is believed by N' while 'p is doubted' may be expanded into 'p is doubted by M.'" Mavrodes, *Belief in God*, 41.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>Ronald H. Nash, *Faith & Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1988), 110. Nash argues that applogetics should be cautious when it comes to the standard of proofs or evidence for existence. There are disciplines that appropriately require higher standards for evidential proof. Nash claims that if the standards are too high for apologetics, then the acquisition of truth will be too difficult. Apologetics is unlike geometry, in which the standard is based on a deductive framework. "In geometry, such things as probability, personal judgment, the weighing of evidence, and non coercive arguments are inappropriate. The standards of proof in geometry are as high as they can possibly be. There are times when anything short of logical certainty is enough to disqualify a proposed proof." Ibid., 113.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup>Clark writes, "The evidential weight of such appeals [objective evidence and reasons] is not perceived and evaluated in a single, purely abstract way by humanity in general. It is assessed in a variety of concrete ways by unique individuals." David K. Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics: A Person-Centered Approach to Christian Defense* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), viii.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup>The appeal to virtue is not *ad hoc*. In the section that introduces the factors of testimony and autonomy, I connect intellectual virtue with the virtues that have already been broached by epistemologists in their definitions of peerhood.

deficiencies of the position. It will be claimed that conciliationism has an inadequate view of testimony, which also results in a weak view of self-trust.

# **Critique of the Equal Weight View**

This critique of the equal weight view will look to the problems that are inherent to two features of the view: the nature of peers and the nature of the uniqueness thesis. It has been shown that giving an individual equal weight is grounded in peer status. This evidence will lead to one *unique* position. Proponents of conciliation maintain that peerhood and uniqueness principles are fundamental to the equal weight view. First, peerhood will be shown to suffer from problems of application, followed by a case that the uniqueness thesis suffers from the same fate in application.

Nathan King has made a strong case against the idea of peerhood.<sup>57</sup> King claims that peer disagreement is a rare condition. He questions three conditions of peerhood:<sup>58</sup> the same evidence condition, the dispositional condition, and the acknowledgement condition. The same evidence condition is complicated because evidence is complicated. The items that can be considered to serve as evidence are difficult to categorize. King states that a restricted view of evidence, omitting perception and intuitions, attempts to promote shared bodies of evidence. However, the whole body of evidence requires articulation. King claims that this principle makes it extremely difficult to satisfy the same evidence condition.

The dispositional condition holds peers to be equally reliable in responding to the same evidence. King's objection to this condition follows a similar line of thought

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup>Nathan King, "Disagreement: What's the Problem? or A Good Peer Is Hard to Find," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 78, no. 2 (September 2012): 249-72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup>The first condition of peerhood is the disagreement condition, which does not possess the difficulties the other conditions contain. "S believes P, while T believes ~P." Ibid., 252. King observes that this sort of disagreement is coarse-grained, which appeals to the tripartite analysis of belief: belief, suspend belief, and disbelief. His article does not consider fine-grained views that hold to degrees of belief; yet, he claims that this does not affect his objections to peerhood. Ibid., 252n5.

against the same evidence. Background beliefs severely complicate the notion that two individuals share identical reliability when these background beliefs shape dispositions.<sup>59</sup> Finally, the acknowledgement condition states that the two peers acknowledge that the other conditions have been fulfilled, but it is difficult to identify how these conditions are met.<sup>60</sup>

Other philosophers also challenge the concept of peerhood. In essence, they charge that background dispositions are diverse, which disqualify individuals from peer status. Robert Audi finds peer identification to be extremely difficult given all the variables one has to consider. "Given the complexity of the notion of epistemic parity, it would be at best rare that one would be justified in believing that a disputant is an epistemic peer in the relevant matter." Alvin Goldman argues that differing epistemic systems prescribe different norms in responding to evidence. Thomas Kelly makes the case for disparate "cognitive goals," as a means for questioning peerhood. One person's goal may be to avoid falsehood, while another may place a premium on accepting true beliefs. The former may be more cautious than the latter, resulting in different epistemic standards.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup>Several epistemologists have also identified this particular principle of peerhood to be highly problematic. The following paragraph will condense these numerous objections.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup>King addresses the objection that his argument has misconstrued peers to be too restrictive to circumvent the concept. He counters by claiming that his argument is charitable to peerhood, allowing for a broadening of evidence. King contends that a loosening of the standards does not escape the problems inherent in peerhood, though.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup>Robert Audi, "Normative Disagreement as a Challenge," in *Challenges to Moral and Religious Belief: Disagreement and Evolution*, ed. Michael Bergmann and Patrick Kain (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup>Goldman claims that the material evidence can be identical but the norm evidence is different. "Where two agents are equal with respect to material evidence but differ with respect to norm evidence—though the correct norm-system stays fixed—it is legitimate for their attitudes toward a given proposition to diverge." Alvin Goldman, "Epistemic Relativism and Reasonable Disagreement," in Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*, 208-9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup>Kelly states, "The more weight one gives to not believing something false, the more it makes sense to hold out until there is a great deal of evidence that p is true before taking up the belief that p. On the other hand, the more one values not missing out on believing the truth, the more it makes sense to take a somewhat more liberal attitude about how much evidence one expects before taking up the relevant belief." Thomas Kelly, "Evidence Can Be Permissive," in *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, ed. Matthias

Similar to other objections, Bryan Frances highlights the problem of finding symmetrical dispositions. His objection to peers is based on the rejection of the uniqueness thesis. Frances rejects uniqueness theories because dispositions are complicated and evidence is sophisticated. Uniqueness overly reduces these factors. He presents a counter example involving two individuals with distinct background "tendencies." These tendencies led one individual to be open to new concepts, while the other has a tendency to scrutinize evidence. They arrive at disparate conclusions because they began at disparate starting places. The two can be peers, but they have started out in different "places." However, different starting points would disqualify the pair as peers.

Apologists have also noted the complexity of background beliefs. These arguments further support the critique of peerhood. For instance, William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland identify the challenge of underlying assumptions as a challenge to constructing good arguments. Craig and Moreland claim an argument requires an "epistemic status" that balances certainty and plausibility. <sup>66</sup> Certainty is excessive, while

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Steup, John Turri, and Ernest Sosa (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 301. Adam Elga, a proponent of conciliating, considers this problem to be the clustering of beliefs. Real world cases are complicated because they are "tangled in clusters of controversy." Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement," 173. He maintains that abortion is a product of this sort of cluster. Elga states that one's belief about abortion is interconnected with other beliefs and thus the problem of sharing peer status is problematic. These areas of disagreement disqualify the disputant's claim to peerage. They may be peers on other isolated issues, but in the particular case of contention, they do not esteem the other as just as likely to be right. Elga considers the clustering of allied issues to be profound, in that "it goes extremely deep—so deep that there is no common ground" from which one could sensibly assess the interlocutor's general outlook on the topic. Ibid., 176.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup>Bryan Frances, *Disagreement* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2014), 181. Frances is critical of the peer hood structure. "The notion of peer hood would have to be very lax in order to have much application to real life—especially when it comes to the complex beliefs we care about most, such as religious, moral, and political ones. It is common for someone to know that there are people who disagree with her and who are, in her judgment, being quite reasonable." Frances, *Disagreement*, 194. Yet, Frances finds complications in continuing to hold to the idea that one's peer is still being reasonable despite having come to a different conclusion regarding the shared evidence. Can peerhood include misjudging evidence? Because Frances' book is a textbook, he leaves the section open-ended. He asks can it be reasonable to claim, "I think he's wrong, but his position is reasonable?" Ibid., 195.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup>This dichotomy between the open agent and the cautious agent follows the objections developed in Goldman, Wedgewood, and Kelly.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup>J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 58.

plausibility is deficient for truth. Plausibility also possesses a subjective aspect. They contend that plausibility is a "person-dependent" notion, which betrays the nature of peerhood.<sup>67</sup>

The objection to peerhood could result in unintended consequences. Can the rejection of peerhood be used to show that peerhood between believers and unbelievers is irreconcilable? In other words, because a Christian does not share peerhood with an unbeliever, could it be maintained that a Christian is under no epistemic obligation to give an unbeliever a "fair hearing?" In this way, apologetics would appear to be ineffective in trying to persuade individuals who disagree with Christian belief.

John Feinberg does not reach this conclusion. He accepts the concept of divergent dispositions, but he does not find the absence of peerhood to be a challenge for apologetics. In his apologetic method, he attempts to convince skeptics of Christianity. Noting that arguments and evidences are accessible to everyone, Feinberg claims, "Our presuppositions and perspectives don't guarantee that we can't get anything right, can't agree with one another, or can't ever convince someone else of our beliefs." While peerhood is not explicitly rejected, this illustrates that some apologists do not operate on the premise of peers. Feinberg also demonstrates that apologetics does not require peerhood in order to persuade individuals with different assumptions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup>Craig and Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 59. The person-relative notion of arguments has been mentioned above in the approach of Clark, Mavrodes, and Nash. For a similar approach, concerning entrenched beliefs and religious epistemology in general, see Robert Adams, "Religious Disagreements and Doxastic Practices," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54, no. 4 (December 1994): 885-89. Craig and Moreland further claim that background influences should not be overlooked: "Accordingly, some people will agree that a particular argument is a good one, while others will say that it is a bad argument. Given our diverse backgrounds and biases, we should expect such disagreements. Obviously, the most persuasive arguments will be those what are based on premises which enjoy the support of widely accepted evidence or seem intuitively to be true." Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 59.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup>John S. Feinberg, *Can You Believe It's True? Christian Apologetics in a Modern and Postmodern Era* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 193-194. Feinberg also contends that epistemic presuppositions must be disclosed, as well. "Once you clarify to yourself and your nonbelieving friend that you need to give an objective case, an apologetic, for Christianity (and your friend needs to give an objective case against it), you still need to designate the standard by which the various arguments and evidences will be judged as to their truth and value in an overall defense." Ibid., 166.

The discussion of peerhood and background assumptions broaches the matter of worldviews. Worldviews cannot be overlooked. In a general sense, worldviews are critical matters, but they are also important for apologetics. James Sire contends that a worldview, at its base, is not an intellectual matter but it is a spiritual orientation. Richard DeWitt, professor of philosophy at Fairfield University, contends that worldviews are similar to jigsaw puzzles, where beliefs fit together securely. The central pieces of a worldview are more entrenched and crystallized than the peripheral pieces. Unlike a puzzle, the central pieces cannot be easily replaced.

Similarly, Steve Wilkens and Mark Sanford hold that worldviews are frequently influenced by "hidden" assumptions.<sup>71</sup> Hidden worldviews, unlike other philosophical systems, do not begin as intellectual frameworks, but are absorbed through the culture. Because they are hidden, these ideas are unintentionally accepted. Their nature allows the ideas to go undetected, giving these concepts more influence. It follows, according to Wilkens and Sanford, that hidden notions are not merely rational because individuals are not "just rational." Similar to Sire's perspective, Wilkens and Sanford maintain that worldviews must be considered from the vantage point of spiritual assumptions as well.

The Christian worldview sees conflicting concepts differently. A salient factor for the Christian perspective of worldviews is the "noetic effect" of sin. Sin hinders the intellectual process by short-circuiting cognitive precision. Sin also causes individuals to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup>He states, "It is a matter of the soul and is represented more as a spiritual orientation, or perhaps disposition." James Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup>Richard DeWitt, *Worldviews: An Introduction to the History and Philosophy of Science* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup>Steve Wilkens and Mark L. Sanford, *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup>Ibid, 217.

embrace inconsistent or irrational beliefs. In this way, it can be argued that Christians can demote all non-believers from peer status. While this dissertation acknowledges the fact that sin disrupts the epistemic process, it does not suggest appealing to sin in every case of disagreement. Instead, this study maintains that because the notion of epistemic peers possesses serious problems it does not present a challenge to apologetics. Furthermore, even though peerhood is no challenge for apologetics, the notion of sin could not be used against everyone who disagrees with the force of apologetical arguments. Simply stating that the Holy Spirit has enlightened those who accept the arguments is to overlook those believers who reject the arguments. Some apologists claim that the Holy Spirit can use these arguments, but it is not necessary.<sup>73</sup>

Additionally, disagreement over apologetics is not relegated to those outside of the Christian faith. Disagreement persists at the intra-system level as well. A Notable Christians such as Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Barth have held to some form of fideism, which rejects the apologetical enterprise. What's more, there is "in-house" disagreement over the merit of specific arguments. The controversial ontological argument is the paragon of this level of disagreement. At this level of conflict in apologetics, peerhood is not reduced to intra-system disagreement by appealing to divine inspiration or religious experience. A Christian can accept the conclusion of the arguments, while rejecting the persuasive nature of the argument. Similarly, apologists do not accept every argument. Thus, there is peer disagreement among apologists about the strength of particular arguments, but they do not appeal to sin in order to reduce peerhood.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup>Norman Geisler contends, "Rational arguments offer proof but do not necessarily persuade unbelievers of God's existence. They may be objectively correct but not always subjectively convincing. This is because they are directed at the mind but are not directive of the will. They can 'lead the horse to water,' but only the Holy Spirit can persuade a person to drink." Norman Geisler, *Knowing the Truth about Creation: How It Happened and What It Means for Us* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1989), 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup>The labels of inter- and intra-system challenges are adopted from David Basinger, *Religious Diversity: A Philosophical Assessment* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup>For more on the issue of disagreement concerning basic religious beliefs, see John Greco, "Religious Knowledge in the Context of Conflicting Testimony," *Proceedings of the American Catholic* 

In conclusion, the concept of peers is based on qualifications that are too restrictive. First, the qualification for shared evidence restricts outside influences. When considering the scenario of classical theistic arguments, it can be assumed that both parties share equal access to the premises and conclusions of the arguments. They also share arguments and evidence that runs counter to the classical arguments. There is, however, more to the disagreement than simply addressing the arguments. A worldview analysis shows that there are different standards for appraising evidence. For instance, someone may not be impressed with the arguments because they believe that the arguments should be compelling to everyone. In addition to appraising the evidence, peer status cannot account for external experiences that may affect how someone responds to evidence.

Similarly, a qualification for peers is attributed to an individual who has spent an equal amount of time working on or considering the issue. However, there is no means of measuring the amount of time an individual has dedicated to studying or deliberating the matter. Correspondingly, there is no means of measuring the quality of time dedicated to the issue. Time may not deliver a correct response to the problem. Again, outside influences may not be taken in full account when identifying a peer. One's alleged peer may be facing external peer pressure from an institution. The threat of losing status or occupation may contribute to how individuals appraise evidence during their time of investigation. While the issue of external peer pressure serves as a hypothetical situation, it does highlight the reality that there may be many more undetected matters that would disqualify peerhood.

Philosophical Association 83, (2010): 61-76; David Holley, "Religious Disagreements and Epistemic Rationality," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 74, no. 1 (2013): 33-48; and John Pittard, "Conciliationism and Religious Disagreement," in Bergmann and Kain, Challenges to Moral and Religious Belief: Disagreement and Evolution. Greco rejects conciliation on the basis that religious belief can be based on testimony. Holley presents a strong case against Richard Feldman's concept of peers, arguing that individuals have different starting points and methods of interpretation. Finally, Pittard objects to peer status based on the differences in the criteria for credentialing individuals.

The second aspect of my critique of the equal weight view regards objections to the uniqueness thesis. It should be first stated that the uniqueness thesis only follows from the principle of peer status. The idea that only one unique position can be held is based on the concept that epistemic partners will reach identical conclusions. This concept is the foundation of the uniqueness thesis. When the foundation of peerhood is abandoned, then uniqueness has lost its basis.

Other philosophers have rejected the thesis on other grounds. Thomas Kelly claims that the uniqueness thesis is coherent only on an approach that frames belief as "an all-or-nothing" matter. A course-grained model views belief as a tripartite response: believe, disbelieve, or withhold belief. Kelly contends that uniqueness is too restrictive and impractical. A more accurate portrait of belief is a fine-grained sense, in which belief is held in degrees. He claims that if the uniqueness thesis can be shown to be false, then it follows that the equal weight view is false.

He holds the view that the uniqueness thesis can only function when framed on the coarse-grained structure of belief. In contrast, the equal weight view must be based on a fine-grained notion of belief. This claim follows from the argument for splitting the difference. The call for giving equal weight prescribes moving closer to a peer's position, which can only be configured when beliefs are considered in degrees. Yet, the uniqueness thesis makes a strong distinction between beliefs. It is unable to distinguish in degrees. According to Kelly, disagreement about God's existence between an agnostic and an atheist cannot be resolved by uniqueness. In this context, the thesis calls for skepticism, which favors the agnostic position. However, basic conciliation calls for the agnostic to conciliate his belief as well. Thus, it is shown that the conciliatory position is undermined by uniqueness in some occasions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup>Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence," 189.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup>Ibid., 190.

In addition to Kelly's critique, the equal weight view also faces problems in scenarios involving majority opinions or expert opinions. Epistemologists Brandon Carey and Jonathan Matheson attempt to save the equal weight view from this problem. <sup>78</sup> They call for an epistemic election that gives vetted individuals the right to vote. Experts and those in superior positions are given additional weight to their vote. Carey and Matheson maintain that the equal weight view does not result in global skepticism because it does not reside with single disputants. In essence, it considers all the known individuals who have given thought to the issue. For example, if one is aware of an individual who disagrees with 2+2=4, the view does not require one to withdraw or suspend belief. The view maintains that all considerations be given an equal vote. The majority resolves the dispute. 79 Majority rule is also given weight against disagreement with experts. If one expert subscribes to a controversial issue, it would seem that suspending belief is in order. However, Carey and Matheson claim that the equal weight view requires that all known views be given consideration. When one is aware of widespread agreement (among peers and superiors) against an expert's view, then the majority resolves the disagreement.

This dissertation notes that these claims lead to further complications for the view. Its principles lead to its demise. The history of philosophical disagreement illustrates that philosophers have not accepted the conciliatory view, much less the equal weight view. According to Carey and Matheson's prescription that all known views should be taken into consideration, the equal weight view is "swamped" by the weight of philosophers throughout history. Proponents of the equal weight view should defer to all the philosophers who did not exhibit the precepts of conciliating.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup>Brandon Carey and Jonathan Matheson, "How Skeptical Is the Equal Weight View?," in Machuca, *Disagreement and Skepticism*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup>"The weight to be given to this disagreeing opinion is swamped by the weight to be given to the other agreeing opinions among your other epistemic peers and superiors." Ibid., 136.

More importantly, siding with majority views could lead to unintended consequences. For instance, this view could lead to extreme moral relativism. The equal weight view does not allow a role for moral revolutionaries who oppose majority views. Conciliationism and the equal weight view leave grim implications for the German citizens who opposed the Nazi party or abolitionists who lived in the southern United States. The history of philosophy also poses a problem for conciliation. Using the history of philosophy as a model, one can reflect back on the morals of philosophers of the past. The equal weight view would recommend adjusting contemporary views with those of the great thinkers of the past. In his book on politics, Aristotle reasoned to the concept of natural slavery; by nature, some individuals are property. <sup>80</sup> Kant also made observations that conflict with contemporary normative theory, particularly the field of social justice. <sup>81</sup> Carey and Matheson's view would appear to prescribe considering these views on equal balance, given that Aristotle and Kant have not been deemed philosophically inferior.

## **Argument for Permissiveness**

The challenges presented to uniqueness are identified as permissive views. If uniqueness is false, then more than one position is permitted. This dissertation holds that permissiveness does not present a problem for apologetics. The acceptance of a permissive stance on belief is not equated with the acceptance of epistemic relativism. Permissivism is modest in that it can allow for a small number of permissive cases; the majority of instances may be non-permitting. 82 Thomas Kelly maintains that those cases

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> It is clear, then, that some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right." Aristotle, *Politics*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Random House, 1941), 1133.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup>See Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings*, ed. Patrick Frierson and Paul Guyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 56-60. In this section of the essay, Kant comments on racial distinctions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup>Thomas Kelly claims that there are many non-permissive cases, but uniqueness is too strong in requiring it in all cases. "A permissivist might clear-headedly hold that the great majority of cases are non-permissive." Thomas Kelly, "Evidence Can Be Permissive," 299. Nathan Ballantyne and E.J. Coffman also support permissivism. See Nathan Ballantyne and E. J. Coffman, "Uniqueness, Evidence, and Rationality," *Philosophers' Imprint* 11, no. 18 (December 2011): 1-13; and Nathan Ballantyne and E. J.

that are permissive are not very permissive, restricting the number of permissible positions according to the evidence. The position of permissivism follows from the varying conditions that support belief. This study has attempted to illustrate that responses to evidence can be influenced by disposition, status, and time. Because of the complexity of peers, uniqueness can be rejected in preference for a permissive stance.

Some apologists appear to operate on a permissive stance, which is qualified as a weak permissivism. This position can be considered to be weak because their position does not entail permitting *every* response to an argument, which is similar to Kelly's case for a restricted permissivism. In this way, some apologists reject the notion that classical arguments are absolute proofs, which would operate on a uniqueness principle. J. P. Moreland allows a permissive stance concerning responses to theistic arguments. <sup>83</sup> For Moreland, proof is too high of a standard. <sup>84</sup> He claims a proof that convinces everyone is rare. In addition, finding an example of a universally accepted proof is almost impossible.

Coffman "Conciliationism and Uniqueness," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 90, no. 4 (December 2012): 657-70. They understand permissivism as the denial of uniqueness, holding that "some body of evidence 'permits' more than one degree of confidence in some proposition." Ballantyne and Coffman, "Conciliationism and Uniqueness," 657. The underlying principle in uniqueness is a strong form of evidentialism. They claim that uniqueness entails evidentialism, but evidentialism does not entail uniqueness. Uniqueness is stronger in that it assumes peerhood. Evidentialism can operate under the assumption of different responses to the evidence based on cognitive differences. Evidentialism is open to the possibility of reasonable disagreement. Ballantyne and Coffman, "Uniqueness, Evidence, and Rationality," 2-3. It is open to the possibility that peers, sharing the same evidence, may take different attitudes responding to the evidence.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup>In *Scaling the Secular City*, he notes the nature of the arguments. "This book is an attempt to defend the thesis that the Christian God does in fact exist and that it is rational to believe that he does. But what does it mean to say that such a belief is rational? Two sense of rationality are relevant to this question. A belief *P* can be rational in the sense that it is a rationally *permissible* belief. A belief *P* is permissible in case believing *P* is just as warranted as believing not-*P* or suspending judgement regarding *P* in light of the evidence. A belief *P* can also be rational in the sense that it is a rationally *obligatory* belief. A belief *P* is obligatory if believing *P* has greater warrant than believing not-*P* or suspending judgement regarding *P* in light of the evidence. In my view, the evidence in this book contributes to making the belief that the Christian God exists at least permissible and, I would argue, obligatory." Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City*, 12-13. The last sentiment would align with uniqueness; however, he does not expand on this thought.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup>Other apologists agree with Moreland. C. Stephen Evans makes claims that oppose the uniqueness thesis: "Must an argument be universally accepted to be a proof? Accepted by all sane people who consider it? Frequently something like this standard seems to be presupposed in these discussions. Such a concept of proof seems impossibly high. It also seems unfair, since this is not the standard of proof we require for nonreligious areas." C. Stephen Evans, *The Quest for Faith: Reason & Mystery as Pointers to God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 28-29. Norm Geisler also objects to this unbearable standard. Commenting on Bishop Butler's method, Geisler states, "Of course, it is foolhardy to demand absolute proof for anything." Norm Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 91.

For example, mathematical proofs are not without dissenters; some hold to an instrumentalist view of numbers. 85

George Mavrodes also incorporates the concept of permission. Mavrodes uses the language of *epistemic obligation*. He states that Christian thought is rational, but one can be permitted to disagree with it. Mavrodes holds that permission is not obligation, and thus one is not obligated to hold all rational beliefs. Mavrodes states, "It is a feature of the logic of permission, however, that a permission is not equivalent to a duty and that a person may have, and often does have, equally good permissions for two or more incompatible courses of action." Concerning apologetics, a permissive stance does not

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup>This scenario refers to Moreland's personal experience with a professor who rejected arithmetic proofs because the professor believed numbers were useful fictions. See J. P. Moreland, *The God Question: An Invitation to a Life of Meaning* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2009), 55.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup>Mavrodes, "Jerusalem and Athens Revisited," 196. For a view on the challenge of relativism in disagreement, see William J. Wainwright, "Does Disagreement Imply Relativism?" *International Philosophical Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (March 1986): 47-60. Related to permissivism, Wainwright holds that disagreement does not reduce to epistemic relativism. Agreement or consensus does not imply truth. He posits that agreement may reveal a shared method, but it is not the ultimate aim. Furthermore, disagreement does not elicit relativism because the conflict is not "irreducibly subjective." Ibid., 58. Disagreement resides at a level that is not "beyond the scope of reason." Ibid. Wainwright rightly contends that the illusion of the harmony in the sciences has led to the thought that disagreement must be a product of relativism. Disagreement can be found in science in the interpretations of data. Philosophers have articulated the requirement of "conceptual clarity" in order to explain these disagreements. In Tim Maudlin's article, "Why Physics Needs Philosophy," disagreement is shown to be a matter of "conceptual clarity" rather than conflict over mathematical equations. He claims, "If your goal is only to calculate, this might be sufficient. But understanding existing theories and formulating new ones requires more." Tim Maudlin, "Why Physics Needs Philosophy," NOVA The Nature of Reality, April 23, 2015, accessed November 13, 2016, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/blogs/physics/2015/04/physics-needs-philosophy/. Maudlin expresses the need for "conceptual clarity." This notion is also highly valued in M. R. Bennett and P. M. S. Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003). Bennett and Hacker argue against reductionist approaches to neuroscience. They argue that conceptual clarity promotes a robust understanding of the brain, for example. The authors hold that neuroscience can be very helpful and effective in discovering truths about "neural conditions," which factor into how individuals physically perceive the world. Yet, these conclusions cannot affect the conceptual understanding we have about the individual as a "psychophysical unity." The disagreement is not over the data but about the philosophical interpretation of the shared data—a notion that is intrinsically at odds with the uniqueness thesis. Social epistemologist Steven Fuller objects that a textbook on Newtonian mechanics, for example, will result in a uniform understanding. "It is simply bad psychology to expect that this multitude of readers will uniformly use the book as intended. Maybe these books on Newtonian mechanics will succeed at bringing people closer to the nature of physical reality, but maybe not, and maybe (and most likely) they will bring most of the people closer but at the cost of making some other aspect of reality more mysterious than before. In any case, the exact outcome of this situation—how the particular distribution of texts will end up affecting the overall social order—is far from clear." Steven Fuller, "Social Epistemology: A Statement of Purpose," Social Epistemology 1, no. 1 (1987): 1. Christopher Norris has also shown that arguments resembling the uniqueness thesis are actually threads of positivism, resting on the view that facts could be extracted directly from the evidence without interpretation. See Christopher Norris, Minding the Gap: Epistemology & Philosophy of Science in the Two Traditions (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).

result in a relativistic attitude toward the method. Furthermore, the apologetic stance against uniqueness does not weaken the apologetical project.

### **Virtuous Response to Conciliation**

It has already been shown that the concept of virtue is implied in the notion of peers. The inquiry of intellectual virtue can then be set for conciliatory views. This section will attempt to show that conciliatory views exaggerate the weight of testimony. Conciliationism also possesses a deficient view of self-trust. Because the weight of testimony is excessive, conciliatory views empty the self of any authority and trustworthiness. Matters of trusting the self become paradoxical at this point because self-trust is necessary for accepting testimony.

## **Exaggerated View of Testimony**

Testimony is a source of knowledge; however, an appropriate theory of testimony requires a means of accepting testimony as well as rejecting it. <sup>87</sup> This dissertation maintains that the conciliatory view exaggerates the force of testimony. For example, Jonathan Matheson, a proponent of conciliating, argues that conflicting testimony should be given deference. Following the equal weight view, he claims that another individual's testimony serves as equal evidence in a disagreement. According to his assessment, disagreement is evidence of error: "Your discovery of this disagreement gives you evidence that you have made a mistake." What's more, it is irrational to dismiss conflicting testimony without reason. Matheson further contends that steadfast views make the mistake of resisting testimony. <sup>89</sup> An exaggerated view of testimony

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup>While it is true that conciliatory views do not prescribe overriding testimony in every social interaction, it will be demonstrated that the weight of testimony has been exaggerated.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup>Jonathan Matheson, "Conciliatory Views of Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," *Episteme* 6, no. 3 (October 2009): 271.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Non-conciliatory views ignore the evidential impact of testimony and thus give the wrong result in such cases of disagreement." Ibid.

derives from a distorted view of disagreement. Matheson contends that disagreement is more forceful than one's particular views on deep-seated beliefs:

I defend the claim that awareness of widespread disagreement on controversial issues in religion, philosophy, politics, and science has the consequence that we are much less epistemically justified in our controversial beliefs on those matters and that we often are not epistemically justified in holding them at all.<sup>90</sup>

In contrast, accepting testimony as a source of knowledge also involves a means of identifying false sources of testimony. Concerning a balanced theory of testimony, philosopher Axel Gelfert refers to an agent's use of *testimonial management*. A robust view of testimony allows for both acceptance and rejection of testimony. He states,

A theory of testimony that compelled us to believe whatever we are told would not only do violence to our actual testimonial practices and to values such as intellectual autonomy, but would also lead to irresolvable theoretical problems (e.g. in the case of conflicting testimonies from different parties).<sup>91</sup>

Robert Audi also focuses on identifying a way of rejecting testimony. His position is distinct in that the focus is not isolated to the speaker, but also emphasizes the actual testimony itself. Audi's standard of assessing testimony is couched in terms of a "trap door." The door's default setting is open, which means that the cognitive filter allows testimony in by way of trusting the testimony. <sup>92</sup> Trust is severed when the account conflicts with one's current beliefs, which Audi identifies as the process of filtering beliefs. Background beliefs about the speaker (or writer) and about the attested beliefs

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup>Matheson, *The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement*, 2. David Enoch also objects to the excessive weight of testimony in Adam Elga's claim for giving equal weight. Enoch claims that the equal weight view overemphasizes the views of others, seeing them as "the only relevant evidence. As Elga insists, for instance, in updating your degrees of belief given the disagreement you are allowed to conditionalize on everything you have learned about the disagreement, *except what depends on your initial reasoning to p.*" Enoch, "Not Just a Truthometer: Taking Oneself Seriously (but Not Too Seriously) in Cases of Peer Disagreement," 969.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup>Axel Gelfert, *A Critical Introduction to Testimony* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 50. For a similar view on testimony, see Elizabeth Fricker, "Against Gullibility," in *Knowing from Words: Western and Indian Philosophical Analysis of Understanding and Testimony*, ed. Bimal Krishna Matilal and Arindam Chakrabarti (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup>His framework for testimony is "attestation" which subsumes speaking and writing—known audiences and hypothetical audiences such as journals or diaries. Robert Audi, "The Place of Testimony in the Fabric of Knowledge and Justification," in *Rational Belief: Structure, Grounds, and Intellectual Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 218.

constitute an individual's filtering beliefs. The filter is triggered to close when defeaters have been detected. 93

In cases of disagreement, Audi prescribes a neutralizing stance toward testimony. Rather than merely dismissing conflicting testimony, one must suspend judgement about it. Audi's account contrasts from the conciliatory response. One does not suspend judgement about one's own beliefs, but suspends his judgement about the testimony. Audi does not mention background beliefs in this context; however, he does express the question of accepting testimony that does not fit with one's filtering beliefs. Thus, conflicting testimony is neutralized, rather than overridden.

Furthermore, Audi contends that the trustworthiness filter to stay engaged throughout the "testimonial event." The idea of trusting testimony can be understood in different terms from the concept of trusting the speaker: "The trustworthiness in question is a matter of the credibility of the testimony, not of the moral or even general trustworthiness of the attester—the latter is a kind of *agential trustworthiness*." This perspective toward testimony is taking a "critical stance" toward testimony. "We all have background beliefs that contain what we accept."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> A justified trust in testimony depends on a kind of cognitive filtering tendency which is activated by defeated testimony; the finer the filter, the more readily defeat is detected and the more discriminating the recipient." Robert Audi, "Testimony as a Social Foundation of Knowledge," in Audi, *Rational Belief*, 252.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup>Ibid., 250.

Philosophy of Religion, ed. Andrew Dole and Andrew Chignell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 178. C. A. J. Coady also holds a balanced view between individual knowledge and social knowledge. C. A. J. Coady, "Testimony and Intellectual Autonomy," Studies in History and Philosophy of Science 33 (2002): 355-72. Coady rejects an individualistic epistemology, which is one that balances social and individual aspects of knowledge. In order to achieve this balance, Coady posits the necessity of intellectual autonomy, which bears three components: Intellectual independence, intellectual integrity and intellectual creativity. Intellectual independence is the freedom from interference or domination by external forces, i.e. testimony. Intellectual integrity is a normative sense of autonomy, which can be demonstrated when an individual stands for truth in the face of adversity. Finally, the element of intellectual creativity consists of the freedom to possess independence in intellectual and epistemic activity. Epistemic autonomy involves the interpretive aspect, which plays against a tyrannical view of testimony. Coady maintains, "the element of interpretation of one's own beliefs and those of others remains a feature of an individual's intellectual world." Coady, "Testimony and Intellectual Autonomy," 368.

In his writings on testimony, Thomas Reid proposes two principles for understanding the nature of testimony. The principle of veracity holds that individuals believe that everyone has a natural disposition to speak the truth. The principle of credulity is the natural proclivity to confide trust in others and believe their attestations. The principle of credulity is strongest in childhood. With age, the principle weakens. Individuals grow independent and learn *via* experience, learning how to reasonably restrain acceptance of testimony and restrict its authority. Similarly, Robert Audi considers testimony to have substantial strength; yet, it is not irresistible. Both Audi and Reid call for a regulatory principle for managing testimony.

This dissertation contends that conciliatory views have not developed a means for regulating testimony. While conciliation does not call for conciliating in every instance of disagreement, it does attribute an excessive weight to testimony. For example, Feldman's view contends that skepticism results from peer disagreement. While Matheson has not appealed to a skeptical stance, he does claim that many beliefs are weakened because of the force of disagreement. This emphasis on the force of disagreement results from an exaggerated view of testimony, which follows from an idealization of peers. The overemphasis of testimony also leads to another epistemological problem inherent to the conciliatory position.

### **Attenuated View of the Self**

A weak view of epistemic self-trust follows from this exaggerated view of testimony. Richard Feldman and David Christensen have argued against appealing to the authority of the self. Feldman suggests that self-trust may be "idle hope" rather than a virtue; however, he does not make an argument to support this assertion. He argues that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup>Thomas Reid, "An Inquiry," in *Inquiry and Essays*, ed. Ronald E. Beanblossom and Keith Lehrer (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 95.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup>Ibid., 96.

self-trust does not lessen the burden of disagreement, but one cannot dispense with self-trust. Self-trust is needed in order to identify a peer, which implies that a peer can be trusted because one's assessment is trusted. Feldman claims, "Self-trust cuts both ways." He also argues that self-trust can be taken too far. It does not require promoting one's view over another view in order to resolve the disagreement. The trust one has in a disputed belief is neutralized by trusting the peer's ability to get things right.

David Christensen also rejects demoting a peer based on the premise of self-trust. Peer trust cannot be defeated merely because the peer came to the wrong conclusion. From Christensen's point of view, disagreement undermines self-trust because it "constitutes evidence that I have made a mistake." He appeals to the independence principle in order to remove peer status. In order to continue to rationally hold one's original belief, did additional evidence is required in order to show where one's peer went wrong. This type of evidence has to lie outside the disagreement. Finding independent evidence to show peer asymmetry is the only way to avoid bootstrapping.

Unfortunately, these positions on self-trust do not reach their conclusions. It has not been shown that self-trust should be rejected in the face of disagreement. On the contrary, the cases that have been made against appealing to self-trust *demonstrate* examples of remaining steadfast in the presence of disagreement. Feldman and Christensen both illustrate self-trust by means of rejecting conflicting testimony. In Feldman's case, he cites disagreement against Keith Lehrer's view<sup>101</sup> as well as objecting to a point made by Michael DePaul. <sup>102</sup> In a similar manner, Christensen's article

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup>Feldman, "Epistemological Puzzles about Disagreement," 228.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup>Christensen, "Epistemology of Disagreement," 196.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup>Ibid., 205. When dissenting views are not taken into account for belief revision, the belief is held "irrationally."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup>See Keith Lehrer, *Self-Trust: A Study of Reason, Knowledge, and Autonomy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup>DePaul's argument for self-trust was in response to Feldman's presentation of

considers the arguments put forth by Richard Foley<sup>103</sup> and Thomas Kelly.<sup>104</sup> Their articles show that self-trust is not circumvented by disagreement. When facing epistemic conflict with a peer, Feldman and Christensen provide examples of standing firm in one's original position through the means of epistemic self-trust. Their cases illustrate the problem: one has to operate on self-trust in order to reject it. Overruling the self is an insufficient notion because the first step is to interpret one's own beliefs prior to accepting another individual's belief.<sup>105</sup>

#### Conclusion

The conciliatory view underestimates the epistemic authority of the self.

Richard Feldman has argued that self-trust does not present a challenge to his form of skeptical conciliation, contending that the presence of disagreement supplants self-trust.

Additionally, disagreement cannot result in reasonable disagreement, which is to say that two or more individuals cannot persist in disagreement while remaining in a rational stance. The awareness of disagreement serves as evidence that one's position could be in error. Therefore, the authority of self-trust is undermined by the knowledge of a dissenting peer.

David Christensen has made similar claims in the presence of disagreement.

His position is more moderate than Feldman's view. Christensen does not propose suspending belief in every occasion. Instead, he appeals to splitting the difference. This form of conciliating is held to be the most logical conclusion concerning peers; the peer

conciliationism at a philosophical conference. Feldman, "Epistemological Puzzles about Disagreement," 227.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup>See Richard Foley, *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup>See Thomas Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup>Linda Zagzebski makes similar claims. Because trust in one's faculties is most basic, trusting others is necessarily grounded in self-trust; self-trust is unavoidable. Trusting others is a choice made at the first level of self-trust. See Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*.

should be given equal weight on the matter. In essence, one's epistemic self cannot be pitted over another individual's self-trust.

These views conflict with the nature of epistemology and the role of self-trust. As this dissertation has argued, the epistemic self is necessary. In order to place assent in a belief, self-trust plays an ineluctable role in the epistemic order. The weakness of the conciliatory view is its deficient aspect of self-trust. However, self-trust plays a large role within the conciliatory position. Granting the feasibility of epistemic peerhood, one inevitably has to affirm self-trust in assessing the credentials of a peer. Peer analysis operates on self-trust. There is no means of circumventing the role of self-trust in appraising situations of disagreement.

In turn, conciliation overestimates the views of others. When self-trust is deficient, testimony is excessive. This sense is also witnessed in Feldman's view on disagreement. Essentially, disagreement can be taken to be the negative impact of testimony. Testimony in general is understood to be the expression of beliefs, propositions, or emotions from other individuals. Feldman's view is in line with much of the thought on testimony. His position accepts the testimonial nature of knowledge. The expression of beliefs has a genuine and legitimate impact on others, but the influence of testimony is granted an overwhelming status. When the testimony conflicts with one's beliefs, granting peerhood, the force of that testimony should result in skepticism.

Where Christensen's view of self-trust was more moderate, I contend that his view on testimony is on the same level as Feldman's position. In cases where testimony conflicts with one's position, Christensen advises that one should either suspend belief or move closer to the other view. The impact of testimony *via* disagreement unsettles the matter. Where the self could retain some force by holding to a lesser degree of confidence, the force of testimony reorients the landscape of beliefs. In other words, testimony in the form of disagreement (granting peerhood) imposes every doxastic position, forcing these positions to change.

Furthermore, this position holds an idealistic view of peers. It is unrealistic to apply this nature of peerhood to actual situations of disagreement. As a consequence of the overestimation of testimony, the conciliatory position overestimates the thrust of peers. An excessive view of testimony results from this view of peers.

Ultimately, the fundamental problem of the conciliatory position is its abrogation of pursuits aimed at epistemic and intellectual goals. Feldman's stance on religious beliefs fits this description. Religious beliefs are annulled when his views of testimony and peers are applied to religious disagreement. Disagreement halts dialogue and the further pursuit to reach any other conclusion. This view can also be attributed to Jonathan Matheson's position. He holds that many controversial views are unjustified due to the presence of dissenting peers. According to Matheson's views, it would appear that all beliefs are threatened due to the ubiquitous nature of disagreement. Disagreement imposes a force that ends further discourse among "peers." In a more moderate tone, it can be stated that conciliatory views discourage the pursuit of intellectual goods. The moderate cases for splitting the difference illustrate this sense of discouragement. While it may not halt all discussion on the matter, Christensen's view weakens the determination to settle the matter despite the awareness of disagreement.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup>In addition, Bryan Frances and Sandford Goldberg have contemplated that it would result in the demise of philosophical discourse. See Bryan Frances, "Philosophical Renegades," in Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*; and Sandford Goldberg, "Disagreement, Defeat, and Assertion," in Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*.

#### **CHAPTER 3**

### THE CHALLENGE OF STEADFAST VIEWS

The previous chapter weighed the merits of the conciliatory position. Rather than merely assuming that conciliating is necessarily incongruent with Christian apologetics, the chapter highlighted specific areas of conflict. The conciliatory position's internal deficiencies were also shown. This dissertation charges that these deficiencies weaken the threat to apologetics. Rather than merely rejecting the view because it conflicts with apologetics, chapter 2 also developed an argument against the coherence of conciliation.

This chapter will turn to the steadfast position. In some ways, steadfastness has developed in response to conciliatory views. Seemingly, the steadfast position appears to be the champion of apologetics. The position contends to stand firm despite disagreement. However, there are elements of steadfastness that betray the nature of apologetics. These factors will be demonstrated, followed by a critique of the steadfast position. The purpose of the critique is similar to the critique of conciliation. The steadfast position is not rejected solely based on the challenges it presents to apologetics. Instead, it is found unsatisfactory due to its internal deficiencies. Ultimately, it will be argued that apologetics does not adhere with the steadfast response to disagreement.

### **Arguments for Steadfastness**

Thomas Kelly has been one of the most vocal proponents of a steadfast view. His perspective attempts to show a means of reaching reasonable disagreement. Similar to those upholding conciliation, he does not make a case for steadfastness in every

instance of disagreement. Kelly intends to illustrate a general notion of how reasonable disagreement can be justified in some situations. He labels this view the "total evidence view." This view attempts to accounts for all the epistemic sources that feed into a belief. The total evidence view maintains that the multiple sources also influence belief, which must be considered in the event of disagreement.

Kelly claims that the equal weight view gives extra weight to disagreement.<sup>1</sup> While he concedes that there are appropriate occasions for disagreement, he criticizes conciliatory views for falling into levels confusion. This concept was introduced in the first chapter; it claims that higher-order evidence is not conclusive evidence. The matter of levels confusion claims that the disputant's high-order evidence should not be considered together with first-order evidence. "Peer" disagreement occurs at the higher-order level. In other words, the conflict is not about the evidence itself, but about the conclusions drawn from the evidence.<sup>2</sup>

Kelly holds that it is reasonable to retain belief in the presence of disagreement. The basis for the original belief was based on a reasonable conclusion, which was drawn according to first-order evidence. If the first belief was reasonable, then its support cannot simply be omitted when considering how to treat the higher-order evidence. The original belief "continues to play a role as an important subset of the new total evidence." The problem with conciliation is that one's original evidence is swept aside in light of the new evidence of a conflicting peer.

Kelly states that intrapersonal conflict is not settled by conciliating.

Intrapersonal conflict occurs when an individual holds two conflicting beliefs. When this

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence," in *Disagreement*, ed. Richard Feldman and Ted A. Warfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 120.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Kelly writes, "The fact that you believe as you do is the *result* of your assessment of the probative force of the first-order evidence: it is not one more piece of evidence to be placed alongside the rest." Ibid., 187.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Ibid., 190.

type of conflict happens, the original evidence is still regarded as essential to the disagreement. Kelly contends that intrapersonal disagreement shows that the former evidence should not be swept aside. It is necessary to consider all the evidence: the "total evidence view."

The total evidence view has been used to object to the thermometer analogy. Kelly claims that no form of conciliationism can support the thermometer analogy. He contends that strong conciliationism is unpopular and thus the popular form of conciliating is the weak version. Kelly states that the weak version has "just as much reason to reject the thermometer model as anti-Conciliationists do." He compares two cases between peers: one instance of peers checking two reliable thermometers, and another case of two reasonable jurors disagreeing. Kelly argues that the total evidence view will support a steadfast response in the juror scenario because there are many other sources of evidence.

In contrast to open evidence, the thermometers are closed systems. For the thermometer case, even a steadfast position may contend for suspending judgment because there's no more evidence. In the juror case, the evidence includes any conflicting views as well as "all of the evidence that was presented in court. And there is simply no

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Thomas Kelly, "Believers as Thermometers," in *Ethics of Belief*, ed. Jonathan Matheson and Rico Vitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Kelly states, "According to the thermometer model, the views at which people independently arrive are like the readings of more or less accurate thermometers. When information about the reliability of a particular thermometer is available, that determines the extent to which we should credit its readings. Similarly, when information about the reliability of another person is available, then that determines the extent to which we should defer to that person, or credit his opinions. When spelled out more fully, the thermometer model seems to deliver substantive epistemological conclusions." Ibid., 303.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>He defines strong conciliation as Feldman's type of skepticism. Weak conciliation is characteristic of Christenson and Matheson's form of reduction, or splitting the difference. See Appendix 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Kelly, "Believers as Thermometers," 305.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Kelly is referring to Gideon Rosen's claim. Recall that Rosen asserted, "It is obvious that reasonable people can disagree, even when confronted with a single body of evidence. When a jury or court is divided in a difficult case, the mere fact of disagreement does not mean that someone is being unreasonable." Gideon Rosen, "Nominalism, Naturalism, Epistemic Relativism," *Noûs* 35, no. 15 (2001): 71.

guarantee that the uniquely reasonable thing to do is to suspend judgment given all of the available evidence." The juror case demonstrates an open system, which must not set aside original evidence, or any evidence. Jurors must consider conflicting views as well as all additional evidence already presented. Therefore, conciliatory positions must reject thermometer analogies when analyzing cases of disagreement.

Kelly also holds a view of egoism in order to support a steadfast position. He confesses that he finds his steadfastness "unsettling" because many of his peers disagree with him about disagreement; he considers these peers to be reasonable. However, he finds that his firmness in steadfastness possesses a robust internal coherence. In the changes his position on disagreement, Kelly states that it will be *his* position that was formed from *his* rational deliberation. Even if peer "pressure coerces him," his abandonment will be from his "fundamental epistemic rationality" rather than external force. Kelly claims that either position enjoys a certain amount of "self-congratulation." Both positions on disagreement are the products of one's own reasoning, eliciting a form of egoism.

Similar to Kelly's position, Richard Fumerton, who is professor of philosophy at the University of Iowa, argues for epistemic egoism as justification for reasonable disagreement. His argument against conciliating is based on the inevitability of self-trust. He further contends that self-trust reduces to epistemic egoism. Fumerton provides an accurate outline of the responses to disagreement:

We encounter disagreement without losing justification when (1) we have good reason to believe that we have a different and better evidence base than the person with whom we disagree, (2) we have good reason to believe that we have engaged a common evidence base more successfully than the person with whom we disagree,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Kelly, "Believers as Thermometers," 311.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement," in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, vol. 1, ed. Tamar Szabo Gendler and John Hawthorne (New York: Oxford University press, 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>Ibid., 193.

or (3) we have good reason to believe that the person with whom we disagree is cognitively defective.<sup>11</sup>

The idea of disagreement points Fumerton to Descartes' well-known statement about the unimaginably strange positions held by philosophers. Fumerton believes that gathering ten philosophers in a room will result in ten different views. Thus, philosophers are not reliable because they are unable to reach a consensus.<sup>12</sup> He finds that this mistrust is also located when experts speak to fields outside of their expertise.<sup>13</sup>

In the same way that Kelly appeals to egoism, Fumerton contends that egoism is unavoidable.<sup>14</sup> Individuals obviously must rely upon their own reasoning and epistemic skills, but individuals also must rely on others to a degree. Ralph Wedgewood argues that the type of trust cannot be reciprocated between the self and another individual. There is an implied asymmetry between one's knowledge and trusting others; thus, "it is rational to have a special sort of 'fundamental trust' in one's own intuitions, but it is not even possible to have the same sort of 'trust' in the intuitions of others." <sup>15</sup>

# **Appeal to Apologetics**

For the most part, these positions allow for reasonable disagreement. The appeal for apologetics is found in the idea of reasonable disagreement. If reasonable

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Richard Fumerton, "You Can't Trust a Philosopher," in *Disagreement*, ed. Richard Feldman and Ted A. Warfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 99.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Fumerton concludes, "If there is one thing I can be virtually certain of, it is that most philosophers are *not* reliable when it comes to arriving at interesting philosophical truth." Ibid., 107.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>This analysis of expert "overreach" will be used in chapter 6 of this study, which considers the challenge of disagreeing with experts, i.e., epistemic superiors.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Fumerton reasons, "I do know how I reason better that I know how others reason. It is important to keep firmly in mind that in the final analysis there really is no alternative to the egocentric perspective. Even when my discoveries about what others believe defeat the justification I had prior to those discoveries, it is *my* discoveries that are doing the defeating. I can use the discovery of disagreement to weaken my justification only insofar as I trust *my* reasoning. Without such trust, there is no access even to what others believe. That is not to deny that trust in my reasoning ability can turn on itself—can lead me to doubt the very faculties that I trust. But when that has not happened, and when I cannot understand exactly what is going in on in the minds of others, I will always turn back to the reasoning I understand best—my own." Fumerton, "You Can't Trust a Philosopher," 106.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Ralph Wedgewood, "The Moral Evil Demons," in *Disagreement*, ed. Richard Feldman and Ted A. Warfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 244.

disagreement is justified, then it appears that the steadfast position is also justified. There is further resonance with the opposition to the uniqueness thesis. Chapter 2 has shown that Christian apologetics can agree on these two matters: accepting reasonable disagreement and rejecting the uniqueness thesis. This section will expand on other areas of agreement.

Stephen Davis has argued that theistic arguments are intended to advocate premises that are more plausible than their denials. <sup>16</sup> The goal of convincing everyone is too much to expect from the arguments, which is contrary to the uniqueness thesis. This is congruent with the rationality of reasonable disagreement, a view exclusive to the steadfast position. The contrast with the uniqueness thesis is also demonstrated in Davis' distinction between hard and soft apologetics. <sup>17</sup> The position of soft apologetics objects to the hardline of uniqueness. Soft apologetics seeks to demonstrate the rationality of Christian belief, while holding that opposing beliefs may still be rational.

Steadfastness is also appealing because of its assessment of disagreement's impact on belief. Apologists concur that disagreement should not unsettle belief. For example, William Lane Craig advises Christians to stand firm in the experience of the Holy Spirit despite dissenting claims that participants in other religions possess similar experiences. He contends that false claims do exist, and do nothing to undermine the Christian experience.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>He also states that arguments must abide by rules of logic; i.e., deductive arguments are formally and informally valid. Stephen T. Davis, *God, Reason, & Theistic Proofs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Stephen T. Davis, "Is It Possible to Know That Jesus Was Raised from the Dead?" *Faith and Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (April 1984): 147-59.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>He explains, "Perhaps the most plausible spin to put on this objection is to say that false claims to a witness of the Holy Spirit ought to undermine my confidence in the reliability of the cognitive faculties which form religious beliefs, since those faculties apparently so often mislead people. The fact that so many people apparently sincerely, yet falsely, believe that God's Spirit is testifying to them of the truth of their religious beliefs ought therefore to make us very leery concerning our own experience of God." William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 48. He presents two responses to challenge this objection. First, the experiences are distinguishable. There is a distinction between pantheistic experiences in monism and those experiences with personal beings, which would discredit pantheistic monism. Furthermore, questioning the unreliability

Apologists would also agree with steadfastness over the complexity of peers. Kelly's "total evidence" view permits nuances when determining peers. In the same way, apologists do not reduce peers to evidence and disposition. Instead, apologists speak to the complex nature of worldview. Given the nature of worldviews, it would be very difficult to find a genuine epistemic twin. Douglas Groothius contends that worldviews not only involve reason, but also include other aspects including, "biases, prejudices, loves and hates that lie at the root of the human being." Thus, reason is not the only factor to consider when analyzing disagreement.

Gregory Ganssle claims that background influences are "upstream" and affect beliefs: "Upstream, we find all of the culture-shaping institutions such as media, government, business, and the university." Kelly James Clark has similar thoughts on the myriad influences that affect belief. Clark states:

Our believings are inextricably entwined with our passions, emotions and will. Our fundamental commitments shape our assessment of the evidence. Sometimes our commitments and values help us to see the truth; sometimes they obscure the truth. We are, in every case, epistemically situated—historically, culturally, socially—and we lack a God's eye view of the world. What counts as evidence, the weight that should attach to it, and the inferences that follow from it are conditioned by our commitments.<sup>21</sup>

In his work on apologetics, Tim Keller gives credence to the complexity of beliefs. He holds that it is too simplistic to affirm that secular thought is formed by scientific fact alone, while holding that theistic thought is formed only by emotion. Keller

of the faculties that cause experiences would generate doubt in all faculties. Additionally, Craig exhorts the Christian who does not have a response to defeaters to persist in belief despite disagreement. However, this last scenario is distinct from the premise of this dissertation. This dissertation focuses on apologists facing disagreement rather than non-apologists facing disagreement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Douglas Groothius, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 49-50.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Gregory Ganssle, "Making the Gospel Connection: An Essay Concerning Applied Apologetics," in *Come Let Us Reason: New Essays in Christian Apologetics*, ed. Paul Copan and William Lane Craig (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Kelly James Clark, "A Reformed Epistemologist's Response: Classical Apologetics," *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 85.

states, "Believers *and* nonbelievers in God alike arrive at their positions through a combination of experience, faith, reasoning, and intuition." Additionally he has stated, "The reality is that every person embraces his or her worldview for a variety of rational, emotional, cultural, and social factors." He goes on to claim that background beliefs are clandestine. They are invisible and are not presented in propositional arguments; they are assumptions that guide belief.<sup>24</sup>

These examples illustrate similarities with the steadfast view in their response to disagreement. Apologists contend for maintaining one's position despite disagreement. Additional, the incorporation of worldview analysis in apologetics is similar to the dismissal of the concept of peers. What's more, many of the apologists' views on the psychology of belief reveal a striking resemblance to Thomas Kelly's "total evidence" view.

# **Challenges to Apologetics**

After finding areas of harmony, it appears that the steadfast position could be fully accepted by apologetics. Steadfastness seems to show support for the project. However, there are elements that are incompatible with apologetics. The following sections will introduce an area of incompatibility. Specifically, a challenge for apologetics can be articulated from Thomas Kelly's case for steadfastness. However, this problem for apologetics also reveals a more fundamental issue for steadfast views. It will be argued that steadfast views cannot be reconciled with the enterprise of apologetics. The chapter will conclude by illustrating the internal deficiencies of steadfastness. Thus, the claim

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical* (New York: Viking Press, 2016), 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Ibid. 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>This thesis is the general thrust of *Making Sense of God*. Steve Wilkens and Mark Sanford develop similar arguments in *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

against the view is not solely based on its incompatibility with apologetics, but steadfastness possesses an unsatisfactory epistemological structure.

# **Argument for Originality**

Thomas Kelly's view of "total evidence" implicitly presents issues for apologetics. As it was shown above, this view considers all first-order and higher-order evidence, which is the evidence itself, and the evidence of peer belief. Based on the total evidence view, there are occasions when the psychological evidence (higher-order evidence of peer opinion) supplants the non-psychological evidence (first-order evidence.) The number of opinions characterizes these specific occasions: When there is a substantial amount of opinions cast toward the evidence and those opinions are sharply divided. In cases when one's belief is outnumbered, remaining firm is weakened.

Furthermore, Kelly also maintains that there is more weigh attributed to beliefs that are gained independently. These sorts of beliefs are not formed by persuasion, but are gained independently. While Kelly labels his principle "independence," this dissertation will refer to it as an argument for *originality* to emphasize a flaw in the argument.

Kelly has written about the common consent argument for God's existence: the *Consensus Gentium*.<sup>25</sup> The *Consensus Gentium* or "common consent argument" for God's existence is premised on the consensus belief that God exists.<sup>26</sup> He argues that the argument is problematic because of the dependency element. In fact, the very nature of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence"; and Thomas Kelly "Consensus Gentium: Reflections on the 'Common Consent' Argument for the Existence of God," in Evidence and Religious Belief, ed. Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. VanArragon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>Kelly indicates that this is the "simplest and most straightforward" version of the argument. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence," 146. Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli pose the argument on the disjunction of the plausibility of the majority being in error—either the majority of the population is in error or they are not. They also use an inductive form, concluding that it is more plausible to believe that most people have not been wrong. Therefore, it is more plausible to believe that God exists. Kreeft and Tacelli present objections to the argument that include problems of historical references, cases of majority error, and psychological explanations. These objections do not resemble Kelly's objection to influence. Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics: Hundreds of Answers to Crucial Questions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 83-85.

religion is coupled with community—it is not closed off to others. Dependency means that individuals have been persuaded or influenced by other individuals or communities. Because they haven't reached their conclusions in isolation or independently, the force of that belief cannot be a matter for "numbers." Independence (originality) is required in order for the belief to bear substantial weight.<sup>27</sup>

Kelly maintains that numbers have weight in occasions where beliefs are formed *independently*. This idea is demonstrated in a group solving a math problem.<sup>28</sup> If a group of individuals is given a non-trivial math problem and they come to the same result, then one member of the group is justified in believing the group's response. Furthermore, if one of the members and an outsider come to the same conclusion, the outsider's confidence should increase. However, if the outsider reaches a different answer from the group, then the non-member should conciliate by accepting the group's answer.<sup>29</sup>

The group opinion is qualified by independence, or originality.<sup>30</sup> When the belief is not original to the individual, it does not share the same force as an original belief. Referring back to group math, Kelly contends that the group consensus is neutralized if the consensus is due to the group copying from one individual. If the dominant opinion can be explained by influence, then it loses its force. Concerning the *Consensus Gentium*, "Here, being greatly outnumbered counts for nothing."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>In this article, Kelly does not articulate the significance that influenced belief might possess. His venture is to consider the value of the *Consensus Gentium* argument. Yet, the general tone of his approach to influence can be assumed that influenced belief does not bear much weight.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>Kelly, "Consensus Gentium," 142.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>For Kelly, this is based on the probability of one individual getting it wrong compared with a group reaching the wrong answer. "Notice that this will typically be the rational course even if I am the most reliable of the ten individuals when it comes to the relevant kind of math problem, and I know that I am." Ibid, 142n10. Thus, even if the most reliable mathematician of the group should conciliate when the group response contradicts the superior mathematician's answer.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup>In order to distinguish this concept from the independence principle, this dissertation will refer to this concept as "originality."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>Kelly, "Consensus Gentium," 143.

Similarly, Adam Elga questions the value of influence. Elga, a proponent of conciliation, contends that one may remain steadfast when others have influenced the peer. He introduces an example of "groupthink." If the disagreement is with a group that is a product of "groupthink," the group counts as one person rather than a majority of opinions. Elga states that they have not reached their conclusion independently and therefore, the disagreement is representative as disagreeing with one individual rather than the entire group.

The concept of originality is problematic for apologetics. The issue is not that Kelly refutes the common consent argument. Rather, the challenge is found in the appeal to originality. The principle is incompatible with apologetics as well as with many Christian beliefs. The concept of originality weakens the value of influence. In many ways, apologetics is based on influence because it uses theistic arguments to persuade individuals. Apologetics also accepts the influence of others. For instance, many apologists are influenced by the thoughts of thinkers who pioneered the field of classical arguments.

Another challenge that is similar to Kelly's originality clause is the issue of epistemic egoism. While Kelly's originality clause does not explicitly attach itself to epistemic egoism, it does connect with other steadfast positions that appeal to egoism. Richard Foley claims, "Egoism will be attractive to those who treasure independence of mind and who correspondingly worry about the temptations of groupthink." He draws a distinction between influence and authority. Influence is independently formed belief that comes through understanding. For example, coming to understand through the Socratic process. On the other hand, authority is aligned with deference. Foley states that authority is "My taking your word for something." For

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>Richard Foley, "Egoism in Epistemology," in *Socializing Epistemology*, ed. Frederick F. Schmitt (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), 57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>Ibid., 55.

Foley, egoists reject fundamental authority. Foley points to the example of Locke's egoism. He claims that Locke argued for avoiding the intellectual authority of others.<sup>34</sup> Thus, others should not be trusted or considered to be reliable. In this way, objecting to authority bolsters the steadfast position.

The general sense of egoism is clearly articulated by the proponents of steadfastness. For example, Richard Fumerton argues for the unreliability of other philosophers based on the group's lack of consensus. Rather than succumbing to skepticism, he argues for self-reliance despite disagreeing with other philosophers.

Fumerton states that he knows his own reasoning better than how others reason. Any support or defeat that is presented to his ideas has to pass through *his* rational scheme. Thus, he claims the egoistic perspective is inevitable. Although Thomas Kelly's "total evidence" view does not explicitly indicate an inference from epistemic egoism, his comments on egoism, and his principle of originality connect with the structure of strong self-reliance. This connection is not surprising. It seems to be essential for a coherent version of the steadfast position. Kelly relates egoism to his comments on the internal coherence of his position.

## **Objections to Persuasion**

The implications of originality and epistemic egoism complicate matters for apologetics. Steadfast's view on disagreement is in contrast with apologetics. Apologetics seeks to disarm disagreement, while steadfastness appears to settle for disagreement. Classical theistic arguments are intended to persuade disagreeing interlocutors. The intention is to settle the dispute. While steadfast claims have not explicitly stated

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Indeed, he makes a pain of saying that of all the 'wrong measures of probability' (that is, sources of inaccuracies in our opinions), allegiance to authority is the single worst." Richard Foley, "Universal Intellectual Trust," *Episteme* 2, no. 1 (June 2005): 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup>Recall his comment that steadfastness had a "robust internal coherence" due to its egoistic structure. Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement," 193.

objections to persuasion, this dissertation maintains that principles of originality and egoism are opposed to apologetics' intent to persuade and influence others.

Hilary Kornblith and David Christenson have submitted cases against accepting another individual's views. It should also be noted that Christensen and Kornblith have endorsed conciliatory views. Thus, it is ironic that they also demonstrate a form of steadfastness by appealing to egoism. The essence of their view is to remain firm despite disagreement, which is justified by reducing peerhood based on bias. Kornblith argues for skepticism regarding reasons behind arguments. <sup>36</sup> He advises looking for motivation behind arguments. Individuals give reasons to support beliefs. They also attempt to compel and persuade others individuals to adopt those beliefs.

Kornblith contends that the possibility of the "rationalization" of belief is a reason to distrust others' reasons. When people rationalize evidence, their rationalization could be based on wish fulfillment. Despite the possibility of rationalization, the reasons could then take the form of well-conceived arguments. He concedes that an intelligent individual has the capacity to form thoughtful arguments on the basis of improperly grounded reasons.<sup>37</sup> Rationalizing one's beliefs can result from "forgetting" evidence or misconstruing data. These are clandestine emotions and are not easily recognized; thus, rationalization is an unintentional act. It is assumed that the arguments do contain good evidence for their conclusions. However, they are selective in what they present to others. Kornblith argues that those who hear "rationalized" arguments do receive good reasons, but they are based on cherry picked evidence.<sup>38</sup>

Although David Christensen is a proponent of conciliating, he has also made objections to conciliating. One of his articles not only looks to the impact of

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>Hilary Kornblith, "Distrusting Reason," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 23, no. 1 (August 1999): 181-96.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Badly grounded opinions" are sources of improperly based reasons. Ibid., 182.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup>Kornblith, "Distrusting Reason," 182.

disagreement, but also considers epistemic fallibility.<sup>39</sup> While the essay presents a case for the conciliatory position, it also personifies the steadfast stance. In order to stand firm, peer reduction can only be achieved by disagreement-independent reasoning. Christensen argues that one's confidence should not be rattled when a peer can be found to be cognitively lacking for reasons that are separate from the disagreement.

Christensen illustrates the issue of disagreement through an analogy he calls "Music Contest." While attending a high-school music program, Christensen is convinced that Kirsten's performance was much better than Aksel's performance. However, Christensen overhears a man express the opposite impression. Despite assumed peer disagreement, Christensen finds out that the man is Aksel's father. According to his assessment, Christensen posits that there is no need to conciliate.

According to Christensen's view, conciliation is typically required because the disagreement is with a known peer. In order to stick to the same belief, one would suffer from question begging because there are no reasons independent from the disagreement to demonstrate that the other person made a mistake. Music Contest results in a steadfast position because Christensen has very good reasons to believe that he reached the correct conclusion because he knows that parents tend to overrate their child's achievement. He notes that psychological attachment is evidence of cognitive failure. This is the problem in Music Contest. It is rational to reject a position because of detected bias. The father is psychologically attached and cannot make an unbiased assessment. Christensen is free from the constraints of conciliating because he is aware that the man is unable to make an informed decision. In other words, the man cannot form a position worth considering because of his psychological attachment.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup>David Christensen, "Disagreement and Public Controversy," in *Essays in Collective Epistemology*, ed. Jennifer Lackey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup>Christensen, "Disagreement and Public Controversy," 144.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>Christensen acknowledges that the independence principle has difficulty discovering personal traits in group disagreement: "In order to explain the disagreement by reference to the sort of

In the same way, Christensen contends that there is no need for proponents of evolution to conciliate to evolution deniers. <sup>42</sup> Although he does not have independent reasons to reduce peerage, he argues that the independence principle is only framed on individuals he considers to be peers. He states,

The idea is not that others, simply in virtue of having beliefs, are granted some sort of default status as my epistemic peers, status that they retain absent independent reason to demote them. The epistemic respect I owe to other believers must be earned.<sup>43</sup>

Christensen also notes that evolution deniers adhere to fundamental texts that conflict with the scientific method. Although, he does not believe that it is clear that he can treat the evolution case in the same way as Music Contest, he follows the same approach. In Music Contest, he considers his "general psychological beliefs" to be reliable in assessing parental bias. Thus, the psychological attachment of evolution deniers eliminates the impact of disagreement. It should also be mentioned that he does not address the evolution deniers' response to disagreement. Rather, his attention is focused on his response to group disagreement.

In conclusion, the argument for originality and egoism contrasts with the nature of apologetics. Apologetics intends to influence those who disagree. This section has attempted to show that the steadfast position is opposed to influence *via* persuasion. Thomas Kelly's steadfast position is premised on a form of epistemic egoism.<sup>44</sup>
Epistemic egoism intends to weaken the weight of testimony. This dissertation contends

insincerity or malfunction that can be eliminated by personal information in one's own case, one would have to suppose that it affected all of one's opponents, and not one's allies." Christensen, "Disagreement and Public Controversy," 149. He argues that philosophical positions must be held tentatively because of the balanced dispute over certain abstract topics. It should be noted that he is not tentative about conciliation despite peer challenges.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup>Christensen does not qualify "evolution deniers" in this scenario. In other words, he does not explain if the group dismisses all forms of evolution; or if the group only rejects macro evolution.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup>Christensen, "Disagreement and Public Controversy," 156-57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup>Many philosophers adopt and use the term "epistemic egoism." Richard Foley, Richard Fumerton, Gary Gutting, and Thomas Kelly have applied this concept in their work on epistemology.

that the implications drawn from the works of Christensen and Kornblith can be applied to the steadfast position. Despite being conciliatory advocates, Christensen and Kornblith present steadfast positions that affirm steadfastness in peer disagreement. It is important to highlight that they did not appeal to reasonable disagreement. They argued for remaining steadfast on account of the implicit bias that fueled their disputant's belief.

Rather than focusing on the argument, the individual making the argument is questioned. These charges can be applied to apologetics. It could be argued that theistic arguments are only presented because apologists have attachments to those beliefs. Therefore, the arguments (and peerhood) are disarmed due to the status of those who propose them.

## **Apologetic Response to Steadfastness**

In contrast to the objections regarding influence and giving reasons, apologists propose the use of influential and persuasive arguments. For example, Craig

Hazen contends that apologetics should be concerned with an "ethos of demonstration."

He finds this concept illustrated in Jesus' demeanor. He also finds Jesus' teaching in Acts

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup>Kornblith writes, "A reasonable person who is worried about the possibility of rationalization as a source of a particular act of reason-giving will thus not allow herself to be pulled into the intellectual task of examining the quality of reasoning offered, for this is the wrong place to look to see whether the conclusion is to be trusted. What needs to be examined is the source of the argument—its motivation—rather than its logical credentials. One needs to know whether the person offering the argument is motivated by a desire to believe truths or by something else instead." Kornblith, "Distrusting Reason," 182.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup>Paul Draper and Ryan Nichols have made similar accusations against philosophers in the field of philosophy of religion. See Paul Draper and Ryan Nichols, "Diagnosing Bias in Philosophy of Religion," *The Monist* 96, no. 3 (2013): 420-46. Based on the bias of Christian philosophers, Draper and Nichols recommend that philosophers of religion distance themselves from apologetics. Their recommendation is diplomatic in that they advise a distance from both atheistic and theistic apologetics. "Genuine philosophy today is superior to apologetics precisely because it does not face the 'paradox of apologetics." Ibid., 439. The paradox of apologetics is that it does not seek the truth, but is based on biased inquiry. Furthermore, apologetics possesses no intellectual risk in that it is not aided by doubt—a feature of philosophy. "Apologetics by comparison is very safe insofar as pursuing it is very unlikely to result in the apologist rejecting any of the central doctrines of the religious community he or she serves." Ibid., 441. This statement comes in the context of suggesting that philosophy of religion become "riskier" and "freeing oneself from service to inflexible orthodoxy." Ibid., 442.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup>Craig Hazen, "Defending the Defense of the Faith," in *To Everyone A Reason: A Case for the Christian Worldview*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 39.

1:3 as supporting the use of apologetics in the early church. He contends, "Jesus was therefore portrayed as the first among many in Acts who would offer reasons for belief at every opportunity." In addition, the most relevant attribute of the ethos is "reasoned argumentation." Hazen concludes that the apostles "seemed almost obsessed with offering evidence, testimony, and argument at every turn in order to establish the truth of the gospel message."

Also in contrast to "originality," William Edgar holds that apologetics "is about *argument*, which means developing a persuasive sequence of words to answer the challenges from an unbelieving culture." Edgar holds that apologetics is not merely concerned with answers, but it requires knowing the needs of the culture. His view of apologetics is also implicitly opposed to the challenges of Kornblith and Christensen. Edgar contends that giving answers relates to the rational aspect of the individual, while appealing to the needs of an individual is a psychological endeavor. The latter involves persuading the individual in areas beyond rationality—appealing to emotion and passion. Edgar suggests, "Apologetics will hardly be effective if it stops at logically valid arguments that do not appeal to the hidden fears, frustrations, and personal needs of the hearer." These background issues also influence belief. 53

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup>Hazen, "Defending the Defense of the Faith," 41. Hazen also states that Paul imitates Jesus' manner of teaching, which is demonstrated in the book of Acts. According to Hazen, Luke shows Paul "reasoning, proving and persuading on behalf of the truth of the gospel" throughout the Mediterranean world. Ibid. Luke shows that it was Paul's custom to reason and persuade. Hazen concludes, "People always come to Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit, but there are many tools the Holy Spirit uses to do his work. One of those tools is apologetic reasoning." Ibid., 42.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup>Ibid, 40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup>William Edgar, *Reasons of the Heart: Recovering Christian Persuasion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 41. The title of Edgar's work also shows relevance for the present subject, referring to Pascal's well known quote: "We know the truth not only through our reason but also through the heart . . . The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing." Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, ed. and trans. Roger Ariew (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), 216.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup>Edgar, *Reasons of the Heart*, 61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup>Edgar continues, "Plausibility, then, has many forms. It may be psychological, social, or cultural in nature. The point to recognize if we are going to engage in the work of persuasion is that people

Regarding the themes of Kornblith and Christensen, William Lane Craig has written about the issue of bias in apologetics. He has found that detractors have attempted to use bias in order to reject an argument. In one particular objection, the argument is dismissed because it does not serve as the basis for Craig's theistic beliefs. The objector claims that even if the argument were shown to be false, Craig would still retain his belief in God. Craig finds the objection to imply hypocrisy. He claims that his character has nothing to do with the argument:

Even if I were a hypocrite, there is just no relationship between the soundness of an argument and the psychological state of the person propounding it. The objector is thus guilty of putting forward a textbook example of an argument *ad hominem*, that is, trying to invalidate a position by attacking the character of the person who defends it.<sup>54</sup>

While I am not applying the *ad hominem* accusation to Kornblith and Christensen's arguments, Craig's response highlights problems for their case on bias. Kornblith and Christensen postulate that there is no obligation to affirm arguments due to the biases of the speaker. This stance on bias only serves to bolster a steadfast position by reducing peer status. However, the attention should be toward the merits of the arguments—whether they are good or bad arguments.

These examples illustrate the problems that stand between apologetics and steadfast positions. Kelly's argument for originality does not attempt to eliminate influence entirely, but it does diminish its value. His view implicitly questions the value of persuasion. Kornblith and Christensen are more explicit in their opposition to persuasion. The act of persuasion goes against Kornblith's stance on "giving reasons" and Christensen's charge of "psychological attachment." Apologetics operates on influence and persuasion. The following section will make the case for the use of persuasion in

are more than purely intellectual beings; they have complex dispositions and insensitivities." Edgar, *Reasons of the Heart*, 61-62.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>William Lane Craig, "Objections So Bad I Couldn't Have Made Them Up," in Copan and Craig, *Come Let Us Reason*, 53-54.

apologetics. This case will demonstrate the conflict between the steadfast position, as it has been presented in the literature, and apologetics. More importantly, this dissertation contends that apologetics uses persuasion responsibly.

#### A Case for Persuasion

Political philosopher Bryan Garsten focuses on the uses and misuses of persuasion in arguments.<sup>55</sup> His work will be shown to be complimentary to the efforts of apologetics. Garsten's focus concerns political persuasion, but the elements of persuasion can be identified in Christian apologetics. He concedes that rhetoric can be misused and persuasive arguments have limitations. Despite its limitations, persuasive arguments have merit when speakers operate on the assumption that individuals can make practical judgments. From this perspective, persuasion is beneficial because it focuses on the individual's point of view and judgments.

He makes a distinction between persuasion and deliberative processes of justification. According to Garsten, deliberative processes of justification assume arguments are justified, contending that anyone who disagrees is irrational. Garsten claims that persuasive arguments are not coercive. The listeners play a part in the process of persuasion. They can control accepting or rejecting an argument. The act of giving the audience control avoids the errors of manipulation and pandering. Garsten claims:

Mental digestion is a process over which we can exercise some control. We reject arguments that seem far-fetched or suspicious. Being persuaded is not the same as learning, but it is related. When someone sits back and decides, 'All right, you have persuaded me,' he is not merely describing something that has happened to him. In spite of the grammar, he is describing something he has done.<sup>56</sup>

When persuasive arguments are used responsibly, the intention is to motivate audiences to be deliberative about their responses. (This sort of deliberation is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup>Bryan Garsten, *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup>Ibid., 7.

distinguished from deliberative processes of justification.) For Garsten, deliberation is not made in haste. Appealing to emotions can refine deliberation because the targeted emotions are partial and person-relative.<sup>57</sup> Thus, emotional appeals can be used appropriately. Furthermore, deliberation, "making decisions deliberately," is not only drawn from reasons but from emotions and attachments that are relevant to the issue.<sup>58</sup>

In addition, effective persuasive arguments also show respect for the audience. Garsten holds that an appropriate use of rhetoric allows for a greater respect to the opinions of listeners. There is a high level of attentiveness and respect to other opinions:

Speakers treat their listeners' existing opinions with a certain deference, and yet they do not cater to them. This respect for the actual opinions of one's audience serve to acknowledge the particular features of individuals—their histories, identities, commitments, and needs.<sup>59</sup>

Persuasive arguments must also appeal to the rational and affective states of the person. Again, he distinguishes between manipulating and pandering. Instead, persuasive arguments appeal to the capacities for judgment by drawing on "existing patterns of thought and emotion." The whole person is engaged in persuasive arguments: "A persuasive speaker often engages judgment by appealing to passions and images as well as reasons." Persuasive arguments also engage the capacity for practical judgement. This capacity "allows us to integrate the various opinions, desires, and emotions that we have gained throughout our lives as active beings and to bring them to bear on a particular case in a way that yields a decision."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup>Garsten, Saving Persuasion, 192-93.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Since effective deliberation aims to take advantage of the tacit knowledge each citizen has within his or her experience, and since that knowledge is intricately intertwined with his emotional ties and attachments, deliberation should not aim to ground itself in a standpoint that denies the relevance of those attachments . . . . Deliberation need not disregard the judgments implicit in those emotions." Ibid., 194.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup>Ibid., 198.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup>Ibid., 175.

Garsten also highlights Aristotle's writings on rhetoric and persuasion, which demonstrate persuasion and influence. Concerning the character of the speaker, in *Rhetoric* Aristotle claims, "Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated" (1355a). Aristotle states that a speaker requires the audience's confidence. The speaker has to display a good sense, a good moral character, and goodwill (1378a).

This dissertation has already shown the use of person-relative arguments by apologists. <sup>62</sup> George Mavrodes suggests that apologetical arguments should be used as tools. <sup>63</sup> In this sense, the arguments *qua* tools are person-relative, but they are tools because they are used in order to persuade and convince. The use of arguments *qua* tools is the point of contention between apologetics and steadfastness, including Kelly's "originality" and other forms of egoism. The use of persuasion and person-relative arguments betrays steadfast's opposition to influence.

A further note could be added to opposition of persuasion and influence. The use of persuasion can be conflated with the action of manipulation. This accusation could easily attach to the incorporation of person-relative. For example, Kornblith's argument for distrusting reason can imply manipulative or coercive speech. The following will consider an objection to person-relative arguments. By analyzing the political use of propaganda, it will be shown that apologetics is non-coercive.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup>See the section, "Critique of the Equal Weight View" in chap. 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup>Mavrodes states, "It is important for all the participants in a theological inquiry or discussion to remember that proofs and arguments are epistemological tools to be used when and if they can be used. They are not to be prized for their own sakes nor are they the prime subjects of the discussion and dispute. One who finds an arguments unconvincing, for whatever reason or even for no reason that he can specify, need not hesitate to say so. He thereby identifies a fatal defect in the argument as it applies to him. The proponent of the argument need not concern himself with defending it. He should ask, rather, whether it can be strengthened to overcome this defect. If it can be strengthened, fine; if not, let it be set aside without discussion. It is a tool that did not work in that particular case. Let him, therefore, cast about for some other tool, whether another argument or some quite different type of approach, might succeed. For the discussants to forget the great question of God while they quibble over some proof would be disastrous." George Mavrodes, *Belief in God: A Study in the Epistemology of Religion* (New York: University Press of America, 1970), 48.

Yale philosophy professor Jason Stanley works in the field of propaganda. <sup>64</sup> He defines harmful propaganda as coercive speech, which does not value the interests of the audience. He maintains that manipulation restricts evidence. In closing off other considerations, one is operating on "biased speech." <sup>65</sup> In contrast, apologists encourage individuals to seek truth and investigate doubts. For instance, Stephen Evans contends that intellectual obstacles cannot be willed away. Evans discourages "evading intellectual problems."

According to Stanley's analysis, another form of coercion is seen in the acts of demagoguery. He defines demagoguery as the act of manipulating emotions in order to "blind rationality" and to circumvent options that should be considered. According to the method of apologetics, it does not fall within the confines of Stanley's definition of demagogues. While apologetics does appeal to emotions, it also welcomes debate by presenting evidence and support for its claims. Apologetics also considers the plausibility of other options. The Fine-Tuning argument demonstrates this openness in its premise by considering the plausibility of other accounts for the anthropic principle. What's more, apologetics does not appeal to affective states in order to bypass reason or to blind another individual's rationality. 8

Os Guinness contends that apologetics is not coercive. <sup>69</sup> In his plea for the use of persuasion in apologetics, he explicitly intends to eliminate coercive arguments.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup>Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup>Stanley defines this as "speech that irrationally closes off certain options that should be considered." Ibid., 49.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup>C. Stephen Evans, *Why Believe? Reason and Mystery as Pointers to God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup>Stanley, How Propaganda Works, 70.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup>In contrast with this appeal to reason, evolutionary psychologist Jonathan Haidt has argued for bypassing reason in order to persuade individuals. See Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), chapter 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup>Os Guinness, *Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015).

However, he rejects the notion of developing a process and method of persuasion. A rigid formula for persuasion would overlook the diversity of dispositions. Using one approach assumes that there is one type of person. The danger of using a strict form is that it approaches persuasion as an act of domination rather than reasoning. For Guinness, the type of persuasion that is suitable for apologetics is the persuasion that is concerned with truth. "There are therefore no foolproof methods of persuasion, and those that come closest are coercive and dangerous because they override the will rather than convince the mind." He contrasts the use of truth-seeking arguments from those intending to enlist adherents irrespective of truth. The latter approach is based on "surefire, foolproof methods," that resemble "the techniques of brainwashing used by communists and by cults." He qualifies the persuasion that interests apologetics as "the art of truth, the art that truth inspires."

It is also notable that appeals to emotions in apologetics are not used to manipulate by omitting evidence. Instead, apologetical arguments that appeal to emotions understand emotions as part of the evidence. This type of argument is illustrated in C.S. Lewis' appeal to aesthetic experience in *Surprised by Joy*. In his work on Lewis' notion of "Sehnsucht," Matthew Crawford contends that argument poses great value for apologetics by undermining naturalism and bolstering the case for Christianity. The notion of Sehnsucht is person-relative; however, the experience is demonstrated to be a common one among various groups. Appealing to these shared emotions is not a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup>Guinness, *Fool's Talk*, 35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup>Matthew David Crawford, "C. S. Lewis's Concept of *Sehnsucht*: Philosophical Foundations, Aesthetic Analysis, and Implications for Evangelism and Apologetics" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup>Crawford identifies an inconsistency when individuals have an aesthetic experience that transcends a naturalistic ontology, yet they resolve to hold to naturalism. The inconsistency is compounded when these individuals, such as Bertrand Russell and Richard Dawkins, insert meaning into what they believe is a meaningless experience. Crawford concludes, "There is an obvious dissonance here between

manipulative device; nor is it offering an argument detached from evidence. Rather, apologetics extends the evidence that aesthetic experience is common to a broad population. Missiological anthropologist Paul Hiebert claims that there is much to learn from Pentecostal and charismatic movements due to their focus on the affective dimension. He contends that feelings should not be suppressed. "Feelings, like knowledge, are parts, not the whole, in the process of spiritual transformation." Thus, reason as well as emotion requires attention.

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the assessment of where the evidence points and the actual worldview and lifestyle chosen by the individual. Correspondence to the real world is lacking." Crawford, "C. S. Lewis' Concept of *Sehnsucht*," 188.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup>In his autobiography, Peter Hitchens recounts an aesthetic experience, which reoriented his thoughts on faith. Prior to coming to faith in Christ, Hitchens' life was "devoted" to pleasure, in the forms of architecture and music. The arts had an emotional draw on him. In his words, "Two of the artsarchitecture and music—move me more than any others, not because I know a great deal about them, but because I can feel their influence upon me, almost as if they were speaking to me." Peter Hitchens, *The Rage against God: How Atheism Led Me to Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 100. *The Last* Judgment, by Rogier van der Weyden, gave Hitchens an "epiphany." The depiction of individuals in fear of the reality of damnation triggered this epiphany. "I did not have a 'religious experience.' Nothing mystical or inexplicable took place—no trance, no swoon, no vision, no voices, no blaze of light. But I had a sudden, strong sense of religion being a thing of the present day, not imprisoned under thick layers of time. A large catalogue of misdeeds, raining from the embarrassing to the appalling, replayed themselves rapidly in my head. I had absolutely no doubt that I was among the damned, if there were any damned." Ibid., 103. The emotion of fear was fitting in his situation. He notes that appropriate fear is helpful and in many times invaluable in times of danger. Hitchens states that he has faced "proper fear" many times in his life—the most important one, he claims, was facing Rogier van der Weyden's altarpiece. This connection between emotion and reason is also illustrated in Whittacker Chambers' account of turning from communism and metaphysical materialism. He reflects on how he used to watch his daughter eat. "My daughter was in her highchair. I was watching her eat. She was the most miraculous thing that had ever happened in my life. I liked to watch her even when she smeared porridge in her face or dropped it meditatively on the floor. My eye came to rest on the delicate convolutions of her ears—those intricate, perfect ears. The thought crossed my mind: 'No, those ears were not created by chance coming together of atoms in nature (the Communist view). They could have been created only by immense design.' The thought was involuntary and unwanted. I crowded it out of my mind, but I never wholly forgot it or the occasion. I had to crowd it out of my mind. If I completed it, I should have had to say: Design presupposes God. I did not know then, but at that moment the finger of God was first laid upon my forehead." Quoted in Martin Gardner, *The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener* (New York: Quill, 1983), 196-97. It is noteworthy that Gardner adheres to fideism in terms of natural theology. Gardner finds that the arguments are not logical arguments, but emotional arguments. Gardner states, "There are no 'purely' logical arguments. There indeed are partly logical arguments. If you make certain posits, posits unsupported by logic or science, the traditional proofs do make a kind of sense. From my fideist perspective, the posits required to confer validity on the proofs are not rational but emotional. They are made in response to deeply felt needs. Grant these emotive posits and the proofs become compelling, but the posits themselves are from the heart, not the head." Ibid., 193. Unfortunately, Gardner draws a false dichotomy between reason and emotion. As was shown above and will be shown in the next chapter, emotions inform reasons. They do this correctly when emotions have been tempered. Examples of the connection between emotion and reason have been found in the field of science and scientific theories, as well. For instance, Roger Penrose has written, "Beauty and Truth are intertwined, the beauty of a physical theory acting as a guide to its correctness in relation to the Physical World." Roger Penrose, The Road to Reality: A Complete Guide to the Laws of the Universe (New York: Vintage, 2007), 1029.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup>Paul Hiebert, Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People

## **Virtuous Response to Steadfastness**

Chapter 2 identified the problems of the conciliatory position. It was argued that the act of conciliating places an excessive burden on testimony, which underestimates the value of self-trust. In contrast, steadfastness can be charged with an excessive view of self-trust, which leads to a deficient view of testimony. In addition to the problems of originality, apologetics can reject the steadfast position based on its appeal to epistemic egoism.

Proponents of the steadfast position have articulated their adherence to epistemic egoism. Thomas Kelly contends that egoism is essential to remaining steadfast. Furthermore, egoism compliments steadfastness by making it "internally coherent." Kelly's response to disagreement outlined the basic definition of egoism. He commented that he was not moved by his peers' dissenting views about his position on disagreement. Richard Fumerton made a case along similar lines. He also appealed to egoism when facing disagreement with his philosophical colleagues. He found it justifiable to demur because his *own* authority supported his belief.

The last chapter made the case that self-trust is epistemically necessary. Where the conciliatory position was deficient in self-trust, the steadfast position is excessive in self-trust. The excess of self-trust is egoism. Egoism conflicts with apologetics because it does not observe the value of persuasive and person-relative arguments. As was shown above, apologetics consists in these types of arguments. Furthermore, egoism also conflicts with testimonial knowledge and the branch of social epistemology. It restricts the force of testimony. If epistemic egoism is faulty, then steadfast positions that feature

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Change (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 313. Focusing on the mission field, he argues that the emphasis should be placed on transforming an individual's worldview. Hiebert notes the difficulty with the meaning of worldview. He contends that its association with philosophy has tethered worldview to strictly being a feature of one's rationality. Hiebert argues that a worldview also involves moral and emotional dimensions—areas of "feelings and values." Furthermore, a worldview is a corporate rather than an individual matter. He defines worldview as the "fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative presuppositions a group of people make about the nature of things, and which they use to order their lives.' Worldviews are what people in a community take as given realties, the maps they have of reality that they use for living." Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 15.

egoism are internally problematic. If this is true, then apologetics has another reason to reject steadfast positions.

Social epistemologist Frederick Schmitt rejects egoistic claims. Instead, he argues for a social nature of knowledge. He identifies the main question of social epistemology as one that analyzes its very existence: "Social epistemology centers on the question whether knowledge is to be understood individualistically or socially." Schmitt holds the view that epistemic egoism results in epistemological individualism. In turn, individualism results in a weak view of knowledge. Strong individualism denies any second hand knowledge, or knowledge that is not original to the individual. Individualism is understood to be the egocentric project. Schmitt questions the motivation for the egocentric project: "Why should we not work together to put our beliefs in order?"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup>Frederick F. Schmitt, "Socializing Epistemology: An Introduction through Two Samples," in Schmitt, *Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge*, 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup>Schmitt credits Locke with this position. Richard Foley agrees with this claim, arguing that Locke's epistemic stance is an egoistic understanding of knowledge, which was tethered to his philosophical positions on other matters. "Epistemic egoism is not a fictitious position. Some of the most influential epistemologists have been egoists—John Locke, for example. His egoism grew out of his ethics. He thought that just as we have an obligation to conform our behavior to moral standards, so too we have an obligation to conform our opinions to epistemic standards. Fulfilling this intellectual obligation requires that we think critically about the operations of our own intellectual faculties and that we trust only those faculties that we have reasons to regard as reliable. Similarly, we ought not to trust uncritically the faculties of others. We have an obligation to think things through for ourselves rather than deferring to commonly held opinions. Indeed, Locke so emphasized the importance of intellectual self-reliance that he even expressed doubts about granting derivative authority to the opinions of others, much less fundamental authority." Foley, "Egoism in Epistemology," 57. Foley defines derivative authority as granting authority to a testifier only when additional support can identify the status of the testifier or the support of the testimony. Fundamental authority omits the requirement for external support. For an objection to this understanding of Locke, see Joseph Schieber, *Testimony: A Philosophical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 50-63.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup>Schmitt, "Socializing Epistemology," 7. A case for the value of testimony can be found in economic and political relations, too. Regarding egoism and autonomy, the economist Thomas Sowell maintains that isolated communities are those that operate in extreme poverty. These isolated communities are not connected with diversity of thought and are cut off from progress. Isolation is a recurring factor in poverty and limitations around the world. Sowell contends a "lack of knowledge of things known to others" paralyzes communities in preventing advancements shared by other communities. Thomas Sowell, *Wealth*, *Poverty, and Politics: An International Perspective*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 42. A similar statement can be made about epistemic egoism and epistemic autonomy. Eradicating the power of testimony will result in an identical scenario painted by Sowell. It would conclude in epistemic poverty. Without the epistemic strength of testimony, many forms of knowledge and progress would be powerless. History and science could not operate without testimony.

Richard Foley also posits a balance between individual and social knowledge. He contends that self-trust is necessary in order to hold any sort of beliefs, but there are restrictions to the degree of self-trust. It cannot be untempered. Individualism must face the reality of cognitive fallibility. If self-trust is required, then there must be a means of self-assessment. Self-assessment is the process of reflecting on beliefs through introspection and external accountability, which relies on the resources of other individuals. 80

Foley maintains that epistemic positions must balance individual and social knowledge. There is a danger with epistemic positions that overemphasizes one of these notions:

An adequate account of intellectual authority must find a way of steering a course between both of these dangers. It must acknowledge that in intellectual matters, as in other matters, we are thoroughly social beings and, more specifically, it must explain how it can be reasonable for us to rely on the expertise and information of people about whom we know little. However, it must also acknowledge the importance of intellectual self-reliance and, more specifically, it must leave room for the possibility of rational iconoclasm, that is, for the possibility of individuals rejecting the most cherished opinions of their contemporaries or the most deeply held assumptions of their traditions and yet still being rational.<sup>81</sup>

A balanced position accepts a prima facie trust in others. The trust in others derives from self-trust. Because individuals can rationally depend upon their own faculties, the same sort of prima facie trust "radiates" out toward other epistemic agents. Foley claims, "I risk inconsistency if I have intellectual trust in myself and do not have

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup>Of course, moderating a bias is only obtainable when the individual is aware of that bias. Foley argues for striking a balance in modifying a bias: "Recalibration is always a delicate business, in part because one has to guard against overcompensation. Nevertheless, when used judiciously, it sometimes is a useful way to compensate for a defect." Richard Foley, *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 71. It appears that Foley's self-monitoring intends to avoid cognitive dissonance. The work of social psychologists Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson has focused on the nature of disagreement and cognitive dissonance. The problem of cognitive dissonance is that it fuels deception when evidence is presented that counters an original belief. Individuals normally do not want to confess that they made mistakes. Tavris and Aronson also identify "naïve realism" as the problem of misperceiving shortcomings. "Naïve realism" is the belief that one's view has clear understanding and reasoning on his side. Accordingly, those who agree are rational, while those who oppose are irrational. See Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson, *Mistakes Were Made (but Not By Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2015).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup>Foley, *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others*, 99.

intellectual trust in others." Similarly, Linda Zagzebski argues for "epistemic universalism," which states that it is reasonable to trust others because it is reasonable to trust one's own faculties. 83 She makes a distinction between self-trust and self-reliance. Zagzebski equates self-reliance with epistemic egoism. According to her view, epistemic egoism values one's faculties over valuing the truth. The "epistemic pipeline" is narrowed because the egoist favors the self over the pursuit of truth. 84

Jay Wood also argues for the necessity of trusting others based on the trust placed in the self. Self-trust is "naturally" extended to the abilities of other agents. He states, "The 'innocent-until-proven-guilty' trust we place in our own cognitive powers we quite naturally extend to other persons, since we unavoidably rely on the testimony of others as we do our own cognitive powers." He states that the rejection of this natural extension is an epistemic error: "Epistemic egoists, perhaps prey to some form of enlightenment hyper-autonomy, prescribe a policy of either rejecting all testimony as rationally justified, or the weaker view that we should reject the testimonial authority of anyone whose reliability we have not personally authenticated."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup>Foley, Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others, 106.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup>She qualifies this trust in three ways. "Trust includes relying upon my faculties for the purpose of getting my questions answered, believing that they can get my questions answered correctly, and feeling the attitude of trust towards my facilities for that purpose." Linda Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy in Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup>Gary Gutting has charged reformed epistemology with the flaws of epistemic egoism: "Because believers have many epistemic peers who do not share their belief in God (and even more who do not share their belief that 'God exists' is properly basic), they have no right to maintain their belief without a justification. If they do so, they are guilty of epistemological egoism." Gary Gutting, *Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 90. For Gutting, appealing to the proper basicality of a belief provides no justification for that belief—it is synonymous with claiming that my belief is true because it is *my* belief. Intuition is especially difficult in cases of known peer disagreement. Similar to Zagzebski's arguments on egoism, Gutting makes a similar claim. Epistemological egoism is "just as arbitrary and unjustifiable as ethical egoism is generally regarded to be." Ibid., 86.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup>Jay Wood, "Faith's Intellectual Rewards," in *Religious Faith and Intellectual Virtue*, ed. Laura Frances Callahan and Timothy O'Connor (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 31.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

The critical question is the significance of testimony in disagreement. The literature on the epistemology of testimony has continued to grow. It has received a significant amount of attention over the past thirty years. It is granted that testimony serves as a great source of beliefs. Social epistemologist Jennifer Lackey has commented that "Virtually everything we know depends in some way or other on the testimony of others." Richard Foley further claims that our beliefs are "saturated with the opinions of others."

Alvin Plantinga has demonstrated the value of testimony in regards to its connection with other forms of knowledge: "Can I really discover, in a way independent of testimony, that in the fifth century B.C. there was a war between the Athenians and Spartans? Can I discover in this way that Plato was a philosopher? Or that the woman I take to be my mother really was?" He also identifies cultural progress with testimony—scientific knowledge is paralyzed without social epistemology. 90

Robert Audi views testimony as "indispensable" for life. Individuals would be reduced to a "primitive stage of learning" if testimony were eliminated. <sup>91</sup> Keeping in line

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup>Jennifer Lackey, "Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge from Others" in *Social Epistemology: Essential Readings*, ed. Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup>He continues to identify the numerous areas of testimony's influence on knowledge: "In our childhood, we acquire beliefs from parents, siblings, and teachers without much thought. These constitute the backdrop upon which we form yet other beliefs, and often enough these later beliefs are also the products of other people's beliefs. We accept the testimony of those we meet; we listen to each other on television and radio; and we read each other's books and articles. We are not intellectual atoms, uninfluenced by one another. Our views are hugely shaped by the people around us." Foley, "Egoism in Epistemology," 61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup>Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup>Ibid., 77. Concerning the value of testimony in science, biomedical ethicist John Hardwig contends that social knowledge is necessary when our beliefs are so vast, but our lives are too short to "fact-check" these beliefs: "The list of things I believe, thought I have no evidence for the truth of them, is, if not infinite, virtually endless. And I am finite. Though I can readily imagine what I would have to do to obtain the evidence that would support any one of my beliefs, I cannot imagine being able to do this for *all* of my beliefs. I believe too much; there is too much relevant evidence (much of it available only after extensive, specialized training); intellect is too small and life too short." John Hardwig, "Epistemic Dependence," *The Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 7 (July 1985): 335.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup>Robert Audi, "The Place of Testimony in the Fabric of Knowledge and Justification," in *Rational Belief: Structure, Grounds, and Intellectual Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015),

with its essential necessity for society, he also claims, "our knowledge would collapse" without the presence of testimony; it is "globally essential." Thomas Reid gave testimony similar esteem. Without testimonial dependence, Reid believed that the world would be "deprived of the greatest benefits of society, and place us in a worse condition than that of savages." Finally, Linda Zagzebski asserts, "Everyone agrees that if we did not depend upon others, we would have far less knowledge because we would have far fewer beliefs." Restricting the impact of testimony greatly restricts knowledge.

The question of the influence of testimony comes prior to the question of disagreement. In other word, the worth of testimony is assumed in the challenge of disagreement. However, it obviously has a direct effect on one's view of disagreement. The question of the significance of disagreement is nested in the view of the significance of testimony. At the most basic construction of the views, steadfast stances do not consider testimony to have a significant role. The low view of testimony can be attributed to its appeal to egoism. Jennifer Lackey has stated that "claims central to the epistemic egoist stand in stark contrast to much of the work done by social epistemology." Social epistemologists contend that knowledge is transmitted through testimony.

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<sup>233.</sup> Audi argues that testimony is not a basic source of knowledge, but a source nonetheless: "It does not imply that testimony is any less important in normal human life than a basic source." Perception is a basic source of knowledge. Audi, "The Place of Testimony in the Fabric of Knowledge and Justification," 233.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup>Robert Audi, "The Epistemic Authority of Testimony and the Ethics of Belief," in *God and the Ethics of Belief: New Essays in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Andrew Dole and Andrew Chignell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 185.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup>Thomas Reid, "An Inquiry," in *Inquiry and Essays*, ed. Ronald E. Beanblossom and Keith Lehrer (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 95.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup>Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 52.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup>Jennifer Lackey, "Introduction: Perspectives on Testimony," *Episteme* 4, no. 3 (October 2007): 234.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup>Lackey contends that there are cases when testimony does generate knowledge. See Jennifer Lackey, "Testimonial Knowledge and Transmission," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 49, no. 197 (October 1999): 471-90. Audi makes the distinction between cognitive processes that generate knowledge from those that transmit knowledge. Generating knowledge is a product of perception. Testimony is also distinguished from memory in that memory merely preserves knowledge. Audi, "The Place of Testimony in the Fabric of Knowledge and Justification," 219.

This view of testimony encounters Kelly's principle of originality. Taken to its logical conclusion, originality weakens many beliefs. For instance, the heliocentric model is the commonly held view on the structure of the galaxy. Yet, problems arise when applying the principle of originality. According to originality, heliocentrism would not be considered common knowledge because the idea was not gathered independently; it is not an original belief. Kelly's factors of influence and common sources do not exclude basic scientific notions; on the contrary, common scientific thought is based on curriculum and the *influence* of teachers.

There are further problems with Kornblith's case for distrusting reasons. His position is clear in setting forth reasons to be skeptical of reasons. One could also question why Kornblith's reasons should be trusted. Rather than accuse his article of offering contradictory premises, this dissertation contends that his argument is based on a weak view of social knowledge. Perhaps all skeptical views have an inherent vicious nature. When it comes to distrusting reasons, there appears to be no determining standard. Being skeptical about a speaker due to the speaker's bias runs into problems because this defense can be caused by one's own bias. It can be seen as repelling arguments that counter one's allegiances, even if the arguments are good arguments. It seems to be a mechanism of avoiding the argument by neutralizing the speaker instead. There are no means of determining when to allow an engagement of dissenting reasons. This position offers nothing in the way of speaking to the challenges of rationalization, more or less. Kornblith's position only identifies bias as opposed to engaging an argument.

In the same way, Christensen's opposition toward "biased" arguments has problems with incorporating social knowledge. His position faces the problem of identifying those who do not have psychological attachments to their beliefs. It did not

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup>Kornblith acknowledges the apparent fallacies of his initial argument. However, he contends that the skeptic of giving reasons is asserting a reductio in identifying a rationalized argument in a specific speaker. Kornblith, "Distrusting Reason," 186.

appear that he implied that he was free from these attachments; however, the same accusation could be directed toward his views, rendering his arguments outside the range of peer status. This is particularly relevant from the example of "evolution deniers" in the argument. Although he was supplying a brief anecdote on merited peer status, he did not address the highly charged philosophical debate concerning evolution—nor did he address the controversial matter of defining evolution. He dismissed evolution deniers because their position does not cohere with the scientific method. However, this response is another example of a dismissive response that does not address the challenges in defining "the" scientific method. By taking his prescription, one could easily dismiss his position on evolution because of his narrow view of the discussion.

## Conclusion

The deficiency of the steadfast position is found in its low view of social knowledge. This low view is also based on a low view of dissenting positions. Dialogue does not continue because of the low view of testimony. In this way, the debate never begins because it is already settled. Rationalization and psychological attachments are complicated matters. These influences merge into all areas of the individual's cognitive structure. These biases are not only linked with religious propositions, but they also include political and cultural influences. Thus, the objections are directed toward the speaker's sociological influences. These views, Kornblith's in particular, appear to yearn for the reality of thermometer models, where individuals are unadulterated systems of cognition. Kornblith contends for "opting out" of the dialogue when the rationalizations are apparent. Shristensen's view formulates a difficult standard of possessing psychologically unattached beliefs; or, much worse, identifying those who share the same attachments in order to give their view a fair hearing.

<sup>98</sup>Kornblith, "Distrusting Reason," 190.

This dissertation proposes a view that does not overlook the reality of influence. Instead, background settings must be addressed rather than flippantly dismissed. A position of this sort must embrace a degree of openness, which is uncharacteristic of the steadfast views. However, the degree of openness must be qualified. The problems of conciliation must not be forgotten.

From this discussion, it is apparent that a balance is required that esteems both self-trust and testimony. Self-trust is a fundamental aspect of knowledge. It was shown that epistemologists have argued that it is reasonable to trust one's own cognitive capacities because these same capacities are required for self-monitoring and correction. It was also shown that testimony is another fundamental element in epistemology. Many beliefs are based on learning from others. Fields of science and history require the transmission of knowledge in order for others to know anything about science or history. Both positions on disagreement have flawed views on self-trust and testimony. Concerning apologetics, it has been demonstrated that both positions conflict with the nature of apologetics. In addition, apologetics should also reject the two positions due to their insufficient epistemological views. The following chapters will attempt to resolve the issues that are inherent to conciliatory and steadfast views by offering a balanced perspective.

#### CHAPTER 4

## A VIRTUOUS RESPONSE

The previous two chapters highlighted the main points of the epistemology of disagreement. In drawing out these points, it was shown that the positions oppose certain features of apologetics. The essence of the conciliatory position appears to be inherently opposed to apologetics. In contrast, steadfastness appears to be the champion of apologetics. It was shown that steadfast positions resist disagreement. It was also demonstrated that the position entails elements that are in opposition to an apologetic stance. Furthermore, these chapters concluded that both positions are structured on epistemological deficiencies.

Another critical matter in the literature on disagreement has been the absence of any expanded discussion on intellectual virtues. One of the fundamental elements of disagreement is the concept of peerhood. Most epistemologists understand peers to share the same intellectual virtues. While this dissertation has argued that the notion of peers is too idealistic, it will adopt a view of intellectual virtues that promotes a balanced social epistemology. The following three chapters will present the case for intellectual virtues through the framework of virtue responsibilism, a branch of virtue epistemology. This study will attempt to demonstrate that virtue responsibilism provides a satisfactory response to the problems of disagreement. The concept of intellectual virtue is also advantageous in that it shows support for apologetics in certain areas of disagreement. Thus, virtue responsibilism is able to supply apologetics with satisfactory and advantageous responses to the challenges of disagreement.

In this chapter, the case will be made that virtue responsibilism can be upheld by apologists as a sufficient response to disagreement. The next chapter will argue that this view of virtue can provide satisfactory responses to the challenges of disagreement. Finally, chapter 6 will apply the virtuous method to two cases that are significant for the epistemology of disagreement and apologetics, illustrating the advantages of virtue responsibilism in disagreement.

## **Normative Nature of Belief**

One of the main concerns in disagreement is how one should respond to conflict with a peer. The two traditional positions in disagreement have provided conflicting responses to this question. Given certain conditions, conciliation contends that one *ought* to suspend belief or reduce doxastic confidence. Similarly, steadfast positions contend that one *should* remain firm in one's belief. However, the normative concept has not been fully developed in the literature on disagreement. This section will review the research of epistemologists who have worked the concept of epistemic norms. It will be shown that epistemologists have appealed to virtue in order to define the norms of belief.

In his work on epistemology, John Pollock defines epistemic norms as rules that govern when it is permissible to hold a belief. Where justification indicates what to believe, epistemic norms "prescribe" how to form beliefs. He argues that epistemic norms are tied with justification. Normativity of belief is an important notion for virtue epistemology. However, the striking contrast is virtue's attention on the nature of the agent's character. Like virtue ethics, virtue epistemology does not emphasize the consequences or the principles of knowledge; rather, virtue focuses on character. In virtue ethics, one looks to a virtuous individual in order to learn how to acquire virtuous habits.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1986). In a similar vein, C. I. Lewis makes the claim that "cognitive rightness is itself a moral concern." C. I. Lewis, "The Rational Imperatives," in *Values and Imperatives* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 163.

In a similar manner, virtue epistemology looks to examples of intellectual character.<sup>2</sup> In the following review of epistemologists, the notion of character and responsible inquiry will be given greater attention in the ethics of belief. This emphasis on character drifts away from Pollock's emphasis on rules.

In regards to ethics of belief, Robert Audi contends that we cannot be intellectually passive.<sup>3</sup> He speaks of standards in belief, which are standards concerning conduct and evidence. Having standards objects to "sloppy" procedures in the intellectual life. He states that when a proposition has met certain standards, "one should try to cause oneself to believe it if one does not believe it and try to retain belief if one does not. These are among the sorts of things one can say in developing an ethics of belief." Audi labels it the "attentiveness conception of epistemic obligation", which implies an ethics of inquiry as well as an ethics of belief.

Audi makes the case for a virtue perspective in the norms of belief. He states that "a sound ethics of belief" requires individuals to develop "dispositions that lead us to seek (evidential) grounds in certain matters." Audi contends that the individual who

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>In her work on virtue epistemology, Lorraine Code notes that exemplars are one factor, not *the* factor, in intellectual virtue. Code claims, "An action cannot be judged morally right simply because it is performed by a virtuous person, nor must a knowledge claim be proclaimed correct because of the intellectual virtue of the claimant. In each case, though, the character of the agent is of central relevance to how the action or claim will be judged." Lorraine Code, *Epistemic Responsibility* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1987), 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Robert Audi, "Doxastic Voluntarism and the Ethics of Belief," in *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility, and Virtue,* ed. Matthais Steup (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Ibid., 105. This quote may appear that he subscribes to direct doxastic voluntarism; however, his view is in line with other epistemologists who contend for a type of doxastic influence rather than doxastic control. In a similar fashion, Audi compares the similarities between belief and action. He states that both entail reasoning, praise and blame, context, decision and deliberation. Their dissimilarity leads him to conclude that doxastic voluntarism is false. He states that beliefs are not actions. Actions entail change, while beliefs are not comprised of change. Audi understands voluntarism to treat beliefs as action, which is a false premise. Furthermore, the formation of belief is a result of voluntary action. In other words, the formation of belief is within the voluntary domain, which resembles how individuals are able to position themselves in order to form a belief. Although the terminology may be in line with deontologism, he claims that those who oppose deontological principles can still uphold doxastic norms. Plantinga defines deontologism as the justification of belief by fulfilling one's epistemic duty or obligation. He argues that these are the roots of contemporary theories of internalism. See Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Audi, "Doxastic Voluntarism and the Ethics of Belief," 106.

possesses these traits is an "epistemically responsible agent." Thus, "an agent is roughly equivalent to one who adheres, in an appropriately scrupulous way, to a sound ethics of belief." This perspective results in a notion of virtue.

Philosopher Timothy Madigan, of St. John Fisher College, maintains a virtuous interpretation of Clifford's "The Ethics of Belief." Madigan argues that the larger argument points to character-formation, which aligns with Aristotelian virtue. He writes, "The choices we make in forming our beliefs have an impact on what sort of a person we are, and this in turn affects those later choices we make." The way in which we voluntarily respond speaks to our character and exacts judgment. One's response also "has an impact on the people around one, who are influenced by the virtues *and* the vices (the good habits and the bad habits) of their peers." He goes on to argue that Clifford was not developing a set of rules to follow; rather, he intended to emphasize role models in developing virtuous habits in belief formation.

Linda Zagzebski's work focuses on the normative nature of epistemology. She contends that the range of moral theory involves epistemic practice. Epistemic appraisal is demonstrated in the language that is used in blaming individuals who *should* have known better or who *ought* to have considered the evidence. Because of the normative nature of epistemology, the implication is that individuals are held responsible for their epistemic actions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Audi, "Doxastic Voluntarism and the Ethics of Belief," 107.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Timothy J. Madigan, W. K. Clifford and "The Ethics of Belief" (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Ibid., 172.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>Madigan references Code's responsibilism as an example of Clifford's intention in his infamous essay. Madigan claims that Clifford "fit this model" concerning the virtuous pursuit of truth. Ibid., 173. Chapter 5 will give attention to the notion of "exemplars" in the project of apologetics.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>The use of "ought" in the latter appraisal is cumbersome, but it highlights the normative nature of belief, and in this case, the component of culpability in inquiry.

Furthermore, she claims that the criticisms of belief in non-philosophical discourse goes beyond castigations against unjustified belief. Instead, criticism is also directed "toward the person himself" calling him "'narrow-minded,' 'careless,' 'intellectually cowardly,' 'rash,' 'imperceptive,' 'prejudiced,' 'rigid,' or 'obtuse,'" This language demonstrates the idea that the individual is culpable for many cases of irresponsible inquiry and belief.

This discussion underscores the notions of epistemic norms as well as emphasizing a concept of intellectual responsibility. Just as it is appropriate to criticize an argument for presenting false premises, it is also appropriate to criticize individuals for neglecting their epistemic diligence, accepting false premises or contradictory claims. For instance, individuals who argue for relativism are rightly presented with criticism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Linda Zagzebski, Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 20. This aspect of doxastic normativity has obvious implications for religious belief. Not only are groups criticized for their epistemic attachments according to doctrinal measures, such as heretical beliefs, but also the soteriological implications of belief place a significant weight on the responsibility of belief. An excellent example of this idea can be found in C. S. Lewis' The Great Divorce. In chapter 5, there is a discussion between a "spirit" and an "episcopal ghost." Their conversation revolves around the concept of "sins of intellect." The episcopal ghost understands these sins as displaying intellectual prejudice, dishonesty, and stagnation; yet, honest inquiry is not a sin. His intellectual courage and honesty led him to reject Christ's resurrection. The spirit, in turn, rejects labeling these intellectual acts as courageous. Instead, the episcopal ghost acted on his own behalf, for his own academic prestige. Ultimately, the discussion ends on the project of inquiry. The spirit contends that inquiry is instrumental because there are answers. The ghost has an intrinsic view of inquiry, revealing that he's not truly searching for answers. Others have written concerning epistemic responsibility in the daily practice of following Christ. Alister McGrath writes, "We cannot allow Christ to reign in our hearts if he does not also guide our thinking. The discipleship of the mind is just as important as any other part of the process by which we grow in our faith and commitment." Alister McGrath, The Passionate Intellect: Christian Faith and the Discipleship of the Mind (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 21. This comment comes in the context of Matthew 22:37, emphasizing the mental aspect of discipleship. James Sire maintains that focusing on Jesus' mind and intellect is a part of the Christian Life. See chapter 9 of James W. Sire, *Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000). J. P. Moreland argues that epistemic irresponsibility can be remedied by the instruction of apologetics. He claims that the development of anti-intellectualism in the church was a result of revivalism. It contributed to the more emotional aspect of faith, which overshadowed the use of reason. He states that another component was the ease at which Christianity withdrew from academia. Moreland claims that Kantian critical philosophy ruled, whereas in earlier days Protestants formed universities and studied numerous fields of scholarship. He argues that apologetics has been lost or almost overshadowed. Moreland claims that apologetics would remedy the dearth of intellect in the church. He believes it should be taught within the realm of discipleship and on a regular basis within the local church. Apologetics is not for a select few, but it is declared to be a discipline for every Christian. He defines apologetics as "a New Testament ministry of helping people overcome intellectual obstacles that block them from coming to or growing in the faith by giving reasons for why one should believe Christianity is true and by responding to objections raised against it." J. P. Moreland, Love God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997), 26.

# **Normative Nature of Disagreement**

Normative concepts are also found in the discussion on disagreement. For the most part, the general question of disagreement looks at the rational response to disagreement. The question points to a sense of norms: how *should* one respond? In his textbook on disagreement, Bryan Frances introduces an ethical sense of disagreement. Similarly, Graham Oppy qualifies the reasons for one's response as normative. The reasons are guides for how agents should respond. According to the norms of disagreement, Oppy states that there are cases of excess in both responses. There are cases of "dogmatism" when the individual ought to revise belief; on the other hand there are cases of "servility" where the individual ought not to revise belief. Thus, Oppy identifies some response to disagreement as violating epistemic norms.

Jonathan Matheson also claims that the question of disagreement is normative: Are individuals *obligated* to respond in one particular way? Matheson makes a distinction between an ethical response and an epistemological response: "There may be a number of *actions* that are rational to undergo upon discovering a disagreement, but our focus is on what should (and should not) be *believed* in such situations." Thomas Kelly contends that analyzing the normative approaches to disagreement may change one's response to disagreement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>See Bryan Frances, *Disagreement* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2014), 5-6. He makes a distinction between epistemological and ethical questions in disagreement. Epistemological questions are normative because they ask if one *should* continue to hold a belief that is rejected by a peer. Ethical questions ask if one should continue to *act* on the contentious belief, emphasizing behavior. Audi makes the distinction as well, but he emphasizes the normative nature of the intellectual question. Ethical as well as epistemological questions are relevant for apologetics. Both conceptions of epistemic and ethical norms would appear to be constitutive of apologetics in that apologists persist in disputed beliefs and act according to those beliefs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Graham Oppy, "Disagreement," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 68 (2010): 183-99.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>He states, "We are reasonably good at recognizing some kinds of cases of *dogmatism*— where subjects fail to revise their beliefs in line with the beliefs of others in circumstances in which they ought thus to revise—and some kinds of cases of servility—where subjects revise their beliefs in line with the beliefs of others in circumstances in which they ought not thus to revise." Ibid., 189.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Jonathan Matheson, *The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 2.

Robert Audi argues that intellectual responsibility is required in responding to disagreement. According to Audi, one goal of intellectual responsibility is to find a balance between "dogmatic self-assurance" and "disabling fear of conviction." He lists five characteristics that are essential to the nature of intellectual responsibility. First, in order to be responsible, individuals are required to seek evidence as well as counterevidence. According to Audi, some individuals have a greater degree of obligation to seek evidence, particularly philosophers. Second, the responsible thinker is called to reflective equilibrium, which is the idea of conscientiously reviewing one's views on vital issues on a periodic basis.

The third trait of intellectual responsibility involves identifying grounds for belief. The intention of conscientiously examining grounds is to develop a greater clarity in order to communicate them to others. He states, "We can then explain our views better and are less likely to miss some basis of belief." A fourth dimension of responsibility is to review social beliefs. It has been argued that testimony is a rich source of knowledge, and therefore, others have additional evidence. Finally, to be responsible is to reflect on one's conviction concerning grounds for belief. Audi claims that conviction can be disproportionate with one's support for particular beliefs. The support for a particular belief may be overestimated or underestimated.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Robert Audi, "The Ethics of Belief and the Morality of Action: Intellectual Responsibility and Rational Disagreement," in *Rational Belief: Structure, Grounds, and Intellectual Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 258. In several places, my thesis resembles Audi's assessment of disagreement. While he does not articulate a stance on virtue epistemology, his sentiment for finding a balance between the two default positions of disagreement resonates with my critique of disagreement *via* virtue. Obviously, his assessment does not address the issue of apologetics and disagreement. However, the next chapter on apologetics, disagreement, and virtue will reflect similarities in Audi's appraisal of disagreement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>These traits are particularly relevant for the practicing apologist.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Audi notes that this pursuit cannot be accomplished with every belief—seeking evidence is required for "important" beliefs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Audi, "The Ethics of Belief and the Morality of Action," 260. This obligation would be applicable to apologists as well.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Ibid., 261. This is another trait that is applicable to the project of apologetics.

The responsible and conscientious thinker will possess these traits as well as possess an awareness of potential disagreement. In response, Audi calls for a "plentitude" of justification; a robust ground for belief. This concept of plentitude calls for a diverse basis for belief such as having auditory and visual support for a belief as well as testimonial support. Intellectual responsibility pushes one to have "evidential adequacy." Audi maintains that evidential adequacy is the possession of evidence that promotes reasonable belief, where the evidence is "knowledge-sufficing." In other words, the belief constitutes knowledge on the basis of the evidence. Throughout his description, Audi's position points to the normative sense of disagreement.

## **Intellectual Virtues**

The discussion of normativity in belief and disagreement has broached the notion of intellectual virtues. This section will attempt to find a fitting description of intellectual virtues, which will interact with the challenges disagreement presents to apologetics. In addition to this factor, this dissertation will seek to identify a conception of intellectual virtues that may solve the issues that have been highlighted in disagreement.<sup>23</sup> This chapter will look to the literature on virtue epistemology in order to elucidate the nature of intellectual virtues.

Epistemology has developed a growing interest in intellectual virtues.<sup>24</sup> In an introductory article to virtue epistemology, Guy Axtell defines an intellectual virtue as "a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Audi, "The Ethics of Belief and the Morality of Action," 271.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>These issues have been highlighted in the conclusions to chapters 2 and 3. The conciliatory position is too restrictive on self-trust and mismanages testimonial sources. The converse is true for the steadfast position. It is too restrictive on social sources of knowledge, leaving it vulnerable to problems of epistemic egoism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>At the popular level, several works have been published concerning intellectual virtues, especially the virtues of open-mindedness and nonconformity. Open-mindedness relates to being open to the reason of others and overcoming cognitive bias—seeing the fallibility of our own reasoning. These works on openness and self-fallibilism include Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012); Sara Gorman and Jack Gorman, *Denying the Grave: Why We Ignore the Facts that Will Save Us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Chuck Klosterman, *But What if We're Wrong: Thinking about the Present as if It Were the Past* (New York: Blue Rider Press, 2016); and James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are* 

cognitive disposition utilized or exercised in the formation of beliefs."<sup>25</sup> Likewise, Jay Wood points to virtue in achieving intellectual excellence.<sup>26</sup> He states, "When we form within ourselves qualities like wisdom, prudence, understanding, intellectual humility, love of truth and similar traits—in short, we embody *intellectual virtues*."<sup>27</sup> He lists foresight, discernment, and studiousness among intellectual virtues. In contrast, vices include folly, obtuseness, gullibility, dishonesty, willful naiveté and vicious curiosity.

Wood finds these virtues and vices especially important for Christians.

Referencing Paul's message about the mind in Romans 12:3, Wood contends that God is not only concerned with *what* Christians think, but *how* Christians think as well. Wood affirms Aristotle's understanding of the virtues, which maintains that the moral and intellectual traits are interdependent. <sup>28</sup> In order to develop intellectually, one must develop morally as well. In addition, moral development is also dependent on intellectual development.

Smarter than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies, and Nations (New York: Doubleday, 2004). On the other hand, there are works designated to the virtue of intellectual courage and boldness. See Adam Grant, Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World (New York: Viking, 2016); and Angela Duckworth, Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance (New York: Scribner, 2016). All of these works align with the virtues expressed in the conciliatory and steadfast views. Some of these works argue that it is a virtue to be cognitively open and honest. Other works hold that it is a virtue to be intellectually courageous and bold. The partnering vices include stubbornness, and dogmatism within steadfastness; while, the vices of gullibility and spinelessness are attached to conciliating.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>Guy Axtell, "Recent Work on Virtue Epistemology," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (January 1997): 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>According to Wood, virtues "are well-anchored, abiding dispositions that persons acquire through their own voluntary actions and that enable them reliably to think, feel and act in ways that contribute to their fulfillment and sometimes to the fulfillment of those with whom they interact." W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 43. Wood sees virtues as traits that enable individuals to be successful, viz. to flourish. On the other hand, vices circumvent flourishing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>Wood does draw a distinction between intellectual and moral virtues. He remarks that the intellectual virtues are an "extension" of their moral counterpart. He states, "while the distinction can be made in the Bible between moral and intellectual virtues, they all serve the same end by contributing to the purposes for which God created us." Ibid., 19. Wood finds four parallels between moral and intellectual aspects of an individual. First, virtuous development is a process. Second, this development is not automatic, requiring time and effort. Third, development occurs in social settings rather than in isolation. A fourth parallel notes that virtue may wane, which implies proactivity. He further notes a fifth parallel, which looks at their interdependency: "We cannot succeed in the moral life without also displaying important intellectual virtues." Ibid.

Jason Baehr develops "natural groupings" of intellectual virtues. <sup>29</sup> Rather than forming rigid classes, he contends that these groups can help understand virtues. They can be understood through their relationship with other virtues as well as through the resulting successes of these virtues. <sup>30</sup> He views the cognitive life as making certain demands on the individual. These demands can be met through the assistance of intellectual virtues. They play a role in the act of inquiry. The demands of knowledge vary. Some knowledge makes no demands, such as cases of immediate perception. Other knowledge demands further inquiry and careful analysis.

Baehr draws distinctions between intellectual virtues and faculties. He makes a clear distinction in identifying the two positions as faculty-based virtue and character-based virtue. These distinctions emphasize how virtue epistemology understands the nature of virtues and how they relate to the individual. The distinction between faculty-based virtues and character-based virtues accounts for the distinction between virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism.

## Virtue Reliabilism

Ernest Sosa's "The Raft and the Pyramid" is seen as the catalyst for virtue epistemology. <sup>31</sup> Following his seminal essay on virtue epistemology, he developed the view labeled "virtue perspectivalism." Sosa states that this view contains two main elements. It involves a concept of intellectual virtue and a concept of epistemic perspective. He explains, "Roughly, a cognitive faculty or intellectual virtue is a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Jason Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind: On Intellectual Virtues and Virtue Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>Ernest Sosa, "The Raft and the Pyramid," in *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). *Knowledge in Perspective* is a compilation of Sosa's works in epistemology. "The Raft and the Pyramid" was first published in 1980. Subsequent works illustrate the development of his understanding of virtue. For example, see Ernest Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

competence to distinguish the true from the false in some field of propositions F when in certain circumstances C."<sup>32</sup> In other words, virtuous faculties consist of the agent's reliable competencies to obtain the truth in various situations.

Sosa's virtue perspective identifies a point between internalism and externalism, or rather, a mixture of both views. He compares the skills of a professionally trained tennis player with those of a novice. The novice may get in a lucky shot, but it is nothing in comparison with the steady disposition of the professional. He posits that the praise for the skill is not directed toward the process; rather, it is directed toward the athlete. For Sosa, virtue includes cognitive faculties:

In speaking of the agent's actions that are *right* and of the cognizer's beliefs that are *knowledge*, we speak implicitly of the virtues, practical or intellectual, seated in that subject, which give rise to that action or belief, and which add to the worth of that subject as agent or cognized, and make her reliable and trustworthy over an interesting field of possible choices or beliefs, and over an interesting span of circumstances <sup>33</sup>

Epistemologist John Greco also subscribes to the view of virtue as a form of reliabilism. He states, "the central claim of virtue epistemology is that, Gettier problems aside, knowledge is true belief which results from a cognitive virtue." Greco argues that virtue is a type of ability that reliably attains a certain result. His central thesis in his work on virtue epistemology, *Achieving Knowledge*, is that "knowledge is a kind of success from ability." Analogous to skilled athletes, Greco relates epistemic ability with athletic ability, which reliably achieves results. There are cases in which the ability may misfire,

<sup>34</sup>John Greco, "Virtues and Vices of Virtue Epistemology," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 23, no. 3 (September 1993): 413.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>Ernest Sosa, "Virtue Perspectivism: Response to Foley and Fumerton," *Philosophical Issues* 5 (1994): 29

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup>John Greco, *Achieving Knowledge: A Virtue-Theoretic Account of Epistemic Normativity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3. He goes on to claim that knowledge is more than mere success, which may involve luck. Knowledge can also be understood to be a type of achievement, to which "the knower deserves credit." Ibid., 7.

but it is nonetheless reliable. Cognitive virtue possesses the same ability in an intellectual respect. Greco argues that positive epistemic status for beliefs is achieved *via* cognitive virtue.

Greco underlines the normative stance of virtue epistemology by looking to the "knower" rather than to what is known. Similar to the normative nature of virtue ethics, "virtue theories in epistemology try to understand the normative properties of beliefs in terms of the normative properties of cognitive agents." In this sense, virtue epistemology is "person-based rather than belief-based." He affirms Aristotle's concept of intellectual virtue. Aristotle's stance on intellectual virtue factored for reliability as well. This view incorporates both responsibility and reliability. Greco posits that knowledge requires responsibility as well as reliability.

# Virtue Responsibilism

The distinction between virtue reliabilism and responsibilism may be subtle, but the distinct premise of responsibilism will lead to a more developed definition of intellectual virtues. Lorraine Code was one of the first philosophers to introduce the term "responsibilism." She argues that responsibility is intrinsic to epistemology. When individuals are faulted for consequences as a result of their lack of knowledge, she contends that the blame implies a notion that the epistemic agent should have known better. Code's argument for epistemic responsibility is inferred from premises that "knowing well" is morally significant. This notion factors into matters of character when

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>Greco, "Virtues and Rules in Epistemology," in *Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*, ed. Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 137.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>Aristotle argues, "Every virtue or excellence both brings into good condition the thing of which it is the excellence and makes the work of that thing be done well." Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), Book II, ch. 6, quoted in Greco, "Virtues and Rules in Epistemology," 137.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup>Greco, "Virtues and Rules in Epistemology," 137.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup>Code, *Epistemic Responsibility*.

individuals are epistemically evaluated.<sup>40</sup> Code focuses on the agent, and the process of inquiry. In this way, the individual's disposition and background "are epistemologically relevant" because they act as enabling and/or constraining factors in the growth of knowledge, both for individuals and for communities."<sup>41</sup>

Code claims that the primary intellectual virtue is epistemic responsibility. She maintains that epistemic irresponsibility involves acts of unwarranted and unjustified beliefs. Instances of epistemic irresponsibility include belief on "scanty" evidence, as well as "avoiding exposure to evidence that might put it in doubt. This self-deceptive procedure seems to be quite plainly irresponsible."

James Montmarquet, who is professor of philosophy at Tennessee State

University, claims that epistemic virtues explain the responsibility of belief. 43 Individuals

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup>It also contains a weight of normativity. Code states that, "*knowing well* is essential to the achievement of human well-being, hence cognitive activity *should be* performed as responsibly as possible." Code, *Epistemic Responsibility*, 70.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>Ibid., 26-27.

work on confirmation bias, see Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson, *Mistakes Were Made (but Not by Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts* (New York: Harcourt, 2007). Tavris and Aronson focus on the nature of disagreement and cognitive dissonance. The problem of cognitive dissonance is that it fuels deception when evidence is presented that counters an original belief. The authors are keen to point out that experts are frequently prone to cognitive dissonance. Their book contends (*via* examples) that it is commonplace for experts to falsify data or cling to cognitive dissonance in order to evade the consequences of confessing error. An example of this is found in Nancy Pearcey's *Finding Truth*. Pearcey contends that John Searle's adherence to materialism is an indication of his cognitive dissonance about that position and what he understands about the world: "Searle is trapped in cognitive dissonance—what his worldview tells him contradicts what he knows from general revelation." Nancy Pearcey, *Finding Truth*: 5 *Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes* (Colorado Springs: David Cook, 2015), 47-48.

As James A. Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993). Montmarquet's position is internalist. He holds the epistemic agent morally responsible for some actions of beliefs. There are those virtues that are practiced that appropriately receive praise or blame. He states, "After all, the hallmark of this view, at least as presented here, is the strong status it gives to something very much *like* a moral responsibility for belief." James Montmarquet, "An 'Internalist' Conception of Epistemic Virtue," in *Knowledge, Belief, and Character: Readings in Virtue Epistemology*, ed. Guy Axtell (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 145. However, his internalist position in nuanced in that he does not hold to a responsibility of all virtues or that all vices would be blameworthy. Those virtues that are not within the responsibilist domain are the epistemic *faculties* listed by Greco and Sosa. The middle position that Montmarquet describes is that there are vices that reside within responsibility, but these vices are not blameworthy. They are "subject to our direct control, but [the] corresponding vices are not." Montmarquet, "An 'Internalist' Conception of Epistemic Virtue," 145. Finally, the third category includes those virtues and vices within direct control (as opposed to complete control, such as doxastic voluntarism) that merit praise or blame. The concept of trying or motivation is critical for Montmarquet's theory.

are held responsible for how they manage intellectual virtues. Exercising moral and epistemic virtues is witnessed when individuals attempt to exemplify them, use them in order to achieve an "overarching" moral or epistemic characteristic, <sup>44</sup> or use the virtue to accomplish a task. <sup>45</sup> In turn, individuals are blameworthy for epistemic vices because they did not supply a sufficient effort to exemplify a particular virtue.

Montmarquet finds three classes of virtues to be the most important. The virtue of impartiality involves being open to the ideas of others as well as a willingness to engage in open dialogue. The second class of virtues is intellectual sobriety. This class is contrary "to the 'enthusiast' who is disposed, out of sheer love of truth, discovery, and the excitement of new and unfamiliar ideas, to embrace what is not really warranted, even relative to the limits of his own evidence."<sup>46</sup> The third category is intellectual courage. To be courageous is to "examine alternatives to popularly held beliefs, perseverance in the face of opposition from others (until one is convinced one is mistaken), and the determination required to see such project through to completion."<sup>47</sup>

These dispositions are balanced. For instance, to be open to everyone would not be virtuous. Like wise, being open to only those who one considers to be truthful is also not virtuous. Montmarquet states that it would be similar to being kind only to those who deserve kindness. These virtues are also construed in a manner that avoids excessive objectivity and subjectivity. In the virtue of openness, the tendency is to see that the beliefs of others are initially plausible. Virtues like intellectual openness and courage

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup>He phrases this activity as "doing one's duty or arriving at the truth." Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility*, 41.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup>Because of these uses, Montmarquet claims, "We can now say that individuals are responsible for the exercise of epistemic virtues either by trying to exemplify some particular ('regulative') virtue or by trying—even though one may have other goals as well and even though one's goals will not have to be framed in just these terms—to be epistemically conscientious." Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup>Ibid.

regulate epistemic conscientiousness. Concerning regulation, he writes that unregulated conscientiousness "may degenerate into some form of intellectual dogmatism." In other words, the very nature of a virtue assumes regulation or restriction. Unrestricted intellectual activity leads to excess. Accordingly, these epistemic behaviors are habits rather than implemented principles.

Linda Zagzebski's *Virtues of the Mind* expanded the literature on virtue responsibilism. <sup>49</sup> Her account is a motivation-based theory. The virtuous individual is motivated to attain truth and avoid falsehood. The intellectual virtues are understood to be analogous to moral virtues. She attempts to construct an epistemological framework from a moral basis. According to her claims, epistemology has focused on moral action in the sense of evaluating how individuals attain knowledge. Zagzebski finds that epistemology has only utilized consequentialism and deontology, neglecting virtue.

Zagzebski claims that a virtue-based theory provides more assistance in evaluation because it is open to a more robust determination of evaluative levels, whereas acts-based theories are binary. They only appraise beliefs on the basis of being justified or unjustified—right or wrong. In this sense, she contends that the individual is required to do the bare minimum to be credited with a justified status. A virtue approach not only

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup>Montmarquet, Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility, 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup>Jason Baehr attributes Zagzebski's work as responsible for putting the responsibilist position on the "philosophical map." Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup>An important concept for Zagzebski's virtue theory is the act of evaluating belief. This idea connects with the discussion of holding individuals culpable for their beliefs. Although she disagrees with the direction of Sosa's virtue theory (she understands Sosa's position as holding intellectual virtues through consequentialist goals and justification through deontological principles), she affirms his expression toward epistemic evaluation as seen through the lens of virtue: "I think, then, that Sosa's insight that it would be fruitful for epistemology to make the primary object of evaluation intellectual virtues and vices and to attach secondary justification to individual beliefs because of their source in intellectual virtues is a significant contribution to the field." Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 9-10. Her position is also closely related to Montmarquet's intellectual virtues. He positions the virtues as character traits, identifying three main intellectual virtues: integrity, sobriety and courage. Montmarquet claims that the virtues are not necessarily truth conducive. Whereas, Zagzebski argues that they are conducive. Yet, she does appeal to Montmarquet's position in its view of virtue as regulative (corrective) in forming beliefs as well as the relationship between virtues as motivated toward knowledge. She also references Code's epistemological responsibilism. Code sees the agent as proactive rather than the passive knower in reliabilism. However, Zagzebski states that Code does not offer a full "aretaic" premise underneath responsibilism.

seeks to avoid blame but also to receive praise. In this way, this view attempts to pay tribute to the varying degrees of successes.

Jason Baehr also incorporates the notion of motivation in his theory of virtue. He sees intellectual virtue as motivated by a desire for knowledge. This motivation leads to other virtues as well. The drive for knowledge leads intellectual virtue to also "spawn a range" of specific virtues such as intellectual courage, determination, and perseverance.<sup>51</sup> By its nature, the aspect of desire translates into a personal characteristic. In this sense, the means of knowing is attributed to the individual's character and the means by which he uses his own abilities in order to fulfill the desire for knowledge and understanding.

Baehr focuses on the act of inquiry. Engaging in inquiry requires intellectual traits such as motivation, whereas an individual disposed to intellectual laziness would have difficulties beginning the process of inquiry. Another component of successful inquiry is intellectual honesty. This virtue overcomes the obstacles of cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias, which he labels self-deception. In order to combat selfdeception, intellectual honesty involves honest reflection on beliefs. Reflection brings harmony between beliefs. Intellectual honesty "might require abandoning a belief, suspending judgment, or conducting further inquiry."<sup>52</sup>

The distinction between reliabilism and responsibilism is found in how they both appraise the role of cognitive faculties. Code coined the term "responsibilism" in order to emphasize the role of character in epistemology. She believed that reliabilism, as a term, did not touch on the "active nature of knowers/believers." Sode posits that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup>Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 5. He includes a variety of other virtuous traits in this list.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup>Code postulates, "In my view, a knower/believer has an important degree of choice and regard to modes of cognitive structuring, and is accountable for these choices; whereas a 'reliable' knower could simply be an accurate, and relatively passive, recorder of experience. An evaluation of human knowledge-seeking in terms of responsibility is instructive precisely because of the active, creative nature of that endeavor." Code, *Epistemic Responsibility*, 51. She goes on to concede that the term "reliabilism" is more fitting for epistemology, concerning truth and warrantability. However, her development of virtue responsibilism makes greater distinctions in focusing on the epistemic actions of intellectual character.

Sosa's reliabilism overlooks the activity of the agent. The faculties are considered to be reliable, where she argues that it is the knower who responsibly uses the faculties. Virtue responsibilism intends to show greater emphasis on the agent rather than the agent's faculties. Zagzebski further criticizes epistemic approaches that place value on knowledge in such a way that is derivative of the process that produced it. She objects to the analysis because it appraises impersonal processes. According to Zagzebski's argument, the value is in the *motivated* individual who reliably uses faculties and evidence standard evidence standard individual who reliably uses faculties and

Baehr contends that virtue reliabilists needlessly attribute faculties with virtue because they also emphasize the agent's character in improving intellectual faculties. For instance, Sosa claims that a faculty is virtuous in that it either transmits or generates truth. Furthermore, faculties are improved by intellectual virtues. When it comes to introspection, Sosa writes: "Through greater attentiveness and circumspection one can normally improve the quality of one's introspection and thus enhance its accuracy." Thus, it appears that enhancing the faculties requires what has been categorized as intellectual character traits. Baehr claims that the distinction between reliabilism and responsibilism is found in their respective theoretical focus. Virtue reliabilism focuses on epistemic reliability, whereas virtue responsibilism focuses on intellectual character. 57

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>Linda Zagzebski, "From Reliabilism to Virtue Epistemology," in Axtell, *Knowledge, Belief, and Character*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup>She concludes her article on this suggestion: "If a cognitive agent is motivated to get to the truth and acts in ways that are reliable because of that motive, and is successful in reaching the truth because of the motive and the reliable processes to which the motive gave rise, that is a cognitive agent who has reached an epistemic state worth having—not just truth, but knowledge." Ibid., 121. A similarity can be found in the conceptual distinctions noted in M.R. Bennett and P.M.S. Hacker's work on philosophical concepts in neuroscience. They claim that the faculties are not solely responsible for their results; data and information gathered is not attributed exclusively to the processes. The authors argue that the whole person is responsible for acquired information. The eye does not see, but it is the individual who uses the eye to see. They identify these assertions as "conceptual confusions." For instance, they note that it is a conceptual confusion to make the claim that your brain "tricked" you into having a thought. See M. R. Bennett and P. M. S. Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003). Likewise, praising the faculties over the individual would appear to be a conceptual confusion.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup>Sosa, Knowledge in Perspective, 228.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup>Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 61.

This section does not intend to settle the debate between virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism. Instead, its purpose is to illustrate responsibilism's focus on intellectual character and its development of intellectual virtues.

## Conclusion

This chapter builds the case for responsibilism's view of virtue epistemology. First, responsibilism focuses on the nature of character in epistemology. In this way, it emphasizes how individuals use or overlook intellectual virtues. Individuals can act responsibly in their assessment of evidence—conversely, epistemic agents act irresponsibly when they hold beliefs on "scanty" evidence. Secondly, responsibilism assumes the normative nature of epistemology. This assumption is inherent in the field of virtue: responsibilists make normative claims when they label certain epistemic behaviors responsible or irresponsible.

Finally, this chapter also builds the case for responsibilism's relevance to the discussion of the previous two chapters. Virtue responsibilism expands on the discussion of intellectual virtues. This dissertation has already noted the discussion of intellectual virtue in disagreement. However, the discussion of virtues in the literature is limited—it does not clarify their nature. The field of disagreement can include responsibilism in identifying virtuous responses to disagreement. What's more, apologetics uses the language of virtue in its literature.<sup>59</sup> In addition to intellectual virtues, the element of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup>Lorraine Code maintains that beliefs held on "scanty" evidence are irresponsible actions because the agents do not extend their search for truth. She contends that this is a form of self-deception. Code, *Epistemic Responsibility*, 90.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup>J. P. Moreland explicitly articulates the necessity of virtues in the practice of apologetics. J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind*. Moreland identifies five groups of virtues: truth seeking, faith & hope, humility, vigor, and fidelity to God that are necessary for apologetics. He also encourages Christians to develop the habit of looking for agreement in disagreement by identifying a common ground. Philip Dow, a specialist in education and pedagogical methods, has also written about developing intellectual virtues in the field of apologetics. While his main contention implements virtue in education, he is also concerned with virtuous character in apologetics. He holds that the training of intellectual virtues will bring glory to God through a strengthened apologetic; and moreover, a strengthened apologetic would be the "natural byproduct" of virtuous development. Philip E. Dow, *Virtuous Minds: Intellectual Character Development* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2013). He writes, "As a natural byproduct of their consistent and earnest pursuit of the truth, intellectually virtuous Christians will not be easily intimidated or threatened by

character is found in apologetics and disagreement. Apologists discuss the *ethos* of the speaker, emphasizing the motivation behind using the arguments. <sup>60</sup> Similarly, responses to disagreement are determined by epistemic norms, which individuals must follow. Thus, responsibilism is a fitting epistemic perspective concerning apologetics and disagreement because it focuses on intellectual character. The next chapter will elaborate on this position by showing that virtue responsibilism can supply satisfactory responses to the deficiencies in disagreement as well as provide support for apologetics.

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arguments that might have otherwise undermined their faith and the potential faith of those listening." Dow, *Virtuous Minds*, 97. Apologetics will benefit from intellectual virtues by giving Christians a "command of the evidence" and "sharply tuned thinking skills," which develop clear and persuasive defenses. Dow emphasizes the nature of character in the apologetic project. He states that character is more important than arguments. Thus, apologetics is more than arguments by also demonstrating virtuous character.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup>For example, James Beilby writes about the underlying concern for *ethos*: "One's attitude and approach to apologetic conversations must be appropriate. Too often, Christians have been condescending, arrogant and dismissive in their apologetic encounters." James K. Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 157.

## CHAPTER 5

## INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES

This chapter expands on the concepts of intellectual character virtues. The last chapter developed a strong relationship between virtue responsibilism and the challenge of disagreement. This dissertation claims that virtue epistemology can provide a response to the challenges that epistemology of disagreement imposes on Christian apologetics. The previous chapter began to build an argument that virtue responsibilism can provide both a satisfactory and advantageous response to the challenge of disagreement. It is satisfactory because it answers the problems by relating to the characteristic traits of apologetics and disagreement. This chapter focuses on two specific virtues. The virtues of intellectual courage and intellectual open-mindedness can provide satisfactory responses to the challenges of disagreement. The virtue of intellectual courage treats the nature of the speaker, while intellectual open-mindedness speaks to the nature of testimony. The next chapter will address how these virtues are advantageous in two settings of disagreement.

## An Argument for Intellectual Courage

Many philosophers have referred to intellectual courage as a virtuous characteristic. It has witnessed a dominant presence in virtue epistemology. Both virtue responsibilists and reliabilists have appealed to the exercise of courage in epistemic endeavors. James Montmarquet holds that intellectual courage is one of the most important classes of the intellectual virtue of conscientiousness. The class of intellectual courage includes, "the willingness to conceive and examine alternatives to popularly held

beliefs, perseverance in the face of opposition from others (until one is convinced one is mistaken), and the determination required to see such a project through to completion."

Linda Zagzebski contends that virtues make the possessor good. "A person is a better person for being open-minded, careful and thorough in evaluating evidence, intellectually courageous, and able to recognize and to rely on trustworthy authorities." John Greco, a proponent of virtue reliabilism, has claimed that intellectual courage is a part of a family of virtues that are a result from one's abilities. He writes, "It is plausible, for example, that the successful exercise of intellectual courage is also intrinsically good, and also constitutive of the best intellectual life."

# **Intellectual Courage** as a Rational Response

The case for intellectual courage can be viewed in contrast to the conclusions of conciliation.<sup>4</sup> If it is a virtue, then courage will take on a certain sense of balance, which is to say that there are excesses of courage that cannot be considered to be courageous. Augustine's *Against the Academics* is pertinent to the virtue of courage in the presence of disagreement.<sup>5</sup> It is an autobiographical work, illustrating Augustine's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>James A. Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), 21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Linda Zagzebski, Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 95.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>John Greco, *Achieving Knowledge: A Virtue-Theoretic Account of Epistemic Normativity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 98.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>The literature on disagreement has not addressed the application of virtue epistemology in the presence of disagreement. The arguments for intellectual courage, which I examine, do not explicitly engage with the field of epistemology of disagreement; however, the implications will be elucidated in the next section.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>The City of God also entertains the notion of virtues. In this work, Augustine contrasts secular philosophy with Christian thought. His understanding of courage can be drawn out of this discussion. Although he was not responding to Aristotle directly, there are corresponding themes. Augustine objects to the contention that the ultimate good can be found in this life. The goal or aim of the courageous person seems to be the most critical aspect of Aristotle's view. After all, his main argument is that all things point to the good. In numerous references, he indicates that courage is aimed at what is "noble." From the beginning of Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle affirms that people "nobly declare that the good is that at which all things aim" (1094 a2). The term "noble" is translated from to kalon, which can relate to three main meanings: "noble," "beautiful," and "fine." Bartlett and Collins contend that the most prominent use

struggle with philosophical skepticism. After rejecting Manichaeism, Augustine challenges the doctrines espoused by the New Academy, which are found in Cicero's writings. As Augustine understood it, the Academy's skepticism claims that suspending belief is the virtuous response. In respond, he does not find suspending belief in this manner to be virtuous. Instead, Augustine contends that the Academicians have hindered his pursuit of truth. "They somehow persuaded me of the plausibility that man cannot find the truth. Accordingly, I had become lazy and utterly inactive, not daring to search for what the most ingenious and learned men weren't permitted to find" (2.9.23). Despite their arguments, he intends to pursue truth.

Augustine brings two cases against the academics. First, the wise man can diligently pursue *and obtain* the truth. Secondly, it is not wise to always "restrain assent." (2.13.30). He affirms that wisdom can be obtained even in the presence of doubt. Wisdom is the goal rather than certainty. One can reasonably pursue wisdom in

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of to kalon in Nicomachean Ethics refers to what is admirable "in a moral sense." Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins, Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: A New Translation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 1. In war, a courageous individual will endure pain because he chooses what is noble. In addition, the courageous individual endures the hardships of battle because it is the noble act—abdicating would be shameful. However, the goal is critical for endurance. Endurance tout court is not courageous if it is not aimed at what is noble. As Charles Young points out, the goal of the soldier is not enduring pains, but succeeding in battle. Charles M. Young, "Courage," in *A Companion to Aristotle* ed. Georgios Anagnostopoulos (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009), 451. He argues that the object of confidence (cheer) is success. (Young does not hold to the traditional definition of "confidence." Instead, he defines *thrasos* as cheer.) The soldier faces his fears to be successful, which is the noble action. The motivation behind endurance is critical in determining courage. Courage aims at the good for noble purposes. Augustine contends that one must possess piety in order to have true virtue. Piety regulates the cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice. The virtues are not salvific; however, happiness can be found in this life because there is hope in future salvation. The essence of fortitude is endurance. Although it is not salvific, those who are faithful will endure because of their hope. He states, "Therefore, we are saved, so we are made happy by hope. And as we do not as yet possess a present, but look for a future salvation, so is it with our happiness, and this 'with patience;' for we are encompassed with evils, which we ought patiently to endure, until we come to the ineffable enjoyment of unmixed good; for there shall be no longer anything to endure." Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, NPNF vol. 2, 403. Augustine concludes that the philosophers have rejected the future hope of salvation: "Salvation, such as it shall be in the world to come, shall itself be our final happiness. And this happiness these philosophers refuse to believe in, because they do not see it, and attempt to fabricate for themselves a happiness in this life, based upon a virtue which is as deceitful as it is proud." Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Later, Augustine sets forth a similar challenge: "Is it more plausible that nothing is perceived and that one should always withhold assent? Or, is it more plausible that the wise man is able to obtain truth and thus, need not always withhold assent?" (2.13.30.38-42).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>In Book 1, Augustine's companion Licentius defines wisdom as knowledge, as well as the "diligent" pursuit of knowledge (1.8.42).

the face of skepticism, while still being cautious of "rash assent." Wisdom finds a balance between the two positions. Although he focuses on wisdom, Augustine also highlights the virtue of fortitude. According to his view, fortitude is courageously pursuing wisdom rather than withdrawing belief. In Augustine's case, he diligently pursues wisdom in spite of the challenges of doubt and uncertainty. He also proceeds in the face of opposition against the Academy. Confidence aims at successfully obtaining wisdom. Wisdom.

Aquinas finds a regulating relationship between the virtues.<sup>11</sup> Reason points to the good, and is held diligently by fortitude: "The good of being firm in holding to the good of reason against the impulse of passion is found chiefly in perils of death, which are most difficult to withstand" (*ST* II.1 Q.61 a.3). Aquinas finds instances of courage and fortitude outside of the perils of death, namely instance of wavering reason. He contends that the virtues "overflow" and regulate other virtues. Fortitude applies to prudence. Prudence "pertains to every moral virtue, from the fact that it is a habit, that it should be accompanied by a certain firmness so as not to be moved by its contrary, and this, we

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>He illustrates this point with a metaphor of two travelers who have approached a fork in the road. The skeptic never proceeds from his position. The other traveler is excessively trusting. The trustworthy traveler reaches his destination only through luck. Augustine cannot support either position. The skeptic is unable to be carried by testimony or reason. The auspicious traveler appears to be swayed by testimony and reason; yet, he travels by chance. In Book 1, the discussion dismisses the role of chance, and thus astrology, from the nature of truth. Chance affords too much opportunity for error (1.6.18).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>This concept is similar to Aristotle's description of courage. Although the circumstances are different, a noble goal motivates courage.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>In his comprehensive biography about Augustine, Peter Brown claims that this period was a critical turning point in Augustine's thought. It served as the crystallization of the pursuit of wisdom. Also, apropos to disagreement, Brown argues that Cicero may have influenced Augustine's approach to skepticism. He writes, "Cicero had deployed his scepticism only against the doctrinaire philosophers of his age: he was far too much of a Roman to attack the established religion of his ancestor." Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 70. Brown believes that Augustine imitated Cicero's approach. Augustine could dismiss Manichaean philosophy; yet still hold to the traditions of his ancestors, i.e., Monica.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>In responding to the question of whether there are four cardinal virtues, Aquinas describes a structure of the formal principles of virtue. Reason is the formal principle of the good. Reason is put into practice through justice. Reason is also curtailed by the passions—first by temperance. "Secondly, by the passions withdrawing us from the dictate of reason, for instance, through fear of danger or toil, and then man needs to be strengthened for that which reason dictates, lest he turn back; and to this end there is fortitude" (*ST* II.1 Q.61 a.2).

have said, belongs to fortitude" (*ST* II.1 Q.61 a.4). He claims fortitude involves "steadfast" or "firm" actions. 12

His thoughts on fortitude also relate to his concept of daring (*ST* II.1 Q. 45). Aquinas' idea of "confidence" is similar to Aristotle's thoughts. They affirm that daring is contrary to fear. <sup>13</sup> Aquinas states that his use of daring is not to be confused with "straying from the order of reason" (*ST* II.1 Q. 45 a.1). Instead, it is the use of reason directed toward a goal. According to Aquinas, daring is contrary to fear in a similar way that hope is contrary to fear, but hope and daring are not identical. Daring is the effect of hope, "just as despair is the effect, not a part, of fear" (*ST* II.1 Q. 45 a.2). Hope brings about the sense of daring and confidence in that it approaches a threat, boldly attempting to overcome or neutralize it. In contrast, fear and despair withdraw and avoid a threat for fear that the threat will be victorious. According to Aquinas' approach, reason aims at the good. Therefore, daring can justifiably aim at "evil" when it is reasonably aimed at the ultimate good of overcoming the evil threat.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>The nature of fortitude or courage is explained in the exemplar virtues. These are seen in God's character. The paragon of the virtues is found in the *summum bonum*. Virtue must preexist in God because all things preexist in God. For instance, the Divine Mind is itself wisdom (*ST* II.1 Q.62 a.5). Thus, courage conforms to the nature of God as well: "God's fortitude is His unchangeableness."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Aristotle claims that confidence is the opposite of fear. He also relates confidence with endurance. Endurance appears several times throughout his description of courage in *Nicomachean Ethics*. He writes, "For the sake of the noble, therefore, the courageous man endures and does what accords with courage" (1115b24). Endurance is supported by confidence—one could not endure given a deficit of confidence. Confidence is also a sense of good hope (1116a3). Thus, "Courage is a mean with respect to what inspired confidence and fear in the situation spoken of, and it chooses to endure what it does because it is noble to do so, or because it is shameful not to" (1116a10). Yet, confidence has to find balance. Excessive confidence is not courageous. It is reckless because it proceeds with no sense of danger or harm. Aristotle also discusses the nature of confidence in *Rhetoric*. In this work, confidence is described as the opposite of fear. He defines fear as a mental response to potential events that could lead to destruction or pain. The feeling of fear is associated with the expectation of some future destructive event. He notes that some individuals are free from these threats due to their feelings of "prosperity." Aristotle states that this is not confidence but insolence, contempt, and recklessness (1383a1). In contrast, he characterizes confidence as the expectation or anticipation of safety or the absence of alarm (1383a19). Confidence is caused by "taking steps" to circumvent trouble (1383a20-21). For instance, when we have not wronged anyone, we can feel confident that we are free from trouble. Aristotle further describes confidence as a feeling that comes from experience. Based on experience, individuals can appropriately feel confident when they have faced similar troubles; yet, they safely avoided it. Their experience "gives them the means of dealing with it" (1383a33). Therefore, experience provides confidence through instruction. Past experiences teach people how to manage threats of danger. Experience provides the reasonable expectation of success.

The general nature of courage is defined as remaining firm or steadfast. Augustine and Aquinas discuss courage or fortitude in terms of persevering despite opposition. The opposition could consist in one's opposing emotions, such as fear of death. In another sense, the opposition could be represented in the terms of unregulated reason, which is seen in Aquinas' account of "overflow." He also understood courage or fortitude in terms of firmness in accord with reason, opposing the emotional inclination to withdraw.

Contemporary views show similarities with these historical views. For example, Jason Baehr defines intellectual courage as essentially "sticking" or "persisting" in one's perspective or belief. Although, simply sticking to a belief does not qualify as a virtuous action of the intellect. The virtuous disposition of intellectual courage may not possess an "ultimate" goal for an epistemic good. For Baehr, courage involves responding "to a conflict between the achievement of a particular good and one's own safety or well-being."

Baehr defines intellectual courage as being motivated to obtain an epistemic good in the presence of potential threats. Intellectual courage involves taking risks: "An intellectually courageous person may risk social, political, professional, or bodily *injury*; or she may risk the *loss* of a considerable good along these lines." Therefore, intellectual courage aims at an immediate concern for truth (epistemic goods) despite the potential for injury or loss.

Nathan King holds a more developed view of the intellectual virtue of perseverance.<sup>16</sup> His case for perseverance attempts to demonstrate that it is not a species of intellectual courage. The nature of perseverance entails features that may not be found

<sup>16</sup>Nathan L. King, "Perseverance as an Intellectual Virtue," *Synthese* 191 (2014): 3501-23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Jason Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind: On Intellectual Virtues and Virtue Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 164.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Ibid., 172.

in virtuous courage. However, his position offers collaboration between the virtues. According to King, perseverance is frequently required in situations that exhibit intellectual courage.<sup>17</sup>

Perseverance can be an intellectual virtue when facing intellectual obstacles. The obstacles require a degree of difficulty, which exacts a "serious" effort from the individual. In addition to the obstacles and effort, the goals are aimed at an epistemic good. Intellectual perseverance balances the actions of irresoluteness and intransigence. The quality of being irresolute is a deficiency of perseverance. It is "the disposition to give up too early on one's intellectual projects in the face of obstacles to the successful execution of these projects." Rather than abandoning a project because it is difficult, perseverance is required to overcome the obstacles.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>King enlists the position of virtue responsibilists in order to develop his definition of perseverance. While he does not declare a position on virtue responsibilism, he conditions his position as one that "emphasizes" intellectual character virtues in contrast to virtue reliabilism. King defines these "as characters of excellent cognitive character involving a motivation for acquiring, maintaining, or distributing intellectual goods, and typically require efforts on the agent's part for their acquisition and maintenance; further, they are characters that end to make their possessor excellent *qua* person." King, "Perseverance as an Intellectual Virtue," 3504. In the same way that Baehr's position appeals to the notion of "personal intellectual worth," King emphasizes a similar concept. He uses this concept to differentiate instances of intellectual excellence from intellectual virtue, which renders a person excellent.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Helen Keller is the paragon of virtuous intellectual courage. King contends that her intellectual habits developed over time. This effort was performed despite the number of obstacles that she faced throughout her life. Keller's motivation was aimed at epistemic goods. This trait is recounted in Van Wyck Brooks' work on Ann Sullivan. Sullivan stated that Keller was "unwilling to leave a lesson if she did not understand it all, and even at the age of seven she would never drop a task until she had mastered it completely." Van Wyck Brooks, *Helen Keller: Sketch for a Portrait* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1956), 17, quoted in King, "Perseverance as an Intellectual Virtue," 3505. Keller's goal is similar to Aristotle's contention that the virtue aims at the "noble" or the admirable. Helen Keller is thus admirable for these personal qualities. In the sense of a personal-worth account of virtue, Keller's trait indicated her excellent personal-worth in her perseverance. King states, "These agents display characters of personal excellence in their pursuit of goods, some of which are distinctively intellectual (e.g., true beliefs, knowledge, and understanding). The development and maintenance of these character [traits] requires serious effort." Ibid., 3506.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>This definition of perseverance can be further clarified by looking at examples of perseverance that do not qualify as virtuous perseverance. King states that perseverance does not always require "serious effort." For instance, a student may lazily approach a project. Despite his poor work ethic, he completes the project. According to King, the student persevered, but it was not virtuous because it lacked effort. Lazily approaching one's work does not convey an excellence on the individual.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>King, "Perseverance as an Intellectual Virtue," 3508. He also includes the dispositions of slothfulness or laziness in completing the projects. Thus, King does not qualify completion as a feature of perseverance. Likewise, an individual may exhibit personal virtuous perseverance; yet never acquire the goal. His view states that virtuous perseverance requires overcoming obstacles *via* serious effort that is motivated by an epistemic good.

Intransigence is the disposition that goes beyond a reasonable degree of perseverance. King states, "Whereas irresolution is a disposition to give up too early on one's projects, intransigence is the disposition to give up too late, or not at all." He notes two ways in which intransigence exceeds virtuous perseverance: The intransigent individual persists despite finding evidence that the project cannot progress. Perhaps the project showed promise in the beginning, but it later becomes clear that the project should have been abandoned. Secondly, intransigence can be demonstrated in projects that are not worthwhile because they are not aimed at "noble" goals. 22

## **Definition**

Following the general trend of these concepts of intellectual courage, intellectual courage can be taken to be a trait aimed at epistemic and intellectual goods despite epistemic obstacles. In the case of epistemic conflict, the obstacles are manifested in the form of disagreement. Because the focus is on epistemology of disagreement, King's notion of perseverance is incorporated into the definition of demonstrating intellectual courage in the presence of disagreement. In this way, the vices of intellectual courage in disagreement are akin to King's vices of perseverance: *intellectual intransigence*. These terms speak to the nature of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>King, "Perseverance as an Intellectual Virtues," 3508.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>King appeals to the interdependent relationship of virtues to argue that practical wisdom (*phronesis*) regulates perseverance. An individual uses practical wisdom to discern which projects are worthwhile, how long to persist or endure in a project, and the feasibility of completing the project. King also claims that perseverance is not a "species" of courage, but is a separate virtue. He concedes that they may cooperate in specific circumstances. It can assist intellectual courage when one faces obstacles of fear. However, it is not clear how King separates the two virtues. According to King, one of the qualities of perseverance is having an awareness of obstacles and enduring these difficulties despite their challenges. Extracted from a sense of courage, he states that a pure form of perseverance is the idea of "an agent hard at work in her intellectual pursuits, aware of their difficulty but proceeding undaunted, unafraid, undistracted, and without discouragement." King, "Perseverance as an Intellectual Virtue," 3518. It should be noted that King employs elements of courage in this definition. The person who perseveres is neither fearful nor discouraged. His broader categorization of perseverance confuses the activities of the intellectual virtues. This is witnessed in his use of courageous terms to define "pure" perseverance. King states that courage has a "thicker psychological profile" than perseverance. To put the latter in the larger category of courage is to put "significant pressure on taxonomies of the intellectual virtues." Ibid. Montmarquet places perseverance within the aspect of courage. He also places courage within the general trait of epistemic conscientiousness. Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility*, 23.

intellectual courage in disagreement, but they do not emphasize the "danger" inherent with intellectual boldness and daring. These themes can be adapted from Aquinas' reflection on confidence.

A sense of intellectual confidence is also illustrated in Baehr's appraisal of intellectual courage. He finds this type of courage as comprised of "psychological toughness or imperviousness." He states, "The intellectually courageous person is not deterred or overcome by fear of apparent danger in her pursuit of epistemic goods."

This sense can then be applied to disagreement. For example, despite having trepidation due to disagreement, the individual is not deterred nor controlled by fear. Intellectual courage pushes past the difficulties in order to continue the pursuit of epistemic goods or continue to hold an epistemic position. This definition can also be applied to apologetics.

From this definition, virtue is a solution to the conciliatory problem. By proposing a balanced self-trust, virtue corrects the conciliatory view's enervation of the self. Conciliatory views discourage pursuits aimed at epistemic and intellectual goods. The virtuous response offers a balanced response of self-trust and managing testimony. By finding the mean between the challenges of disagreement and the pursuit of truth, virtue provides a means of pursuing epistemic targets despite disagreement. Aquinas' definition of daring and confidence is the manifestation of intellectual courage. It aims to overcome the challenges of skepticism. Because reason aims at the good, intellectual courage must be regulated by reason in order to obtain the ultimate good. The threat to conciliation is disagreement. Conciliation aims to overcome the threat by withdrawing. For Aquinas, the act of withdrawing does not aim at the ultimate good.

Similarities are also found between Augustine's *Against the Academicians* and the literature on disagreement. Augustine finds agreement with the Academicians in some areas by granting their authority. He does not want to be portrayed as being "insolent" in

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 178.

contesting "the authority of highly learned men, among whom Cicero above all must carry weight" (3.7.14.2-4). Furthermore, Augustine agrees with Cicero about the difficulty in determining which philosophical school is right.<sup>24</sup> In this way he does not reduce peer status. However, Augustine rejects their skeptical response to uncertainty and disagreement. For example, Zeno rejects anything that can appear to be false, which is to say that assent should be withdrawn from any belief that can be challenged (2.5.11.12-14).

Augustine maintains that the skeptical position discourages intellectual aims and results in the hindrance of reason.<sup>25</sup> For the skeptic, the challenge of disagreement conjures doubt and uncertainty. However, he concludes that this does not nullify the pursuit of wisdom and truth. He affirms, "Knowledge still doesn't abandon us, even if we're uncertain about it. We know that Zeno's definition is either true or false. Hence we do not know nothing" (3.9.21.75-76). In a similar manner, disagreement with "peers" is a challenge, but it does not obstruct intellectual pursuits. Augustine's example of intellectual courage illustrates a balanced response to the conciliatory position.

## **Examples of Intellectual Courage in Apologetics**

Augustine's example of intellectual courage can be seen as an instance of general disagreement regarding the pursuit of truth. His example is useful in elucidating a way in which virtue can satisfy the problems of conciliationism. In order to fully expand on this matter of disagreement's challenge to apologetics, this chapter will elaborate on examples of intellectual courage demonstrated in apologetics.<sup>26</sup> These examples are not

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>In this dialogue, Augustine states, "Gentlemen, I have it in common with this man to be in doubt about who among you is following the truth" (3.8.17.30-31).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>Augustine queries, "Did this definition move you, my dear Platonist, to try to draw those interested away from the hope of learning, so that they abandon the whole business of doing philosophy?" (3.9.18.13-15).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>The use of examples or exemplars is pertinent to the theory of virtue. Virtue theorists have incorporated the use of exemplars throughout its history. Aristotle discussed the appeal of exemplars in *Nicomachean Ethics*. Exemplars are the manifestation of virtuous dispositions. One can learn and begin to

intended to imply that there are not myriad examples of apologists demonstrating virtuous character.

## Tim Keller

Tim Keller has expressed intellectual courage in his practice of apologetics. His work is related to epistemology of disagreement in that he regularly engages individuals who would qualify as peers. These individuals are well educated and knowledgeable. Similar to Augustine, Keller demonstrates a respect for his audience as well as attempting to settle the disagreement. He does not opt to resolve the disagreement by conciliating. Instead, Keller presses the dialogue while remaining firm in his position. Despite the challenge of peer disagreement, he persists by engaging the beliefs of those who disagree.

In a recent *New York Times* interview, Tim Keller demonstrates the character virtue of intellectual courage. Columnist Nicholas Kristof asks Keller several questions about religious belief, specifically, if Kristof can still be a Christian despite having heterodox beliefs.<sup>27</sup> When asked if Christians can doubt the reality of the Resurrection.

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replicate the virtues through studying the practical applications of how exemplars employ their character. Virtue theorists do not contend that this is a mere impersonation; nor is virtue claiming that individuals simply imitate exemplars. Mere impersonation would not suffice due to the reality of diverse situations. Regarding the project of apologetics, apologists will not always face the same objections or arguments. Virtue theorists claim that virtue can take shape in numerous situations. Therefore, the student must learn how to extrapolate the virtue from the exemplar's particular situation and apply it to his own circumstances. Linda Zagzebski classifies exemplars as "supremely" admirable individuals. See Linda Zagzebski, Exemplarist Moral Theory (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). In this work, Zagzebski classifies three categories of exemplars: sages, saints, and heroes. Each class exhibits one particular virtue when compared with any other virtue. For sages, the prominent virtue is wisdom. Saints predominantly demonstrate love, while heroes, of course, predominantly manifest the virtue of courage. Zagzebski argues that intellectual virtues are not based on rules, and therefore, intellectual courage cannot be acquired through following rules. Regarding moral courage, she states, "Courage is often used as a paradigm case of a virtue. One acquires courage by imitating a courageous person." Linda Zagzebski, Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 150. In the same way, intellectual courage cannot be determined merely by following rules. She contends that imitating a virtuous person is critical in acquiring intellectual virtues.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>Nicholas Kristof, "Am I a Christian, Pastor Timothy Keller?" *The New York Times*, December 23, 2016, accessed May 16, 2016, https://www.google.com/amp/s/mobile.nytimes.com/2016/12/23/opinion/sunday/pastor-am-i-a-christian.amp.html.

reducing the doctrine to an unessential belief, Keller's response illustrates the fortitude of his apologetic method. He shifts the burden back to the interviewer, claiming that the nature of "integral beliefs" is not exclusive to religious belief. Instead, Keller suggests that removing an essential belief from a cohesive group "destabilizes" the entity. He states, "A religion can't be whatever we desire it to be." In order for Kristof to remove beliefs from a perspective such as a religion, he would have to show that it would be easily accomplished in other groups as well. Keller implies this with an example: "If I'm a member of the board of Greenpeace and I come out and say climate change is a hoax, they will ask me to resign. I could call them narrow-minded, but they would rightly say that there have to be some boundaries for dissent or you couldn't have a cohesive, integrated organization."

This response illustrates intellectual courage. Kristof's question implied the narrow-minded nature of Christians who demand that the adherents of Christianity follow orthodox beliefs. Keller shows wisdom in broadening his example to include a progressive group who equally requires its members to "toe the line." Conformity is not exclusive to religious faith. Further into the interview, Kristof presses the same question about his identity as a Christian when he denies the Resurrection. Keller's response is firm, but sensitive. He states that he is not qualified to make any rash assessment without speaking at length with the individual. However, he holds that anyone who denies the Resurrection is "outside of the boundary."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>In another prompting, Kristof questions the use of eyewitnesses and evidence to affirm any belief, questioning the inconsistent manner in which Keller and Christians in general suspend skepticism in their own faith, but extend it toward other traditions, such as Islam, Hinduism, and Taoism. Keller affirms the use of evidence to support Christian belief. However, he does not define reason and faith as logically incoherent concepts. Keller sees faith as incorporating reason to infer his beliefs. He claims, "My faith is to some degree based on reasoning that the existence of God makes the most sense of what we see in nature, history, and experience" which he compares with Thomas Nagel's opposition to materialism, who "wrote that the thoroughly materialistic view of nature can't account for human consciousness, cognition and moral values." Kristof, "Am I a Christian, Pastor Keller?" Keller also pulls from Nietzsche to make the case for the reality of values. In this way, Keller placed the burden back on those who disagree with Christianity; yet, they would agree with the reality of values and human cognition. The implication is that Christianity can provide a better explanation for the basic assumptions of life.

This type of apologetics approach is the central contention of his latest work, *Making Sense of God*. Keller challenges the basic assumptions of secular thought, claiming that theistic belief makes better sense. Despite the challenges of his secular audience, he counters the basis of their presuppositions. Keller claims that reason points to a more robust explanation for life and its numerous experiences: "It is the sense that we are more and life is more than what we can see in the material world." Thus, secular thought is understood to be severely restricted. Keller analyzes secularism by exposing the falsehood that it is grounded in purely rational thought.

Secularism has problems in developing strong concepts of meaning, freedom, and identity. According to Keller, the problem of evil poses a particular problem for a secular conception of meaning. From the secular perspective, meaning is created rather than discovered. In this sense, meaning serves as a purely instrumental good. This instrumental understanding of created meaning is placed in objects or actions that are found in the world; however, this sense of meaning is fleeting. The meaning placed in relationships is empty due to the reality of death. Created meaning is problematic in that everything will ultimately be lost, reducing to a meaningless existence. The secular response suggests not focusing on this sardonic reality: "When secular people seek to lead a meaningful life, they must have discipline to *not think* much about the big picture."

Secularism also falls short in identifying sources of value. If the source of values ultimately falls to the individual, then every action is permissible. He concludes, "Created meaning is a less rational way to live life than doing so with discovered meaning." Similar to his interview in *The New York Times*, Keller places the burden on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical* (New York: Viking, 2016), 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup>Ibid., 67.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>Ibid., 69.

the dissenters. He agrees with secularism's focus on helping the needy, but questions the assumption supporting the action: why is it the right behavior and how do they know? Keller cites Charles Taylor, "Moral positions are not in any way grounded in reason or in the nature of things but are ultimately just adopted by each of us because we find ourselves drawn to them." Thus, Keller persists despite disagreement.

He also challenges the secular ideal of identity. Keller concludes that the modern notion of identity is incoherent, illusory, crushing, and fracturing. It is incoherent from the secular perspective because secularism teaches that individuals must analyze and follow their desires. Yet, it is not that simple. Keller maintains that there are multiple desires, which may conflict. What is most often the case is that people will choose the desire that does not conflict with the culture. The problem lies with the aspect of self-affirmation because affirmation can only be found in others. This aspect of external affirmation makes secular notions of identity illusory. He further charges that identity is crushing because the ideal of success places an unbearable burden on the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, ON: Anansi, 1991), 14, quoted in Keller, *Making Sense of God*, 71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>He further challenges the assumptions of freedom by analyzing how it moved from just one good to the ultimate good. Keller argues against consensus views of freedom, contending that freedom cannot be the summum bonum. He suggests that there are a number of freedoms, rather than the overly romanticized notion of freedom. There are conflicting freedoms, and one has to choose which freedom is more valuable. (He gives the analogy of an elderly man who loves his grandchildren, but also loves to eat whatever he wants to eat. Upon receiving a poor bill of health, the man has to choose which freedom is more valuable: spending time with his grandchildren or having an unhealthy diet.) The option of choosing the freedom collides with issues of meaning and value: what gives freedoms their worth?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>He provides a brief history of the concept of identity. Prior to the contemporary landscape, identity was not an individualistic ideal. Instead, individuals found their identity in the community. Keller claims, "If you ask people in a traditional culture, 'Who are you?' they will most likely say they are a son or a mother or a member of a particular tribe and people. And if they fulfill their duties and give up their individual desires for the good of the whole family, community, and their God, then their identity is secure as persons of honor." Keller, *Making Sense of God*, 119. He finds the modern perspective to be the opposite of the traditional view.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup>Keller gives a thought experiment, comparing a ninth century Anglo-Saxon warrior with a contemporary man in Manhattan. Both share the same desires: aggression and same-sex desire. Keller contends that identity will be found in the culture and not within the individual. The warrior will suppress sexual desires, which violate his contemporary code of conduct. He will express his aggression because it is accepted. In contrast, the Manhattanite will suppress his aggression to physically harm people because it betrays the contemporary "liberty principle." The man finds no problems with the sexual expression because others affirm him in this contemporary setting.

individual. Finally, Keller contends that the secular notion of identity is fracturing. The notions of self-created identity, freedom, meaning, and values are tethered to a vicious selfishness that is cancerous to upholding any of the other ideals.

Keller's challenge to the secular worldview expresses an intellectual courage that resonates with definitions of intellectual courage. He presses the argument despite the apparent obstacle of epistemic disagreement. His persistence is virtuous by aiming at epistemic goods. For instance, Keller's arguments against secularism intend to point out falsehoods. The main falsehood is that Christianity is based on faith, while secularism is based on reason. Throughout his arguments, he challenges this assumption by showing that secular principles are not solely based on reason. What's more, he forcefully and methodically demonstrates the irrational suppositions that "subconsciously" support ideals such as identity and meaning.

In relation to Aquinas, Keller demonstrates boldness and daring. Although there are threats, manifested as vehement disagreement, Keller aims at overcoming these challenges. For example, his speaking engagements demonstrate intellectual courage. Throughout his ministry, he has hosted discussions for "skeptics" in order to answer questions. With the release of both of his works on apologetics, Keller has been invited to secular venues. For instance, Keller has been invited to "Talks at Google" at Google's headquarters in California, concerning his books. <sup>36</sup> Pastor and blogger, Justin Buzzard was present at the first event. On his blog, Buzzard remarked on Keller's interaction with the audience: "After his message, Keller took about 25 minutes of Q&A. He handled the secular, Bay Area, Google-engineer questions masterfully—with humility, concern, and intellectual rigor." Buzzard further notes, "Two of the questioners expressed astonishment

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>Timothy Keller, "The Reason for God," Talks at Google, entry posted March 18, 2008, accessed June 3, 2017, https://talksat.withgoogle.com/talk/the-reason-for-god; and Timothy Keller "Making Sense of God," Talks at Google, entry posted October 19, 2016, accessed June 2, 2017, https://talksat.withgoogle.com/talk/making-sense-of-god-an-invitation-to-the-skeptical.

over the fact that this was the largest turn out they've ever seen for a Google *Author Talk* event."<sup>37</sup>

In accord with Aquinas' notion of daring, Keller personified daring in that his aim was to overcome intellectual threats posed against Christianity and his own message. Through his publication of his apologetical books, Keller has been able to attain his goal of actively engaging with Christianity's intellectual opponents. These characteristics also cohere with Baehr's disposition of toughness or imperviousness. The character traits also relate to King's definition of intellectual perseverance. Although success is not a necessary feature of intellectual courage, Keller's work through his church can be taken as a success. He was persistent in his epistemic pursuit in the presence of intellectual adversity.

## J. P. Moreland

Another example of intellectual courage is demonstrated in J. P. Moreland's defense of dualism.<sup>39</sup> He labels his defense as "the argument from consciousness for the existence of God."<sup>40</sup> Moreland's central claim is "that the existence of finite, irreducible

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>Justin Buzzard, "Tim Keller Speaks at Google," The Justin Buzzard Blog, entry posted March 5, 2008, accessed June 3, 2017, http://www.justinbuzzard.net/2008/03/05/tim-keller-speaks-atgoogle/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup>Recall Baehr's claim that intellectual courage "consists in a certain psychological *toughness* and imperviousness. The intellectually courageous person is not deterred or overcome by fear of apparent danger in pursuit of epistemic goods." Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 178.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup>I will offer only a terse characterization of Moreland's argument. The most pressing matter for identifying this argument is providing an example of intellectual courage, addressing how Moreland exhibits intellectual courage and why I believe this to be the case. As a result, my hope is that this brief explanation of his argument does not disparage its robust nature. The goal is delineating how Moreland represents intellectual courage in his apologetical method.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup>His work on consciousness and the soul has been published in numerous works and articles. A case is made for God in his chapter on dualism and philosophy of the mind in *Scaling the Secular City*; see chapter 3. Moreland also coauthored a work about anthropology and its implications on ethics. See J. P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae, *Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000). His more scholarly work on the nature of consciousness (the focus of this section) provides a thorough analysis of the "canonical" philosophical positions about the concept of consciousness in philosophy of the mind. See J. P. Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God: A Theistic Argument* (New York: Routledge, 2008). He also published a work aimed at more devotional and biblical purposes. See J. P. Moreland *The Soul: How We Know It's Real and Why It Matters* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014). For further development about his argument for dualism, see J. P. Moreland, "Substance Dualism and the Argument from Self-Awareness," *Philosophia Christi* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2011):

consciousness (or its regular, law-like correlation with physical states) provides evidence (with a strength I characterize) for the existence of God."<sup>41</sup> He concludes, "If irreducible consciousness exists, then this provides evidence for God's existence."<sup>42</sup>

The intention of the argument is to challenge naturalistic explanations for consciousness. According to his assessment, the naturalist must provide responses to both structural properties and emergent properties. He argues that the only option for naturalists is to reject emergent properties. Naturalists cannot accept emergent properties because they betray causal closure. <sup>43</sup> If naturalism cannot accept emergent properties, then it must supply a response to epiphenomenalism.

Moreland argues that naturalism can only support strong physicalism rather than a weak physicalism. Naturalism's only response is strong physicalism because the emergent properties of consciousness and mentality betray the notions of the "Grand Story" of creation and causal closure. The explanations of the atomic theory of matter and evolutionary theory are the "combinatorial" modes of explanation behind the Grand Story. These explanations restrict the ontological reality to physical explanations: "No non-physical entities exist, including emergent ones." The challenge for the naturalist is

<sup>21-34;</sup> and J. P. Moreland, "A Conceptualist Argument for a Spiritual Soul," *Religious Studies* 49, no. 1 (March 2013): 35-43. For an interaction with neuropsychologist Jason Runyan about the issue of emergent properties, see *Neuroscience and the Soul: The Human Person in Philosophy, Science, and Theology*, ed. Thomas M. Crisp, Steven L. Porter, and Gregg A. Ten Elshof (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), chapters 4 through 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>Moreland, Consciousness and the Existence of God, ix.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup>Moreland maintains that structural properties develop from and share properties. It is "constituted by the parts, properties, relations, and events at the subvenient level." Ibid., 15. He contends that a structural property is not a new property, but a new pattern; while emergent properties are *sui generis*: "An emergent property is a unique, new kind of property different from those that characterize its subvenient base." Ibid. Therefore, it is a novel property and not just a new pattern.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup>The "Grand Story" of creation is defined as the original "creation" of all reality, which includes space, time, and matter. Big Bang cosmology can be taken as the contemporary understanding of the "Grand Story."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup>Moreland, Consciousness and the Existence of God, 7.

twofold. Moreland contends that the naturalist must respond to the challenge of emergent properties as well as responding to the challenge set forth based on the reality of emergent properties, i.e., an argument for God's existence can follow from properties such as mental properties.

Theism has no problem explaining mental properties: "Consciousness is ontologically basic for theism since it characterizes the fundamental being." Moreland defines basicality as the description of phenomena rather than an explanation. If an explanation is required, the implication is that the phenomena are derivative and explained by other basic phenomena. Consciousness is also a challenge to naturalism because it is foreign to the theory's assumed materialism. According to Moreland's assessment, the rival theory of theism can easily incorporate consciousness into its ontological explanation of reality and experience. Thus, theism is proposed as the more epistemically adequate position in light of the challenges facing naturalism.

Elsewhere, Moreland has argued for the value of the soul. Despite challenges, he maintains that it is a justified concept. He states, "A robust case can be offered for the view that consciousness and the soul are *immaterial*—not physical—realities." His argument for the importance of the soul aims at a more biblical expansion of the concept. Moreland contends that the concept of the soul, and thus dualism, should not be overlooked. The concept of the soul should be taught because the Bible implicitly points to the reality of the soul. He further holds that the Bible assumes an immaterial view of consciousness. He claims this despite disagreement at the academic level. He writes, "Most lay Christians would be surprised to learn that among contemporary Christian

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup>Moreland, Consciousness and the Existence of God, 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup>Moreland, *The Soul*, 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup>Moreland appeals to Matt 22:23-33 and Acts 23:6-9 as textual support for the existence of the soul. He maintains that these passages affirm that the soul departs the body at death, waiting for the general resurrection of the body. Ibid., 55.

intellectuals, there is a widespread loathing for substance dualism."<sup>49</sup> Moreland argues that Christian objections to dualism are drawn from either an opposition to Greek philosophy or that science has refuted the existence of the soul. He maintains that biblical passages challenge Christian physicalism. He further claims that some Christian academics reject dualism because they conflate generic dualism and radical Platonic dualism. <sup>50</sup> These ideas are distinguished between how they view the body: Platonic dualism views the body as worthless and evil. Generic dualism does not require a low view of the physical. <sup>51</sup>

Moreland's approach is another example of virtuous intellectual courage. His argument from consciousness represents a virtuous response to the challenge of conciliation. His aim is motivated toward epistemic goods. While his main intent is to make a case for God's existence based on consciousness, he also seeks to challenge dissenters. Through his analysis of the contemporary arguments in philosophy of mind, he also intends to unveil hidden assumptions. For example, in his challenge against naturalism, he finds that it is in line with scientism. Moreland addresses naturalism as an "epistemic posture" rather than a scientific claim. There are two types of scientism: a weak and a strong adherence to scientism.

Moreland argues that weak scientism affirms the value of nonscientific fields; yet, these fields "offer no intellectual results but they are notably inferior to science in their epistemic standing and do not merit full credence." He states that strong scientism restricts epistemic value to science. Naturalism's presupposed scientism determines their

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup>Moreland, *The Soul*, 40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup>He claims that N.T. Wright and Nancy Murphy fail to distinguish these two views.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup>Moreland also argues that belief in the soul is critical for spiritual formation. The church has fallen into prioritizing matter over immaterial, empirical experience. Why are humans/sentient beings of value? "If it is true that we are merely physical objects, we are of little value." Moreland, *The Soul*, 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup>Moreland, Consciousness and the Existence of God, 4.

stance on consciousness: "Either way, naturalists are extremely skeptical of any claims about reality that are not justified by scientific methodology in the hard sciences." The reason for this posture is due to the successes of science. The problem with this methodology arises in its apparent incoherence. Scientism eliminates "first philosophy." In order to eliminate a first philosophy, naturalists would have to employ epistemological methods. The problem of naturalism is its adherence to any form of scientism, which undercuts any philosophical approach or philosophical claims.

There are two parallels between Moreland's stance on consciousness and Augustine's position against the Academicians. First, Moreland's argument for consciousness shares similar epistemic expressions. Moreland provides a "simple" definition of knowledge. He claims that his use of knowledge is to "represent reality in thought or experience the way it really is on the basis of adequate grounds." Given this definition, he intends to remove assumptions of certainty as well as incorporating a sense of doubt that does not eradicate knowledge. Similar to Augustine's persistence against the Academicians, Moreland contends that the soul's existence can be known even in the face of doubt. He states, "One can know something without being certain about it, and in the presence of doubt or with the admission that one might be wrong." Rather than conciliating to a skeptical position or relinquishing doxastic confidence, Moreland

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup>Moreland, Consciousness and the Existence of God, 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>David Papineau defines first philosophy as the investigation of fundamental categories, such as thought and knowledge.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup>Moreland, *The Soul*, 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup>Ibid. Moreland holds that the concept of knowledge with certainty implies a sense of knowledge without certainty. The implication is that certainty is unessential for knowledge if the notion of certainty is not contained within the definition of knowledge. He gives a hamburger analogy: If he asks for a hamburger with pickles, he implies that pickles are not essential to hamburgers. Thus, it would be redundant to ask for it with pickles. Moreland considers Paul's statement in Eph 5:5 to imply a similar idea to knowledge. Paul makes the claim: "This you know with certainty." Moreland contends that this implies that knowledge can be held without certainty, as well. Furthermore, he sees this sort of knowledge in application toward several Christian beliefs: "When Christians claim to have knowledge of this or that—for example, that God is real, that Jesus rose from the dead, that the Bible is the Word of God—they are not saying that there is no possibility that they could be wrong, that they have no doubts, or that they have answers to every question raised against them." Ibid., 14.

suggests that the case for consciousness can be based on adequate grounds.<sup>57</sup> He defines these adequate grounds as everyday experiences, which in turn makes belief in the soul "commonsensical."<sup>58</sup> The fact of disagreement did not eliminate common experience.

The second way in which Moreland's example relates to Augustine regards his epistemic interlocutors. Just as Augustine endured against trained philosophers, such as Cicero, Moreland also contends against well-known contemporary philosophers. <sup>59</sup> The argument for consciousness resists the popularly held philosophical position of naturalism. He suggests that this argument paves the way for "dethroning the naturalist hegemony." <sup>60</sup> This hegemony, however, is witnessing a "Kuhnian" crisis regarding explanations of mental entities. Moreland claims that the argument from consciousness provides a better explanation because it is not restricted by causal closure.

In contrast, the presupposition of causal closure hinders naturalistic explanations. Despite these problems, Moreland concedes, "versions of naturalism have multiplied like rabbits." What's more, he also acknowledges that philosophical naturalism is widely accepted. Thus, Moreland's interlocutors would be considered peers,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup>Stewart Goetz contends that Moreland's basis on the adequate grounds of experience can be understood in the way that Plantinga argues for belief in God that is properly basic. Goetz finds Plantinga's notion of "triggering" conditions to be similar to Moreland's case for the soul. Goetz states that it is "plausible" that belief in the soul is a properly basic belief, which arises from conditions experienced by the individual. Belief in the soul is not based on any other belief, but the belief is "had in light of a direct awareness of oneself" as a soul experiencing numerous sensations: "These occasions provide the gourd for the belief." Stewart Goetz, "The Ghost in the Machine: Embodied Souls," in *Loving God with Your Mind: Essays in Honor of J. P. Moreland*, ed. Paul M. Gould and Richard Brian Davis (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 74.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup>Moreland, "Substance Dualism and the Argument from Self-Awareness," 30. He enlists the support of Jaegwon Kim in this basis for commonsense. Kim states that the "dualism of personhood, I believe, is common lore shared across most cultures and traditions." Jaegwon Kim, "Lonely Souls: Causality and Substance Dualism," in *Soul, Body, and Survival*, ed. Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 30, quoted in Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God*, 191.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup>Moreland's target audience varies throughout his work on the argument from consciousness. For instance, his audience in *The Soul* is not aimed toward academics. However, *Consciousness and the Existence of God* is a technical work intended to make a strong case against naturalism. Moreland also suggests that any of the chapters could be employed in courses analyzing the ontology of naturalism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup>Moreland, Consciousness and the Existence of God, 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup>Ibid., 3. He qualifies that these types of explanations have increased within the "last twenty years or so." This was written in 2008, though.

according to the definition held in disagreement literature. Moreland's argument from consciousness conflicts with the positions of well-known philosophers such as John Searle and Colin McGinn. Moreland pays respect to these thinkers despite disagreement. Moreland confronts these philosophers despite their philosophical stature. For example, he objects to many of Searle's claims. Searle has asserted that it is an "obvious fact of physics" that the ontological nature of reality is purely physical. Moreland forcefully questions this claim, rightly pointing out the fact that it is a mere assertion. He states, "I would like to have the journal reference in a physics journal where this fact was discovered and by whom." Moreland's central contempt for the nature of the discussion is that there is no interaction with those proposing dualism. Instead, he finds the discourse to be reduced to mere dismissals of dualism. His challenge to their dismissals can be seen from the vantage of Aquinas' sense of daring.

In relation to Aquinas' characterization of courage *qua* boldness and daring, Moreland's argument for substance dualism makes a bold claim in response to atheistic monism. He holds that atheistic monism is based on theological and spiritual reasons. He further contends that some atheists dismiss the argument from consciousness out of a fear of God.

In reference to Thomas Nagel's concession, <sup>65</sup> Moreland boldly contends that the fear of God and religion forms the basis for affirming naturalism and strong

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup>In addition, this respect is illustrated in Moreland's critique of McGinn's opposition to theistic explanations. Moreland finds his position "completely out of touch" with contemporary theistic arguments. He states, "This is not characteristic of McGinn. But his dismissal of theism is unworthy of a philosopher of his stature." Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God*, 180. Moreland supports this accusation by demonstrating that McGinn's work is not comprised of relevant or contemporary footnotes. Consequently, Moreland's critique reveals his respect for McGinn's work as a philosopher.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup>John Searle, *Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), xii, quoted in Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God*, 187.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup>Moreland, Consciousness and the Existence of God, 187.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup>Nagel admits, "I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that." Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford

physicalism. He does not claim that this is a "substitute" for the argument; rather, he challenges naturalists to address this fear as a factor in the discussion. Moreland writes, "It would be foolish not to consider the role such fear plays in shaping the dialog in philosophy of mind in its current setting." This sentiment displays a boldness aimed at epistemic goods. Furthermore, Moreland articulates this despite the challenges he may face, such as *ad hominem* allegations. However, it should be noted that he intends to further the discussion. The sociological and psychological factors behind the disagreement are not used in order to disrupt philosophical engagement. Moreland displays virtuous intellectual courage by persisting in the debate about consciousness despite the factors that have caused the disagreement.

## **An Argument for Open-Mindedness**

As was shown in the last chapter, the growth of virtue epistemology increased the discussion on the aspect of intellectual virtues. Unlike the intellectual virtue of courage, open-mindedness is a relatively new entry into the field of virtue. This does not mean that it has only recently been discovered; or that the nature of open-mindedness has not been discussed under different labels. However, the contemporary discussion has witnessed an active engagement in defining the virtue of open-mindedness. It is no surprise that it has been discussed in virtue responsibilism as well as in the literature on disagreement.

In virtue responsibilism, James Montmarquet's three categories of conscientiousness involve a trait of open-mindedness. He holds to a category of impartiality, which displays open-mindedness among other virtues.<sup>67</sup> In order to be a

University Press, 2001), 130. He claims that this fear has lead to some "pernicious consequences" such as the excesses of scientism and Darwinian explanations.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup>Moreland, Consciousness and the Existence of God, 179.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup>He states, "These include such particular qualities as an openness to the ideas of others, the willingness to exchange ideas with and learn from them, the lack of jealousy and personal bias directed at their ideas, and the lively sense of one's own fallibility." Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic* 

virtue it has to be found between the vices of closed-mindedness and gullibility. Montmarquet characterizes openness as a resistance to dismissing unfamiliar ideas. <sup>68</sup>

According to Linda Zagzebski's theory of virtue, individuals who possess virtues have an increased personal moral worth. Open-mindedness has this affect on its possessors. "A person is a better person for being open-minded, careful, and thorough in evaluating evidence." She contends that an open-minded person is motivated by his delight in obtaining the truth. This delight "is strong enough to outweigh an attachment to old beliefs and to lead to the investigation of previously neglected possibilities." Furthermore, an open-minded person is "motivated to consider the ideas of others without prejudice, including those that conflict with her own."

In her work on virtue, philosopher Heather Battaly relates the virtue of open-mindedness to the main character of *House M.D.* Dr. Gregory House exhibits open-mindedness in every episode when he collects the thoughts and research from his team, considering potential diagnoses by weighing their plausibility and justification.<sup>72</sup> She explains open-mindedness as "consistently considering alternative ideas appropriately," rather than dismissing them without reflection.<sup>73</sup>

Epistemologists in disagreement also refer to the virtue of open-mindedness. David Christensen implicitly finds this trait noble.<sup>74</sup> He references the notion of open-

<sup>68</sup>Montmarquet, Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility, 25.

Responsibility, 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup>Zagzebski, Virtues of the Mind, 95.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup>Ibid., 185.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup>Heather Battaly, *Virtue* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2015), 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup>Christensen, "Epistemology of Disagreement: The Good News," *The Philosophical Review* 116, no. 2 (2007): 187-217.

mindedness in a response to disagreement that is characterized by a "live-and-let-live" demeanor. In other words, it is the belief that people should not have to revise beliefs because of disagreement, letting other people believe what they want to believe. According to Christensen, this position may seem open-minded, but it ultimately reduces to an "implausibly close-minded" stance. He implies that open-mindedness is the desired trait. In the same way, Richard Feldman argues that relativistic attitudes are not open-minded. According to Feldman, the absence of open-minded discourse leads to "blatant refusals to engage in intellectually serious argument analysis." Similar to Christensen's view, Feldman implicitly remarks on the admirable quality of open-mindedness in disagreement.

# **Open-Mindedness as a Rational Response**

Wayne Riggs, professor of philosophy at the University of Oklahoma, notes three paradoxes attached to the virtue of open-mindedness. According to Riggs, the motivation behind the virtue is a puzzle: Why would one want to be open-minded? And why should a virtuous individual be open-minded? Although these are considered to be puzzles, they do not seem to be as paradoxical as a third puzzle: How is open-mindedness

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup>Christensen, "Epistemology of Disagreement," 192.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup>Richard Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreement," in *Social Epistemology: Essential Readings*, ed. Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 138.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup>In an essay from 2010, Riggs stated that open-mindedness was nearly ubiquitously listed at the top of everyone's list of intellectual virtues. Wayne Riggs, "Open-Mindedness," in *Virtue and Vice: Moral and Epistemic*, ed. Heather Battaly (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010). Although its popularity may imply that it is the most important virtue or the least controversial, Riggs doubts these assumptions. At the time of writing, Riggs claims that the intellectual virtues had not been thoroughly analyzed in piecemeal fashion. He states that little was understood about open-mindedness as a virtue. It was assumed to be separate from moral virtues. Semantically, it sounds like a purely intellectual virtue. Given this assumption, Riggs discredits the idea that it was the most important virtue. Furthermore, it was not the least controversial because, at the time of writing, Riggs contends that no one had a "firm or precise prephilosophical grip" on the concept of open-mindedness. Ibid., 174. In fact, controversy does surround the nature of open-mindedness. Riggs' intention is to find an account that makes openness both plausible and "interesting." He explains the nature of an interesting account: "An account of a specific virtue is interesting in its own right if it provides us with a unique way of expressing a worthwhile evaluation of our ethical or cognitive practice." Ibid., 175. In this way, the intellectual virtues are seen as a means of appraising the epistemic behaviors.

consistent with confident belief? He believes that the solution to the third puzzle provides a good idea of open-mindedness.

Riggs' description of open-mindedness is similar to the definitions found in Montmarquet and Zagzebski. He states, "In ordinary usage, being open-minded implies being prepared to take seriously the views of others, especially when those views are in conflict with one's own." Although terse, the definition also indicates the challenge of balancing a position of doxastic confidence: When facing challenging beliefs, how can one be open while remaining confident? In order to respond, he separates doxastic confidence from closed-mindedness. In this way, openness must be compatible with strongly holding to one's beliefs. <sup>79</sup>

Open-mindedness does not entail doxastic insecurity. In other words, a belief can be held in a confident manner while the individual is open to outside beliefs—particularly beliefs that conflict with the strongly held belief. He contends that if openness were an epistemic insecurity, then it would not be a virtue. Epistemic insecurity is akin to intellectual cowardice, whereby the individual does not take a firm stance toward any belief.

Riggs attempts to solve this problem by supplying an alternative to insecurity. A virtuously open-minded individual has to have a different reason for being open to other propositions. He offers the concept of reasonably affirming fallibility. The reason that an open-minded individual will entertain challenges is due to the reality of human

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup>Riggs, "Open-Mindedness," 177.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup>Riggs cleverly phrases it, "But, if we are not to be so open-minded that our brains fall out, we must still be capable of strong belief." Ibid., 178. Moreover, Riggs rejects William Hare's qualifications for open-mindedness. Hare states that an open-minded individual will revise beliefs when faced with sound objections, objectively and impartially assessing the evidence. William Hare, *Open-Mindedness and Education* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979), 9, quoted in Riggs, "Open-Mindedness," 179. Riggs contends that Hare reduces open-mindedness to basic rationality. In addition, Riggs claims that there are cases of individuals who mistakenly do not respond to evidence in the appropriate manner, which are not cases of closed-mindedness. Riggs additionally considers cases in which individuals are unable to remember all the salient evidence because there are times when it is easier to recall other forms of evidence. Although he does not identify this psychological aspect, his description looms close to those allegations that resemble cognitive bias.

error. Riggs states, "This need not affect the strength of his belief at all. If it did, then the mere commitment to fallibilism would render strong belief impossible." Merely holding to the possibility that one could be wrong says nothing about doxastic confidence. Thus, the solution to the puzzle is through affirming fallibility.

Riggs provides two practices that can enable the incorporation of the habit of open-mindedness. The first practice is self-knowledge, which is an awareness of one's own fallibility. However, it is more than a general concession that one's position may be wrong. Instead, self-knowledge involves knowing and accepting one's personal intellectual weaknesses and bad epistemic habits. The open-minded agent will actively try to overcome these weaknesses and habits. Riggs states that individuals can become aware of these errors through active self-monitoring, which is the second exercise. One can monitor these actions through exposure to challenging ideas. Although fallibilism is accepted, it is not an inference that one's beliefs are wrong or reasoning has gone awry. Taking the expression from Jonathan Adler, Riggs contends, "One can be prompted to take a challenge seriously without lowering one's confidence in the belief itself."

These responses are taken to solve the puzzles held against open-mindedness. An individual should be motivated to be open-minded by the fact that one is open to the intellectual pursuit of truth. The error of closed-mindedness shackles one to false beliefs, given that they follow from epistemic malfunction. Also, the paradox of open-mindedness and doxastic confidence has been resolved through the affirmation of fallibility. Human error does not imply skepticism or insecurity. Instead, open-mindedness attempts to overcome these problems in order to attain epistemic goods.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup>Riggs, "Open-Mindedness," 181.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup>Riggs states that it is caused through "exposing oneself to a variety of ideas and worldviews." Ibid., 184.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup>Closed-mindedness does not guarantee false belief. However, the nature of open-mindedness, as described by Riggs, contends that epistemic goals will supplant problems of overconfidence.

Jason Baehr's account of open-mindedness intends to find a general description of the virtue. The reason for a general description is the tendency to assume open-mindedness can only occur in the midst of epistemic conflict. He identifies this example as the conflict model. It is characterized by a "willingness or ability to temporarily set aside one's doxastic commitments about a particular matter in order to give a fair and impartial hearing to an opposing belief, argument, or body of belief." However, there are occasions when the individual is neutral, and thus, does not need to set aside beliefs pertaining to the matter. Also, disagreement or conflict is not necessary for a virtuous agent to exhibit open-mindedness. For obvious reasons, the conflict model is particularly relevant to this dissertation. The nature of disagreement and apologetics presupposes epistemic conflict. While this dissertation affirms the idea that open-mindedness does not necessitate this sort of dispute, this section will move on to Baehr's description of open-mindedness in relation to disagreement.

He contends that the difference between the conflict model and the peaceful model concerns the vices that may deter open-minded characteristics. He states, "In the context of intellectual conflict or opposition, open-mindedness is the antidote to vices like narrow-mindedness, closed-mindedness, dogmatism, prejudice, and bias." Open-mindedness also corrects intellectual hastiness, impatience, and laziness. However, I find that these vices do not appear to be cleanly separated from the vices found in the conflict model. For instance, closed-mindedness could be the result of intellectual laziness by not fully investigating opposing beliefs. Moreover, closed-mindedness could be the product of intellectual laziness. The former could be found in examples disagreement, in which

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup>Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 143.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup>Baehr's analogy of the neutral, open-minded individual is an honest and impartial judge. The judge can openly reflect and impartially assess arguments and evidence without setting aside any prior beliefs or notions. The judge is free from any prior commitments or investments in the outcome.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup>Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 144.

the prior vice of lazily working through an argument could result in a mischaracterization of the argument, leading the individual to be closed-minded to further positions in that camp. The latter formula of prior closed-mindedness could lead to lazily considering dissenting views.

Baehr ultimately concludes in a general description of open-mindedness, which is identified as the "adjudication model." Open-mindedness is a general disposition "to assess one or more sides of an intellectual dispute in a fair and impartial way." This case looks to conditions that pertain to instances of disagreement. One of the general qualities concerns the agent's departure or detachment from his own views in order to consider opposing views. The individual "moves beyond or transcends" in order to fully and seriously reflect on the other position. Departing or detaching is considered to be the "conceptual core" of the virtue of open-mindedness.<sup>88</sup>

In order to seriously consider opposing beliefs, one must be open to the arguments and evidences presented by the opposing side. Open-mindedness then is comprised of the trait of being willing to hear the arguments, and follow the conclusions of the evidence. Open-mindedness also has the negative feature of refraining from "bringing the inquiry to a hasty or premature conclusion." The virtue is aimed at carrying out the dialogue despite disagreement. Open-mindedness is also coordinated with other virtues. Baehr argues for a balance or "conjunction" of openness with other virtues. The virtue of openness is balanced

By a kind of mindfulness of and adherence to arguments and evidence, intellectual caution by a firm commitment to discovering the truth, and intellectual tenacity by a willingness to revise a belief or course of inquiry if the evidence finally calls for it. <sup>90</sup>

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 65. Baehr further remarks that one virtue implies another virtue. In the case of openmindedness, one must be motivated to seriously reflect on the matter; this action would also entail virtues

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup>Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 145.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

Finally, open-mindedness does not culminate with the mere initiation of considering an opposing viewpoint. Open-mindedness *qua* intellectual virtue is aimed at epistemic goods. Therefore, the motivation of an open-minded individual is aimed at acquiring truth, justification, and evidence. Accordingly, Baehr adds that open-mindedness "necessarily involves adjusting one's beliefs or confidence levels according to the outcome of the assessment." While this condition does not apply to general issues, it is essential to cases of disagreement.

In addition to Baehr's view, Jack Kwong of Appalachian State University claims that open-mindedness is a type of engagement. Engagement entails "a willingness to make room for novel ideas in one's cognitive space and to give them serious consideration." Kwong aims to expand on Riggs and Baehr's views. He suggests that they are both insufficient in elucidating the essence of openness. Thus, his engagement model attempts to resolve the shortcomings of their analysis.

Engagement is understood to incorporate numerous cognitive activities. In these types of activities, Kwong distinguishes between assessment and understanding. Assessment in open-mindedness serves as an evaluative means, whereas understanding simply tries to "make sense" of different views. He does not list any other engagements, but argues that the essence of engagement is the willingness "to invite the viewpoint into the cognitive space and to connect with it in some manner." In order to qualify as open-mindedness, the motivation must be directed at acquiring truth or understanding. Motivation is a *desire* for knowledge. The desire for knowledge or understanding will also require epistemic care and fairness in engagement.

of fairness, honesty, and objectivity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup>Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 154.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup>Jack M. C. Kwong, "Open-Mindedness as Engagement," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 54, no. 1 (March 2016): 71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup>Ibid., 76.

Engagement is also necessary for epistemic improvement, or the potential for improvement. It may be the case that the contested belief meets rational credibility. In this way, the argument for engagement can be viewed from the standpoint of closed-mindedness. Kwong states,

This is someone who is unwilling to engage with the novel viewpoint, either by refusing to make room for it in her cognitive space . . . by not giving it serious treatment. For such a person, the gateway to new ideas is closed, and the prospect for epistemic betterment is cut off altogether. To advance knowledge for such a person, it is necessary that she engage. <sup>94</sup>

Kwong distinguishes between the virtue of openness and the vice of "reckless openness." This distinction establishes a standard for open-mindedness. Reckless openness indiscriminately considers arguments and views. In contrast, a virtuously open-minded individual shows discretion by employing epistemic traits. According to Kwong, open-mindedness can "decline challenges in an open-minded way," using reasons aimed at epistemic goods: "Genuine open-mindedness therefore imposes conditions of application that help to allay the worry . . . that a person would unnecessarily, unwisely and with risk subject her true beliefs to scrutiny." He contends that open-mindedness consists in a protection against misusing epistemic resources.

In addition to this analysis on the nature of open-mindedness, Merold Westphal's work provides an example of applying virtuous open-mindedness. In developing a method of self-examination for the church, he enlists the ideas of modern atheism found in Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche. He contends that their thoughts can be employed in order to create a healthy self-examination. Westphal contends that they are not the usual source of devotional material, but their focus on psychology and sociology

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup>Kwong, "Open-Mindedness as Engagement," 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup>Jack M. C. Kwong, "Is Open-Mindedness Conducive to Truth?" *Synthese* 194, no. 5 (2017): 1620.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

refers to "real people in the real world." Their works are critical of the church. Likewise, Westphal is equally critical. However, he does not join their ranks in dismissing orthodox doctrines of the faith. Instead, Westphal is critical of "instrumental religion," which is defined as a reduction of God "to a means or instrument for achieving our own human purposes with professedly divine power and sanction." He finds this critique in biblical instruction. For instance, the Gospel accounts are filled with instances of the disciples intending to use their "piety" for their own gains. Westphal aligns this biblical message with the thoughts of these particular atheists. Their aversion to the church is due to selfish piety.

Westphal maintains that the school of suspicion is not representative of logical positivism or scientism. <sup>99</sup> Instead, this form of atheism belongs to the school of suspicion. Westphal defines this thought as, "The deliberate attempt to expose the self-deceptions involved in hiding our actual operative motives from ourselves in order not to notice how and how much our behavior and our beliefs are shaped by values we profess to disown." <sup>100</sup> This thought should not be conflated with a form of skepticism. Instead, it is suspicious of motives. For example, Freud questions the hidden motives and drives behind practices rather than the specific beliefs.

Westphal is open to the critiques of the school of suspicion because their thoughts frequently hit their targets. He exhorts the church to seriously consider the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup>Merold Westphal, *Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup>Westphal makes a poignant distinction: "Where Hume and Kant challenge the soundness of arguments for the existence of God, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud seek to show how theistic belief functions both to mask and to fulfill forms of self-interest that cannot be acknowledged." Ibid., 14. He adds, "No doubt the proper response of Christian thinkers to evidential atheism is to seek to refute it. This can be done by trying to show that there is, in fact, sufficient evidence to warrant religious beliefs and practices rationally. Or it can be done by challenging the way in which the evidentialist demands evidence." Ibid., 16

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup>Ibid., 13.

critiques of Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche because they offer true critiques. Their arguments can be used for personal and corporate examination. While he obviously does not accept everything they have to offer, he maintains that they can be used in order to fully develop a life that can refute skeptics "more effectively than our arguments ever could."

#### **Definition**

These descriptions and examples point to a definition of open-mindedness. Baehr and Kwong' arguments can be used to demonstrate certain dispositions shown in disagreement. Baehr argues that open-mindedness involves the demeanor of willingly transcending one's own position in order to fully consider another view. Kwong's model of engagement qualifies as a position that is voluntarily open to reflecting on the credentials of opposing views. However, the aim must be directed at epistemic goods. Westphal's contribution provides a fuller description to the virtue of open-mindedness, which adds an "agreement" feature. He illustrates a sense of open-mindedness by way of finding agreement. He does not flippantly dismiss opposing views; instead, he openly considers their worth. Westphal lines up with Baehr and Kwong's definitions, but demonstrates the added trait of searching for agreement in the conflict. Thus, the "serious consideration" of other views involves searching for agreement, showing a sympathetic disposition.

# Virtue as a Solution to the Steadfast Problem

The description of open-mindedness *qua* intellectual virtue can address the problems identified in the steadfast position. The vice of egoism can be corrected through the actions of openness defined in Riggs' account. Egoism implies a higher view of one's

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup>Westphal, Suspicion and Faith, 17.

epistemic stance. While it may not explicitly rule out epistemic error, Riggs' view respects the potential of fallibility. His suggestion of self-monitoring could be consistent with epistemic egoism. However, Riggs contends that the aim of self-monitoring follows from one's openness to other viewpoints. Egoism could incorporate a self-reflecting mechanism, but the aim is not to address other views. In this sense, open-mindedness is an admirable quality, whereas egoism reduces to a type of closed-mindedness.

In addition, self-monitoring is employed when seriously considering other positions. It is a regulating virtue. In order to overcome intellectual weaknesses and bad epistemic habits, openness must be self-monitored when seriously considering challenges. Thus, the virtuous agent would cease to be virtuous in the case where he did not self-monitor regarding which challenges to consider. The implications of the steadfast positions that I have analyzed do not extend the type of "consideration" that has been described in open-mindedness. Openness is defined as a virtue that seriously considers epistemic challenges. Riggs' suggestion that exposure to the challenges can aide in overcoming closed-minded habits can be directed toward the cases brought forth by Kornblith and Christensen. In Kornblith's account, it is acknowledged that one may be biased or partial when monitoring for biases in other individuals. However, he does not development a means of overcoming this challenge. Instead, Kornblith's focus is narrowed to the interlocutor's bias. By affirming fallibility, the virtue of open-mindedness provides a satisfactory response to the challenge of bad epistemic habits. In addition, developing openness through exposure to opposing views challenges the steadfastness inherent in Christensen's own position, particularly his omission in engaging with conflicting thoughts over the issue of evolution.

Baehr's definition of openness lends support for establishing an appropriate sense of testimony. He describes open-mindedness as a willingness to detach from one's own view in order to understand and reflect on other views. In order to qualify as a serious consideration, one has to follow the evidence and the argument to its logical end.

This action attributes the appropriate balance toward testimony. It should be considered in light of its evidential force. Kwong's engagement can supplement this endeavor, demonstrating that open-mindedness does not equate with epistemic insecurity. A serious consideration can be extended to opposing views while remaining confident. This definition aligns with this dissertation's case for developing a sense of testimonial management.

Seeking agreement can provide a standard to which challenges are taken seriously. The act of seeking agreement is also a feature of open-mindedness. This expression of sympathy toward conflicting arguments is one of the conditions of a serious consideration of dissenting positions. Westphal provides a good example of looking to conflicting positions, worldviews that are diametrically opposed, in order to identify areas of agreement. This element is missing from the steadfastness of Kornblith and Christensen.

Ultimately, the virtue of open-mindedness attempts to continue the discussion despite disagreement. Open-mindedness is transcending one's views in order to fully consider the views of others. A serious consideration is open to arguments and evidence. It also avoids abrogating the discussion on account of disagreement. This satisfies the fundamental weakness of steadfast views. Steadfastness discourages continued dialogue by appealing to egoism and originality. According to Thomas Kelly's account, other views cannot be fully considered because they were not obtained through one's own cognitive process. This definition of virtuous open-mindedness also provides a satisfactory response to issue of egoism, which attempts to withdraw from the influence of testimony, bringing an end to the dialogue. Instead, open-mindedness continues to investigate evidence in a regulated way. However, it does not reduce to conciliation because openness can be balanced with doxastic confidence. Finally, open-mindedness aligns with a view of self-trust that opposes the egoistic view of self-reliance.

## **Examples of Open-Mindedness in Apologetics**

The following examples demonstrate the virtue of open-mindedness, representing criteria described in the definition. In their apologetical analysis, the apologists have extended a serious consideration of opposing viewpoints in order to acquire an epistemic good. They demonstrate openness through seeking understanding. They also fit the description of a sympathetic disposition, that is, they seek sources of agreement in the disagreement. Sympathy and understanding are thus, constitutive of exhibiting a "serious consideration" of the other viewpoint.

# Stephen T. Davis

Stephen T. Davis' apologetic approach is called a "soft" approach, or soft apologetics. In contrast to hard apologetics, soft apologetics does not find all opposing beliefs to be irrational. Davis contends that those who hold different views can still stand on rational grounds. The approach of soft apologetics is to demonstrate the rationality of Christian belief, while the approach of hard apologetics intends to show the irrationality of unbelief in a particular Christian doctrine. In his description on the soft apologetic approach, Davis focuses on the essential doctrine of the resurrection. <sup>103</sup>

Davis contends that the impulse to defend the faith is rational; it is also an "understandable and quite acceptable impulse." This impulse is found in both

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup>This sentiment is diametrically opposed to proponents of the conciliatory stance, which maintains that evidence will not misdirect observers. Recall that conciliationists hold that dissenting views demonstrate that someone is in error. However, the evidence of disagreement does not identify the individual in error. Thus, both parties must conciliate. This conclusion is based on the assumption of peers. According to the evidence, one's interlocutor is a proven peer. On this basis, the conciliatory position would outrightly reject Davis' position due to its appeal to reasonable disagreement, and its further omission of peer status. Davis does not develop a view of peerage in his method. However, he appeals to disparate worldview settings to explain disagreement, which was shown to be the apologetic method in chapter 2 of this study.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup>He claims that philosophy has its limits in settling disputes: "I am opposing what I consider to be overblown claims that are made on both sides of the issue—that is, by those who hold that rational argument can either verify or falsify the resurrection. I do not believe it can do either (at least in the strong sense of those terms)." Stephen T. Davis, *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup>Stephen T. Davis, "Is It Possible to Know That Jesus Was Raised from the Dead?" *Faith and Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (April 1984): 147.

apologetical approaches, for they want to demonstrate the rationality of Christian belief. Davis opposes hard apologetics because it is weak in engaging nonbelievers. It is a critical matter because he believes that *all* Christians engage in some form of apologetics.

At first glance, "soft arguments" can be seen to offer too much to the opposing view. It would appear to release too much doxastic confidence in essential Christian doctrines, especially the resurrection. However, this would infer a premise that is not found in Davis' account. He does not relinquish his belief due to disagreement. In fact, his apologetic is based on a firm belief in the resurrection. What's more, he affirms the orthodox view of the bodily resurrection of Christ. In his view, the bodily resurrection is "the most acceptable interpretation of the doctrine for Christians." He does defend the historicity of the resurrection, but he does not claim that it is irrational to reject it. <sup>106</sup>

Davis' work on soft apologetics follows from his own personal experiences. In his education, both seminary and secular, he found hard apologists on both sides of the discussion. Both sides claim that the other view was irrational. His response is relevant to epistemology of disagreement: "What is the reason for this puzzling phenomenon? Why is it that people on both sides are so convinced they are obviously correct and the others obviously wrong?" Davis finds some explanations unhelpful. For example, believers may claim that unbelievers are blinded by sin, while unbelievers may claim that believers are blinded by wishful thinking. It is notable that these are examples of peer reduction. The intention is to locate where the other individual went wrong, showing that one's

 $<sup>^{105}</sup>$ Davis, "Is It Possible to Know That Jesus Was Raised from the Dead?" 158n1. He also addresses this in further detail in *Risen Indeed*, chap. 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup>He draws a distinction in the hard position's restrictions. He writes, "A soft apologetic argument attempts to demonstrate the rationality of accepting the Christian position. A hard apologetic argument attempts to demonstrate the irrationality of rejecting the Christian position. Typically the soft apologetic argument claims that an intellectually acceptable explanation of some phenomenon x is some claim y, while the hard apologetic argument claims that the *only* intellectually acceptable explanation of x is y." Furthermore, Davis concedes, "Both the hard apologists and I are interested in persuading people who do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus that it did in fact happen." Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 173.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup>Ibid., 148.

position is superior due to these personal reasons. Davis appeals to distinctions in worldviews in order to rectify the disagreement between Christians and non-Christians. In general, these are "vastly different conclusions . . . about religious knowledge" which is due to the distinctions in the worldviews. <sup>108</sup>

The resurrection event conflicts with the naturalistic perspective. It is the type of miracle that cannot be interpreted in some other way so that naturalism could consistently affirm it. Davis categorizes two types of miracles: soft miracles and hard miracles. Naturalists and supernaturalists can agree on the fact that soft miracles occur. However, they disagree on the cause and meaning of the event. Based on their worldview, supernaturalists can embrace a divinely caused event. On the other hand, naturalists can reasonably accept an event, but would be required to reject divine intervention in order to remain consistent. An example of a soft miracle can be seen in an individual's sudden and unexpected return to health. According to his worldview, a naturalist could reasonably accept a naturalistic explanation, whereas a theist could reasonably explain the event as an answer to prayer.

Hard miracles are the types of events that can only be explained through God's involvement. Davis contends that the resurrection is a hard miracle because the litany of naturalistic explanations has been exposed as extremely weak objections.<sup>110</sup> Because of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup>Davis, Risen Indeed, 148.

<sup>109</sup> In *Risen Indeed*, Davis responds to the criticisms of James Keller. See James A. Keller, "Contemporary Christian Doubts about the Resurrection," *Faith and Philosophy* 5 (January 1988): 40-60. For another response to Keller, see William Lane Craig, "On Doubts about the Resurrection," *Modern Theology* 6, no. 1 (October 1989): 53-75. In his article, Craig makes statements that are in line with soft apologetics. He holds that Keller should not be shaken by his doubts in the resurrection. Craig states, "In light of the evidence, the contemporary Christian who believes in the event is at least as rational as his sceptical counterpart, and, indeed, I should dare say, more rational." Craig, "On Doubts about the Resurrection." 73.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup>He finds the counterarguments weak because they are unable to offer any acceptable alternatives. "The old 19th century rationalistic explanations (swoon theory, stolen body, wrong tomb, etc.) all seem to collapse of their own weight once spelled out, and no strong new theory has emerged as the consensus of scholars who deny that the resurrection occurred. One recent full-blooded attempt to offer such an explanation is Hugh Schonfield's *The Passover Plot*, a bold and entertaining book. But with its highly fanciful hypotheses and selective use of evidence it has drawn much criticism and precious little support from scholars." Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 153.

the absence of any alternative explanation, the naturalist is forced to deny the fact of the event: "Skeptics apparently cannot agree that it has occurred . . . without abandoning religious skepticism." Thus, in order to accept that it occurred, the naturalist would be required to accept that God exists; thus, rejecting their worldview. 112

Davis maintains that the resurrection can be reasonably doubted. Although, he contends that the resurrection can be "known," it cannot be known in the Cartesian sense. He believes it is not "immune to all *rational* doubt." More importantly, he affirms that it can be rationally accepted according to one's worldview—one that accepts God's existence and supernatural events. The soft apologetic approach is sensitive to these underlying worldviews. It is more than simply being aware of these biases, but it seeks to understand and *interact* with biases. Davis suggests that it is difficult to determine the point at which evidence could amend a bias. 114

Ultimately, Davis objects to hard apologetics because it "ignores the rationality of our bias against extraordinary events." In this sense, he contends that Christians are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup>Davis, Risen Indeed, 152.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup>He contends that naturalism is a rational position because he does not believe that anyone has refuted it; although, he states, "Perhaps someday someone will refute the worldview." Ibid., 172. He agrees with criticisms of naturalism, but he finds them to be short of refutation. Ibid., 21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup>Ibid., 158.

<sup>114</sup>Davis writes, "At what point would such a change of mind rationally come about? Surely we can give no general rule. All we can say is that it would depend on the strength of our bias against events like E, the weight of evidence in favor of E, and the possibility and plausibility of alternative explanations." Ibid., 149. Again, this position is in opposition to conciliatory positions. He states that one's worldview yields rational and irrational beliefs. Davis states, "The upshot of what I have been arguing is that both belief and disbelief in the resurrection of Jesus can be rational. It is a mistake to argue either (1) that it is never rational to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, or (2) that belief in the resurrection of Jesus is the only rational position." Ibid., 155. His explanation is based on the idea that individuals often operate on different, conflicting systems. Davis focuses on the conflict between naturalism and supernaturalism. Within the literature on epistemology of disagreement, Alvin Goldman has made a similar argument regarding positions based on disparate epistemic systems. He makes the case for reasonable disagreement when the dispute involves two distinct epistemic systems, which involves "a system of rules or norms directed at doxastic attitudes or choices." Alvin Goldman, "Epistemic Relativism and Reasonable Disagreement," in Feldman and Warfield, Disagreement, 192. In this way, reasonable disagreement can be explained by disputes between positions influenced by scientism or strong-evidentialism and positions receptive to inductive or abductive reasoning.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup>Davis, Risen Indeed, 158.

incredulous toward other extraordinary phenomena. For instance, if a Christian were told that John Lennon came back to life three days after he died or the Washington Monument levitated for three hours, skepticism and suspicion would be the most appropriate responses—in addition to requiring substantial evidence.

In a similar vein, Davis points to the fact that the original disciples were shocked by the resurrection event. He contends for Christians "recovering a sense of the shocking absurdity of the very idea" of a resurrected person after being dead for three days. Davis goes on to say that God's intervention in such a way is shocking: "Aren't we all convinced—and for good reason—that people who die stay dead?" Soft apologetics incorporates understanding and openness in considering other viewpoints. 117

In this way, Davis demonstrates the open-mindedness described above.

According to Baehr's "transcendence," Davis departs from his own views in order to seriously consider the naturalistic perspective. His reflection on naturalism leads him to affirm that the event of the resurrection is a "shocking" event. Davis has to depart from

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup>Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 168. Davis demonstrates this sense of understanding and agreement as well when analyzing Hume's argument against miracles. Although Davis finds Hume mistaken in several areas, he also finds Hume to be correct on matters such as the notion that people rationally require strong evidence in order to believe a miracle occurred; and also that Hume was correct to hold that the "rational explanation of what will happen is based on our best available knowledge of what *has* happened." Davis, "Is it Possible to Know That Jesus Was Raised from the Dead?" 148. Darrell Bock has demonstrated a similar open demeanor in his approach toward recovering the historical Jesus. See Darrell L. Bock, Who Is Jesus? Linking the Historical Jesus with the Christ of Faith (Nashville: Howard Books, 2012). Bock gives a personal account of an ongoing discussion with his older brother, who was skeptical toward the historical Jesus. Like Davis, Bock is open toward his brother's position. Bock knew that his brother had adopted this position from reading scholars who taught at well-known schools. It was no surprise that his older brother held a skeptical stance. Bock is open to the discussion, and contends, "Together we have helped each other gain a deeper understanding of Jesus." Ibid., 2. Bock concedes that he came to appreciate the skeptical position, although he disagreed with its conclusions. Bock additionally extends this openness in his academic pursuits. Referring to the skeptical motives behind the First and Second Quest for Jesus, he states, "Not all skepticism is strictly negative but can lead to good questions and fresh answers." Ibid., 5. His method in studying the historicity of Jesus operates on the "agreed upon" approach. He finds agreement with nonbelievers: "By examining Jesus this way, we make the case—not using rules of the church, but rules rooted in a much more skeptical approach to Jesus." Ibid., 12. Bock claims that this approach is noncoercive in that it does not force a position on people—a position that only believers hold. Finally, similar to Davis' manner, Bock acknowledges that his approach does not "absolutely prove" his argument for the historical Jesus, but it does make a "strong case . . . for appreciating who Jesus was through the sources we have." Ibid., 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup>For a response to soft apologetics, see Gary Habermas, "Knowing that Jesus' Resurrection Occurred: A Response to Stephen Davis," *Faith and Philosophy* 2, no. 3 (July 1985): 295-302. Davis responds to Habermas' essay in *Risen Indeed*.

the settled positions of Christian doctrine in order to reach the conclusion that the resurrection can be seen as an absurd notion. He also illustrates Kwong's engagement by not relinquishing belief, even if he does find it to be an absurdity. Davis' reflection exemplifies open-mindedness. Davis has detached himself in order to view the resurrection from the opposing view. In this manner, he shows a sympathetic disposition by reflecting on naturalism's perspective of this essential doctrine. Accordingly, he rejects epistemic egoism and close-mindedness, while remaining firm in his position. These descriptions fit the virtue of balancing testimony and self-trust.

#### David K. Clark

David K. Clark has developed a "person-centered" approach to apologetics. According to Clark, two contrasting fields of epistemology have influenced apologetics. Classical foundationalism is contrasted with fideistic notions of religious epistemology. He contends that these two influences have placed an unbearable weight on apologetics. Classical foundationalism makes apologetics a zero-sum situation by forcing apologetics to definitively prove God's existence. On the other hand, if "religious knowledge is impossible outside of revelation," then "one is nudged toward fideism and the claim that natural theology is apologetically pointless." Thus, these epistemic stances thrust extreme positions on apologetics.

In order to strike a balance between these extremes, Clark appeals to "soft rationalism." Soft rationalism rejects the strong empiricism found in classical foundationalism, while also distancing itself from the methodological approach of Reformed epistemology. Soft rationalists contend for the use of "evidence to discriminate among competing religious claims, which depend on experience." Clark agrees with

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup>David K. Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics: A Person-Centered Approach to Christian Defense* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup>Ibid., 49.

Reformed epistemology's criticism of classical foundationalism. However, he is also suspicious of contending for the proper basicality of belief in God as an apologetic strategy.<sup>120</sup>

Clark distinguishes between two views of faith: the intellectual and the personal view. The intellectual view substitutes faith for evidence. When there is not enough evidence, people will opt for grounding religious knowledge in faith. <sup>121</sup> Clark rejects the Kierkegaardian notion that maintains the view that "having more evidence means needing less faith." <sup>122</sup> Clark argues that faith and reason do not have an inverse relationship. In order to have a more effective apologetic strategy, Clark attempts to bridge the personal element of faith with "understanding." The two have a reciprocal relationship. In order to know God, one has to understand his nature. <sup>123</sup> However, it is not solely intellectual. Clark contends that faith bolsters knowing, while "knowing undergirds"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup>In his words, the position "questions whether it is enough to say that belief in God is properly basic." Ibid. Elsewhere, Clark states that soft rationalism stands between Reformed epistemology and Enlightenment evidentialism "on the continuum from fideism to rationalism." Ibid., 82.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup>Clark relates this view to a time when he asked a car salesman about the certainty of air bags. The salesman said that his air bag belief was like belief in God; belief is required even when there is no evidence.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup>Clark, Dialogical Apologetics, 17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup>Here, Clark defines knowledge as understanding. This idea connects with the concept of "faith seeking understanding," Paul Helm also identifies distinctions in epistemic "understanding," He looks at four instances of "understanding" as an epistemic matter: skilled, comprehensive, explanatory, and evaluative. Skilled understanding is "know how." Helm relates comprehensive understanding to Augustine's faith seeking understanding. Comprehensive understanding involves an awareness of how beliefs relate to other beliefs, including the implications of those beliefs. Explanatory understanding is descriptive scientific knowledge. The last form of understanding relates to the concept of open-mindedness: evaluative understanding. To understand in this way is "to gain an appreciation of the value and importance of that activity from the standpoint of the agent." Paul Helm, *Faith & Understanding* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 56. Understanding evaluates and appreciates the world. Helm contends that this type of understanding operates in unfamiliar cultures as well as in matters of disagreement. Evaluative understanding assists us in coming to sympathetically appreciate the reasons why people hold their particular beliefs. Most importantly, Helm distinguishes between understanding and accepting. <sup>24</sup>Understanding in this way does not involve accepting or identifying with the standpoint understood. One can understand why someone did something, their reasons and motives, without going along with them. It may be that the more one understands what lies behind an action, the less one is able to concur in it." Ibid., 57. Linda Zagzebski has also made the case for incorporating understanding back into epistemology. She contends that pre-Gettier definitions of knowledge involved a greater sense of understanding. Due to getting "Gettierized," the tripartite analysis of knowledge and the search for the missing element has dominated the field of knowledge and has abandoned a sense of understanding. See Linda Zagzebski, On Epistemology (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2009).

trust."<sup>124</sup> In this way, he incorporates the personal aspect of trust, which involves the emotional aspects of a faithful relationship.

The dialogical approach of person-centered apologetics uses soft rationalism in an attempt to eliminate the fact-value distinction from apologetic discourse. He argues that strong evidentialism has lost its force, and relativism "shoots off its own foot in self-defeat whenever it seeks to mount a defense." Soft rationalism incorporates reason in order to assess evidence in a way that is broadly accepted between conflicting worldviews. For instance, Clark appeals to the principle of credulity. He states that most worldviews rely on this principle because most worldviews tread on some form of evidence. Soft rationalism also uses a cumulative case approach. This approach is also widely accepted. Clark contends that science operates on cumulative cases. Thus, those who attempt to discredit cumulative cases in apologetics must also apply this attack against science. Soft rationalism also looks for the best explanation: "The world view that most naturally explains wide ranges of evidence is the best." While conceding some shortcomings to theism, Davis maintains that it offers the best explanation when considering the best explanations in the network of evidence. This network includes cosmology, anthropology, ethics, religious experience, and history.

His approach also affirms different sources of knowledge. One's experience plays a large role in his conceptual system. It will also influence how evidence is assessed. Yet, Clark clarifies that he does not reduce it to conceptual relativism. He also includes authority in sources of knowledge. It cannot be a "stand alone" aspect of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup>Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics*, 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup>Ibid., 82. These are two of three options that Clark applies to an apologetic approach. Strong evidentialism is the progeny of the Enlightenment, which contends that facts determine knowledge. The second option is conceptual relativism, which heavily relies on understanding "facts" as personal preferences. The third option argues for incorporating facts and "perspectives." For a brief but wideranging history of the issue of facts and values in moral philosophy, see Arthur F. Holmes, *Fact, Value, and God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup>Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics*, 88.

knowledge, but Clark intends to reconcile the value of testimony. He affirms the conclusions of many social epistemologists: testimony is necessary for knowledge. However, it cannot be uncritically accepted. Nevertheless, it has to be incorporated:

Critics are wrong to believe that accepting authority necessitates sacrificing the mind. In one sense, some do abdicate their personal responsibility for their beliefs in favor of an unquestioned authority figure. But they have still made a judgment, however poor it is, about which authority to believe. Indeed, all people at some time or other make rational assessments about competing claims to authority. 127

Concerning knowledge, Clark contends that it is person-centered. Every aspect of the individual is involved in knowledge. External factors and internal factors infiltrate one's epistemic makeup. For instance, mental capacity will affect apologetics. Not everyone can comprehend ontological arguments. In addition, if one accepts the conclusions of a theistic argument, it may create a stress in one's social and political life. In short, "Knowing is a function of persons, not of brains." <sup>128</sup>

He objects to the idea that everyone finds truth in the same way. Thus, it is incorrect to contend for only one way of practicing apologetics. In a way, he affirms Mavrodes' analogy of arguments as tools. <sup>129</sup> Clark posits that apologetics cannot be a generic system of assertion and argument. Rather, it should approach the individual with a "unique discussion." <sup>130</sup> He labels this notion an "audience centered" approach. <sup>131</sup> Rather than disregarding the presuppositions of those who may object to Christian belief,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup>Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics*, 98.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> See the second chapter of George Mavrodes, *Belief in God: A Study in the Epistemology of Religion* (New York: University Press of America, 1970). Clark contends, "Dialogical apologetics encourages a strategy of dialogue with unique persons in which an apologist uses all the tools in the toolbox to move particular individuals toward an intellectual acknowledgement of the Christian world view and a heartfelt commitment of life and soul to the Savior that this world view declares." Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics*, 114.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup>Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics*, 99.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup>Clark states that some apologists have lost sight of the nature of a *defense*. "As a *defense*, apologetics takes an advocacy point of view. It seeks to *persuade* particular persons of Christian truth, not just to *prove* the faith into thin air. Those who debate apologetic method often forget that *in practice*, apologetics must be audience-sensitive." Ibid., 112.

dialogical apologetics intends to incorporate personal biases and emotional inclinations into the discussion. These biases involve interests, abilities, perspectives, and personal commitments.

Clark finds John Cobb Jr.'s "open" approach to apologetics to be an example of excessive openness. Cobb states that he must be open to others in order to be faithful to Christ. In addition, Cobb states, "I cannot predetermine that I will be a Christian at all. That is what I mean by full openness. In my faithfulness to Christ I must be prepared to give up even faithfulness to Christ." Clark agrees that apologists must have a demeanor of openness and willingness to learn from other views. He states, "I need not enter with the assumption that my view, as I now understand it, is the final, uncorrectable word on truth. I believe that what I have to say is true in the main, but I can remain open to the instruction of my dialogue partner." He concludes that the goals of dialogical apologetics are to clearly defend the faith as well as building a relationship in open understanding. If the other is not convinced, Clark still declares the defense successful if "I understand his views better, develop a relationship with him, or grow intellectually or personally." 134

Clark's person-centered apologetics reflect the open-mindedness of Westphal's position. Where Westphal sought to understand the suspicion of the atheists, Clark is motivated to understand opposing views. In developing this view, he constructs a disposition that is sympathetic with different perspectives. Furthermore, his apologetic resists egoism. Clark states that he enters the dialogue in an open stance by not assuming his position is the "uncorrectable word of truth." It is clear that this position opposes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup>John Cobb Jr., "The Meaning of Pluralism for Christian Self-Understanding," in *Religious Pluralism*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 175, quoted in Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics*, 119.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>133</sup>Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics*, 124.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>134</sup>Ibid., 123.

closed-mindedness. It balances testimony and self-trust. In addition, it reflects similarities with Riggs' conviction concerning human error and fallibility. In this sense, Clark's apologetical method incorporates an epistemic humility as well. However, this humility does not reduce to insecurity. Similar to Kwong's engagement, Clark is convinced that his position is the best explanation considering all the epistemic sources of evidence, experience, and authority. Thus, Clark's position balances testimony and self-trust.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to identify the interaction between the two intellectual virtues of courage and open-mindedness. The interrelationship between the virtues can be identified in their respective definitions. In his definition of intellectual open-mindedness, Montmarquet indicates a mixture of courage and openness when he claims that courage requires an openness to consider counter evidence. Likewise, something similar appears in Baehr's analysis of these virtues. He suggests that open-mindedness is the willingness to transcend or depart from one's own view in order to comprehend another view. According to his conflict model of open-mindedness, this intellectual virtue requires the person to seriously consider views that conflict with one's own position; in the case of apologetics, these beliefs are deeply held. In this way, intellectual open-mindedness also requires courage. It is the undaunted action of placing one's views in contention.

Baehr identifies this relationship as "facilitating virtues." He argues that the individual virtues are distinctive in that they cannot be reduced to other virtues, but occupy their own "niche within the cognitive economy." The facilitating role "allows its possessor to employ or make effective use of these excellences." The distinction

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup>Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 156.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

between the virtues is picked out in their respective motivations. In their operations, the intellectual virtues can lend support for the operation of other virtues. <sup>137</sup> Virtues self regulate, resembling Aquinas' concept of "overflow." Courage exhibits openness in assessing other viewpoints. Likewise, open-mindedness displays courage in seriously considering evidence that may defeat one's strongly held position.

For example, Keller illustrates a sense of openness to counter evidence as well. <sup>138</sup> In his demonstration of intellectual courage, he also displays openness toward other views that contradict his own beliefs. He regularly held question-and-answer forums following his church services. In the context of disagreement over the doctrine of hell, Keller exudes both courage and open-mindedness. In reference to these question-and-answer sessions, Kelly states, "I was regularly grilled by New Yorkers about these teachings [on God's wrath and hell]. I found their deep distress over this aspect of historic Christian faith perfectly understandable." Yet, "this objection to hell and judgment may seem to be more of a feeling of revulsion than a doubt, we still can find a number of very specific beliefs hidden inside it." This openness fits the description developed in Baehr's view of openness, which contends that virtuous intellectual open-mindedness involves the willingness and capacity to depart and transcend one's own views in order to understand other views.

Keller understood the objections to God's wrath. He also intended to understand the deeper beliefs, which motivated the emotional responses. In this situation,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup>According to a virtue understanding of courage and openness, apologetics would be closer to the vice of presumptuousness. Therefore, apologetics is more akin to the virtue of courage. The virtue of openness cradles the excesses of boldness and courage. The virtue of openness is regulated by a sense of perseverance, which is related to courage, too.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup>Moreland shows open-mindedness by seriously considering the views of those who oppose substance dualism. Throughout his work on philosophy of mind, he systematically considers the merits and demerits of opposing views. In some ways, Moreland expresses sympathy with some portions of the views he rejects.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup>Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in An Age of Skepticism* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008), 71.

his intellectual courage must not be overlooked. Keller regularly taught on the doctrine of hell and God's wrath. He even exposed himself to the vulnerabilities of attempting to answer questions following church services. He also demonstrated the type of openmindedness found in Davis' soft apologetic approach. While Keller has not declared a position, favoring hard or soft apologetics, his expressions align with soft apologetics. For instance, in his analysis of meaning, Keller argues that "created meaning" is less rational than discovered meaning. While presenting strong challenges against the idea of created meaning, he does not ultimately conclude that it is irrational, but that the view is less rational. He attempts to provide a better position. 141

The intellectual virtues of open-mindedness and courage satisfy the problems inherent in conciliatory and steadfast positions. It has been shown that apologetics does not suffer from these same traits. I have charged the positions on disagreement with the fundamental error of abrogating further discourse due to epistemic conflict. Apologetics overcomes this weakness through balancing courageous perseverance with extending openness by seriously considering the other viewpoint. The next chapter intends to expand on these virtues to show how they are used to an advantage in apologetics, particularly in the challenges of experts and religious diversity.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup>Keller, *Making Sense of God*, 69.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>141</sup>The term "irrational" appears only two times in Keller's *Making Sense of God*; a book extending to well over three hundred pages. In both instances, he is quoting someone else. Moreover, elements of courage can be found in the examples of open-minded apologetics. Davis displays intellectual courage in his engagement with other positions, leaving his position open to his opponents. Similarly, Westphal exhibits intellectual courage in looking to his intellectual opponents to discover truth.

### CHAPTER 6

#### SPECIFIC CHALLENGES OF DISAGREEMENT

This chapter will look at two specific challenges that involve the terrain of disagreement. These challenges are instances of applied disagreement, whereas the preceding chapters have been concerned with the general nature of disagreement. This dissertation introduced virtue epistemology in order to present solutions to the deficiencies in the traditional responses to disagreement, claiming that virtue epistemology satisfies the problems of general disagreement. Virtue is particularly relevant in that it is a normative approach to how the epistemic agent behaves as well as how interlocutors are treated. One of the central charges against conciliation and steadfastness is that they both suppress dialogue. In contrast, the intellectual virtues move beyond the stances of disagreement in that virtue does not resist continued discussion. In addition, intellectual virtues address the philosophical assumptions, or worldviews, held by the disagreeing parties. These characteristics will be of particular worth in the two instances of disagreement addressed in this chapter: disagreement with experts (epistemic superiors) and the challenge of religious diversity. Intellectual virtues provide apologetics with an advantageous response to these cases of disagreement.

# **Disagreement with Experts**

Up to this point, the discussion on disagreement has only shown concern for how individuals are to respond when they face disagreement with peers. Throughout the literature, challenging cases assume peerhood. Conciliatory and steadfast stances assume that one should not alter his doxastic confidence when an epistemic inferior challenges one's views. For example, if a seasoned philosophy professor disagrees with a first-year

However, there has been little discussion on cases where the individual is beneath peer status. The implication may be that the novice should always move closer to the superior. Given the professor-student scenario, it appears to be the assumption that the student should either move closer or adopt the professor's belief. This scenario is relevant for situations in apologetics. For example, Christians entering their first philosophy courses may encounter instructors who hold diametrically opposing views. From the Christian perspective, students are encouraged to remain firm in their faith. This response contradicts the nature of both steadfast and conciliating positions. The focus of this chapter will not extend to "untrained" students, but it will remain focused on "informed" apologists. The first challenge addressed is disagreement between apologists and experts. For brevity, this chapter will simply refer to the group of epistemic superiors as experts.

As already mentioned, the discussion in the disagreement literature on experts has been sparse. Catherine Elgin of Harvard University writes about this matter, in which she finds herself in opposition to David Lewis' modal realism.<sup>2</sup> Although she finds Lewis to be a superior philosopher and an expert on counterpart theory and quantified modal logic, Elgin resists his position. She finds his position "incredible" in the sense that it is beyond her apprehension.<sup>3</sup> Concerning disagreement with a host of experts, Thomas

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>In their work on Christian philosophy, Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen employ a scenario of two Christians attending their first philosophy course. These two friends have gone to separate colleges. One attends a secular institution, while the other friend is at a Christian college. Throughout the book, the authors refer to the hypothetical experiences that the two students face in their respective courses. The Christian student in the secular philosophy course is presented with serious challenges. One provides support that found in the Christian philosophy course. Although Bartholomew and Goheen do not address epistemology of disagreement, the looming assumption is that one can rationally disagree with an expert or epistemic superior. See Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Catherine Elgin, "Persistent Disagreement," in *Disagreement*, ed. Richard Feldman and Ted A. Warfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Her solution to this challenge is restricting the presumption of direct doxastic voluntarism. When an individual becomes aware of a dissenting expert, she cannot simply will herself to align her belief with the expert. Elgin claims that she does not control how she will respond to evidence of disagreement much like her response to evidence. Although her argument is intuitive in its response to experts, her position does not address the problem of epistemic vices, such as closed-mindedness.

Kelly addresses the issue of a non-expert who disagrees against a consensus of experts. In his example, the non-expert denies the Holocaust. Kelly acknowledges that the non-expert may have rational belief. However, when he becomes aware of the disagreeing consensus, the rational move is to adopt their position. Hilary Kornblith has also argued for conciliation when disagreeing with a group of experts. He states that conciliation is the only option for non-experts as well as experts. He writes, "If my views on a problem in decision theory are entirely at odds with the experts in the field, then, even if I am myself such an expert, I would not be justified in continuing to hold the belief in the face of such opposition." What's more, he maintains that an expert should conciliate when facing a consensus among other experts. Therefore, conciliation is the justified position when opposing the consensus even if one qualifies as an expert.

The nature of expertise is not described in these essays, nor was it the authors' intention to define experts. The goal of this section is to identify the challenge of experts. This challenge involves highlighting the nature of expertise. Before looking at a virtuous response to disagreement with experts, this chapter will also broach the problem of disagreement between experts. Disagreement between experts is typical and presents a serious challenge for relying on experts as a source of knowledge. Additionally, expertise

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Thomas Kelly, "Disagreement and the Burdens of Judgment," in *The Epistemology of Disagreement: New Essays*, ed. David Christensen and Jennifer Lackey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Kelly states that remaining steadfast in this position is dogmatic rather than rational. He claims, "Even if my belief was initially reasonable, it will typically not be reasonable once I learn that all of the experts think otherwise, given how that will affect my epistemic situation." Ibid., 46. Consequently, although a steadfast proponent, Kelly argues for instances of reasonable conciliation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Hilary Kornblith, "Belief in the Face of Controversy," in Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*, 43. Likewise, Kornblith could be understood to make a similar claim with the Christian dining with a number of atheist philosophers who specialize in philosophy of religion. Given this scenario, the Christian should forsake his own beliefs in lieu of the consensus at the table. Therefore, those Christians who reside in an overwhelmingly secular community or state are held to the state epistemic prohibition—they are to conciliate. Following this approach, the same prescription would be extended for atheists in the minority position, as well.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>"If the question at issue is thus whether one is justified in siding with the dissenter in the face of an overwhelming majority, the answer is that one is not, and this is true not only of bystanders who seek to inform their opinions by looking to the experts; it is true of the dissenter him- or herself." Ibid., 43-44.

in general can take many forms. It can range from plumbers to pilots. Due to this vagueness, this dissertation will focus on scientists. This area of expertise is particularly relevant due to the conflict between some apologists and expertise in evolutionary fields of science.

# **Identifying Experts**

The problem of identifying and defining experts is the primary challenge in describing the issue of disagreement with experts. Philosophers have attempted to delineate the nature of expertise, although, the concept has not received much attention. However, the lack of a specific identity of experts does not leave this project hopeless. Instead, the philosophical discussion on expertise is helpful in describing a general idea of experts. A generic notion of experts will assist the contention that there is a means of virtuously disagreeing with experts.

Tom Nichols, who is professor of National Security at US Naval War College, contends that experts are necessary for the progression of any modern society. In order to progress, a society has to have a division of labor. One of the categories of this division is the office of experts. Just as the society must rely on the efforts within the division of physical labor, a modern society is also dependent upon experts as well. <sup>9</sup> The nature of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Evan Selinger and Robert P. Crease make a similar assessment on the nature of expertise. They claim, "The lack of explicit philosophical inquiry is surprising, given how thoroughly experts and expertise permeate society, on many levels and in both the public and private spheres. Economic, scientific, social, and technological decisions are regularly delegated to experts. Politicians, judges, businessmen, and ordinary citizens rely on experts not only in circumstances involving technical dimensions but also routinely, in everyday situations." Evan Selinger and Robert P. Crease, "Introduction," in *The Philosophy of Expertise*, ed. Evan Selinger and Robert P. Crease (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 1. Selinger and Crease claim that the discussion about experts has long faced disagreement about identifying true experts, resulting from contradictory claims and dissenting testimonies. In addition, they argue that skepticism toward expert analysis would only result in shifting credence toward another set of experts. Expert authority clashes with the autonomous epistemic inclinations of modern culture. "The authority so conferred on experts seems to collide with the democratic and anti-elitist urge to accord equality to all opinions; it also risked elitism, ideology, and partisanship sneaking in under the guise of value-neutral expertise." Ibid., 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>Nichols identifies experts, along with professionals and intellectuals in his claim for societal dependence. Tom Nichols, *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 14.

expertise is restricted to a specific domain. An expert's field is a narrowed view, such that the expert has to rely on other experts outside of his scope of specialization. According to Nichols, specialization lends to flourishing. Specialization is necessary because humans are limited in terms of talent; thus, experts cannot speak authoritatively to every discipline or even other specializations within his own field. He contends, "The fact of the matter is that we cannot function without admitting the limits of our knowledge and trusting in the expertise of others." Trouble looms when a modern society rejects this expert dependence. <sup>11</sup>

Although he concedes that expertise is difficult to define, Nichols argues that an expert is an individual who has specialized in a particular skill or knowledge in such a way as to have "mastered" it. An expert practices this mastery as his main role in life. Nichols states that experts "know considerably more on a subject than the rest of us, and are those to whom we turn when we need advice, education, or solutions in a particular area of human knowledge." An expert's knowledge is not unlimited in his domain, but can be understood to be more "authoritative" or more likely to be correct or accurate than the opinions of most people—experts are a minority. The factors that contribute to expertise involve education, talent, experience, and peer affirmation. Expertise is more

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>Nichols, *The Death of Expertise*, 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Nichols' main contention is that modern culture has developed a narcissistic attitude toward autonomous knowledge. The past generation displayed deference to authorities. In that generation, experts were respected in science and medicine. He claims that perhaps this attitude did not demonstrate a responsible degree of incredulity. However, the contemporary scene has moved beyond incredulity and into a disdainful disposition. Nichols remarks on the harmful efforts of celebrities who outrightly reject modern science, pointing to actors and actresses who oppose vaccines. He finds these instances of celebrity particularly dangerous because of their sphere of influence. What's more, he states, "These are dangerous times. Never have so many people had so much access to so much knowledge and yet have been so resistant to learning anything." Ibid., 3. In this sense, rejecting expertise is illustrated as the vice of closed-mindedness. This vice is particularly deleterious because the society rejects the very structures that fueled its progress: science and rationality. I will return to Nichols' argument in comparing it with my argument for virtuous disagreement with experts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Ibid., 29. This description is intended to be broad to incorporate the expertise of numerous fields of skills or knowledge. He includes pilots, plumbers, coaches, and film directors in the category of experts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Ibid., 30.

than knowledge. Education and experience produce an understanding of the field, which is more valuable than mere knowledge. <sup>14</sup> Talent exceeds knowledge in the sense that talent is the ability to communicate the knowledge and even "generate new knowledge." <sup>15</sup>

Nichols posits that the challenge with expertise is the tendency to overlook biases and shortcomings. More or less, the most fundamental problem inherent with experts is their human nature. Nichols believes that all experts suffer from the same problems in how they garner information and interpret it as well; experts are still prone to making "elementary mistakes" in their role as an expert.<sup>16</sup>

Philosophers Nico Stehr and Reiner Grundmann make similar claims about the need for experts; yet, they offer a contrasting definition.<sup>17</sup> They argue that there is a growing demand for experts, which coincides with the growth of knowledge in societies in the modern era. They contend that the essence of expertise entails trust and reliability. In this way, societies must depend on experts. Experts can be identified as synonymous with advisers and counselors, existing outside the parameters of science.

They distinguish experts from intellectuals. Clients identify experts solely for consulting purposes. This factor attributes a "social proximity" in their relationship. <sup>18</sup> Clients identify experts based on how the clients assess credentials. According to Stehr and Grundmann, experts are mediators by transferring knowledge to others; they do not produce knowledge. In this sense, they are distinct from intellectuals. Intellectuals

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Nichols states, "Knowing things is not the same as understanding them. Comprehension is not the same thing as analysis. Expertise is not a parlor game played with factoids." Nichols, *The Death of Expertise*, 37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Nico Stehr and Reiner Grundmann, *Experts: The Knowledge and Power of Expertise* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Ibid., 33.

produce knowledge and deal with general, abstract forms of knowledge, whereas experts are specialized in a particular area, breaking down complex information. They contend that expert status is contextual and tied to the relative understandings of the culture. Their client-based definition of experts seems to be relativistic, grounded in social constructs; however, it does pose a question on how experts "earn" their title. Thus, experts service clients; the role of expertise is based on the trust and legitimacy credited to them by their clients. <sup>19</sup>

Alvin Goldman also delineates conditions for expertise.<sup>20</sup> He focuses on "cognitive" experts. These individuals are distinct from experts in "skilled" fields such as athletes or musicians. Goldman identifies cognitive or intellectual experts as individuals "who have (or claim to have) a superior quantity or level of knowledge in some domain and an ability to generate new knowledge in answer to questions within the domain."<sup>21</sup>

According to his view, experts have two sets of knowledge in a particular field. The first set is called primary knowledge, which is comprised of the principled questions of the domain. It may be seen as "first-hand" knowledge. The second set of knowledge involves secondary matters, including the state of evidence or arguments in the field, as well as possessing a scope of the prominent thinkers' positions. Goldman contends that a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Social epistemologist Steve Fuller contends that experts are a social phenomenon, as well. In line with Stehr and Grundmann, Fuller postulates similar traits to the role of expertise. He also argues that the expert is free from controversy due to this highly specialized order. Colleagues, who work in the same field, support the expert's accomplishments as well as the expert's conclusions. As Fuller phrases it, "The disposition of expertise is dependent on the collegial patterns of the relevant experts. Protracted internecine disputes over fundamentals typically erode expertise." Steve Fuller, "The Constitutively Social Character of Expertise," in Selinger and Crease, *The Philosophy of Expertise*, 344. An expert is distinguished from an intellectual. The intellectual's focus is general and controversial. "An intellectual takes the entire world as fair game for his judgments, but at the same time he opens himself to scrutiny from all quarters. Indeed, the intellectual's natural habitat is controversy, and often he seems to spend more time on defending and attacking positions than on developing and applying them." Ibid., 342-43. Fuller notes the problem of cognitive "authoritarianism," which is when knowledge is excluded from the people; it is "the tendency to cede an ever larger share of the realm of participatory politics to expert rule." Ibid., 348. He defines expertise as a positional good, in which a positional good is "one whose value is directly tied to others not having it." Ibid., 352.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Alvin Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63, no. 1 (July 2001): 85-110.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Ibid., 91.

general sense of an expert would include both primary and secondary categories; however, those who only have acquired secondary knowledge on a domain would be considered an expert in a weak sense.

Goldman also distinguishes between an objective sense of experts and a reputational sense. The objective sense looks to qualities that push an individual into the category of expert without any external affirmation of that role. He states, "To qualify as a cognitive expert, a person must possess a substantial body of truths in the target domain." Unfortunately, he does not expand on how the reputational sense functions, nor other questions posed for merely reputational experts. Goldman assumes that reputation follows from credentials, but someone may be considered an expert who does not meet the objective standards. <sup>23</sup>

# **Expert Overreach**

One of the most problematic issues with expertise is the proclivity of experts to overstep the bounds of their specialization. It has already been shown that specialization is a particularly niche element. Richard Fumerton, a steadfast proponent, cites this reason as the basis for his incredulity toward "experts" and "intellectuals." They can be reliable in their respective field of specialization, but they typically trespass into other fields where they lack expertise.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?" 91.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>This comment opens the way to further questions: Can one be an expert if no one recognizes his or her credentials? Thus, the "objective expert" is not truly operating in the role as an expert. Then, what if everyone explicitly rejects an objective expert's credentials? These questions seem to point to the necessity of social proximity in being an expert. While he does not make the distinction in this article, perhaps Goldman would point to the distinction between an intellectual and an expert. The intellectual does not utilize a role of trust, which seems to be necessary for one to be deemed an expert. Credentialing has already been shown to play a part in identifying peers; similarly, it is a vital function in identifying experts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>Fumerton states, "There are people in physics I trust to give me information about the physical constitution of various kinds of things. I think that I have good reason to believe that they are more or less reliable when it comes to information in their fields. But it does not take long to discover that even brilliant physicists are often hopeless philosophers. When they stray beyond the boundaries of their expertise, they are not to be trusted. So, before I take the fact that another philosopher disagrees with me to be counter evidence to what I believe, I would need good reason to believe that the philosopher in question is reliable when it comes to the discovery of philosophical truth." Richard Fumerton, "You Can't Trust a

Concerning the social recognition of experts, Carl Henry notes that scientists have the tendency of "overstepping" their fields of competence. He believes that the public may cause this condition because the culture provides a platform for scientists to become the architects of an overarching worldview.<sup>25</sup> Henry references Charles H. Malik's observation about the prestige of science, endowed by the public, allows this overreach. Malik states,

In the present euphoria about the wonders of science you find many scientists, individually and in groups, arrogating to themselves rights that do not strictly flow from their scientific competence. They pass high judgments on . . . God and man, on good and evil, on culture and justice, and on the deepest issues of human destiny. And their prestige as scientist, which is in no doubt whatever, illicitly carries over in the mind of the public to these extra-scientific pronouncements. <sup>26</sup>

Malik also comments that although Einstein was an authority in physics, "one would have thought that in matters appertaining to God one should rely on the Bible or the theologians and saints rather than on Einstein." Furthermore, he adds that scientists and their efforts deserve an esteemed gratitude from the public, but the danger is that the "enormous and absolutely merited prestige of science might delude the scientists into believing (because after all they are human beings who are as subject to delusion as the rest of us) that they are destiny's elected masters of the universe."

Similar allegations have been charged against Richard Dawkins. A prominent example of expert overstep is illustrated in Terry Eagleton's review of Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*.<sup>29</sup> His review highlights Dawkins' theological "illiteracy."

Philosopher," in Feldman and Warfield, Disagreement, 107.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, *God Who Speaks and Shows: Preliminary Considerations* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), 83-84.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>Charles H. Malik, "The Limitations of Natural Science," *Impact of Science on Society* 19, no. 4 (October-December 1969): 385.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Terry Eagleton, "Lunging, Flailing, Mispunching," *London Review of Books* 28, no. 20 (October 19, 2006): 32-34.

Throughout the review, Eagleton emphasizes Dawkins' insufficient credentials to address theological matters. Eagleton finds it arrogant that Dawkins reduces theology to a matter that apparently does not require study or reflection. He is further appalled that Dawkins did not study theology in order to publish a book that rejects it.<sup>30</sup>

There are other instances of science and philosophy witnessing this sort of expert overreach. For example, when physicist Lawrence Krauss contends that philosophy of science does not progress nor is it useful, it is helpful to understand his credentials are not in philosophy.<sup>31</sup> In the same manner, Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow claim that philosophy is "dead."<sup>32</sup> Similar to Krauss' fashion, Hawking and Mlodinow declare that philosophy has not kept up with its production of knowledge. Therefore, it has been replaced by science as the source for knowledge. Their work in *The Grand Design* is an attempt to lead where philosophy has fallen. Philosophy can no longer answer the most fundamental metaphysical questions such as the nature of reality and trusting our capacity to understand the world.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup>Eagleton's opening is worth quoting at length: "Imagine someone holding forth on biology whose only knowledge of the subject is the *Book of British Birds*, and you have a rough idea of what it feels like to read Richard Dawkins on theology. Card-carrying rationalists like Dawkins, who is the nearest thing to a professional atheist we have had since Bertrand Russell, are in one sense the least well-equipped to understand what they castigate, since they don't believe there is anything there to be understood, or at least anything worth understanding. This is why they invariably come up with vulgar caricatures of religious faith that would make a first-year theology student wince. The more they detest religion, the more ill-informed their criticisms of it tend to be. If they were asked to pass judgment on phenomenology or the geopolitics of South Asia, they would no doubt bone up on the question as assiduously as they could. When it comes to theology, however, any shoddy old travesty will pass muster. These days, theology is the queen of the sciences in a rather less august sense of the word than in its medieval heyday." Eagleton, "Lunging, Flailing, Mispunching," 32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>In the context, he contends that no one reads philosophers of science, except for philosophers of science. Krauss also states that philosophy of science is difficult to "understand what justifies it." Ultimately, philosophers feel threatened because it is not progressive. Lawrence Krauss, interview by Ross Anderson, "Has Physics Made Philosophy and Religion Obsolete?" *The Atlantic*, April 23, 2012, accessed July 2, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/04/has-physics-made-philosophy-and-religion-obsolete/256203/. The philosopher Julian Baggini has called this overreach, "mission creep." Julian Baggini and Lawrence Krauss, "Philosophy v. Science: Which Can Answer the Big Questions of Life?" *The Guardian* September 8, 2012, accessed July 3, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/sep/09/science-philosophy-debate-julian-baggini-lawrence-krauss.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010), 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>Hawking has additionally made these comments in a public setting at Google's Zeitgeist

Following these cases, it can be concluded that scientism is an instance of expert overreach. Both Hawking and Krauss stand on the premise of restricting knowledge to the scientific field. However, they are not philosophical experts, according to the definition of expertise. In addition, their lack of expertise is revealed in the contradiction within their claims. As some philosophers have shown, the claims of scientism are not scientific products but are the manifestations of philosophical thought.<sup>34</sup>

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Conference, which can be seen as crossing over into popular culture. At the conference, Hawking extrapolated on the "M-Theory." He claims that it is the unified theory that Einstein sought. Matt Warman, "Stephen Hawking Tells Google 'Philosophy is Dead," *The Telegraph* May 17, 2011, accessed July 3, 2017, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/google/8520033/Stephen-Hawking-tells-Google-philosophyis-dead.html. According to their website, Zeitgeist events are considered to be "a series of intimate gatherings of top global thinkers and leaders . . . exploring ideas that affect our social, economic, political, and cultural surroundings." Zeitgeistminds, "About Zeitgeist," accessed July 3, 2017, https://www.zeitgeistminds.com/about. Conference speakers include philosopher Alain de Botton and writer/director J. J. Abrams. The status of such speakers draws in a diverse audience. Thus, Hawking's comments reach a wide spectrum, pointing to the "celebrity" status of some scientists. In his essay on the history of scientism, Lawrence Principe touches on the development of "pop culture" scientists: "Yet another development has been the rise of the celebrity scientist. Several such figures have authored bestselling books not so much to explain scientific ideas and discoveries, but rather to make expansive, sometimes shockingly bold, statements about larger epistemological and ontological issues and to declaim about the role of science, scientific methodology, and the scientist in human society and civilization in general." He goes on to state, "Gone (it seems) are the tweedy bespectacled lectures of the 1960s who were content to educate public audiences on the subjects of their specific expertise." Lawrence M. Principe, "Scientism and the Religion of Science," in Scientism: The New Orthodoxy, ed. Richard N. Williams and Daniel N. Robinson (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 41. Thomas M. Lessl has also written about the conflicting nature of science and its ability to manage its public image. In Rhetorical Darwinism, Lessl discusses a cartoon of Darwin exiling laissez-faire and eugenics, which can be found on the website, "Understanding Evolution for Teachers." The University of California, Berkeley sponsors the site. Lessl argues that the caricature of scientific piety is not a scientific message. He states, "Its creators have stepped outside of their own definition of science in their effort to absolve it of responsibility for the social and political schemes of social Darwinism." Thomas M. Lessl, *Rhetorical Darwinism: Religion, Evolution, and the Scientific Identity* (Waco: Baylor University, 2012), xiii-xiv. He goes on to identify the impetus behind such messages: "Much of the public esteem that science has enjoyed in recent centuries is tied up with its claims on the technical side, namely that scientists operate in an arena of inquiry unspoiled by the dubious human motives that govern other affairs. We have a special regard for science because we believe that it approaches nature on nature's own terms. But while public support for such work depends on upholding this image, it also demands that science should mean more than this. Scientists respond to this dilemma by creating public messages that continue to have scientific content, thus retaining some sense of this profession's epistemic purity, but these messages also seem to advance social and political arguments that could never in reality have such a grounding." Ibid., xiv.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>J. P. Moreland states that *strong* scientism is self-refuting. "Strong scientism is not itself a proposition *of* science, but a second order proposition *of* philosophy *about* science to the effect that only scientific propositions are true and/or rational to believe. And strong scientism is itself offered as a true, rational belief." J. P. Moreland, "Scientism," in *Dictionary of Christianity and Science: The Definitive Reference for the Intersection of Christian Faith and Contemporary Science*, ed. Paul Copan, Tremper Longman III, Christopher L. Reese, and Michael G. Strauss (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 621. Moreland argues for two forms of scientism: strong and weak scientism. Strong scientism contends that there are no truths outside of science. Weak scientism allows for "non-scientific" truths with the qualification that these outside sources can be supported only by science. Given these categories, Krauss would seem to fall within weak scientism, while Hawking's stance would be in line with strong scientism. Moreland maintains that both positions are insufficient epistemological positions. Roger Scruton has also challenged the problem of scientism and its pervasive nature. Roger Scruton, *The Soul of the World* 

Nevertheless, expert overreach is surreptitious and it bolsters the challenge of identifying experts.

# The Value of Disagreement

Jason Stanley's work on propaganda also focuses on the "tyranny" of expertise. He contends that experts have the ability to suppress views of novices through expert/superior epistemology. Stanley argues that the shock experiments by Stanley Milgrim reveal how expertise supplants beliefs. He claims, "Milgrim's work supports the view that 'uncritical acceptance' of the claims of authority figures, especially when delivered in the language of pseudoscientific expertise is the norm rather than the exception. In this case, the results conclude that individuals will defer to scientific expertise despite the sharp conflict between their moral values and the expressions of expert authority. Stanley argues that expertise status can be exploited to the extent that it becomes tyrannical.

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<sup>(</sup>Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). Scruton rejects scientism's intrusion into the humanities. In his estimation, it has overreached its field. He finds various problems when science steps in to explain architecture, art, and music. He writes, "The world as we live it is not the world as science explains it, any more than the smile of the *Mona Lisa* is a smear of pigments on a canvas. But this lived world is as real as the *Mona Lisa's smile*." Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 134. He further rejects Darwinian explanations of fitness and reproduction in the area aesthetics. These explanations are "absurd" when trying to explain the peacock's feathers. The beauty of the feathers, however vulnerable they make the bird, is seen as a reproductive advantage from the Darwinian stance. Scruton satirizes, "Their genes will be more likely to be passed on if they go for the cock with the tail, and evolutionary pressure will therefore make the tails get bigger and bigger until the wretched birds topple over from the weight of them." Ibid, 143.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup>Milgrim's infamous experiments tested how individuals respond to authorities. In these experiments, volunteers were informed that their role was to initiate electric shocks to subjects who supply wrong answers to their questions. The "learner" was not a volunteer, but acted out the experience of being shocked. Despite the ostensible consternation of the "teachers," they proceeded to shock the learner because they were just following orders. See Stanley Milgrim, *Obedience to Authority* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 248.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>French sociologist Michel Crozier has made similar statements on the tension between expertise and values. He states, "The fact is that we do not seem to control anything anymore. Experts are everywhere, imposing limits, making people recognize their limitations, deterring the right options. All important decisions are made by different technicians, who have no consideration for what people are going through." Michel Crozier, *Strategies for Change: The Future of French Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 128. In a similar fashion, Friedrich Von Hayek contends that surrendering to experts is a relinquishing of freedom: "Our freedom is threatened in many fields because of the fact that we are much too ready to leave the decision to the expert or to accept too uncritically his opinion about a problem of

Stanley contends that experts are needed, which is obvious in areas such as medicine. However, "we cannot let experts dictate matters of value." Thus, there are situations when expertise can be resisted. In regards to absolute deference to majorities, Philip Pettit has argued that it appears to be "an inappropriate degree of epistemic timidity." He goes on to argue, "To migrate towards the views of others . . . would seem to be an abdication of epistemic responsibility: a failure to take seriously the evidence as it presents itself to your own mind." In the same way, absolute deference to experts is problematic, given the nature of deeply embedded beliefs.

Miriam Solomon argues that individualism dominates "expert decision-making." She argues that "outsiders" (i.e., informed non-specialists) can contribute to specialized fields. By their very nature, outsiders stand in a more neutral position compared with experts within the field's system. Solomon contends that social pressures affect which questions are pursued. Experts have their own presuppositional commitments, along with the financial factors of grants and career opportunities. She states, "If all scientists evaluated in the same way—if they were all influenced by the *same* cognitive, social, and motivational factors, to the same degrees—distribution of research effort would not take place, few theories would be developed, and consensus

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which he knows intimately only one little aspect." Friedrich Von Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 50.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup>Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*, 291.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup>Philip Pettit, "When to Defer to Majority Testimony—And When Not," *Analysis* 66, no. 3 (July 2006): 181. Solomon Asch's experiments on conformity give support to Pettit's position. Asch experimented on volunteers who were positioned against majority opinions. He designed experiments in which respondents would uniformly agree to or announce an obviously false calculation. However, one respondent was uninformed (the "victim") and was the emphasis of the study. The isolated member would consistently side with the majority even when the majority's answers were clearly incorrect. Asch's studies revealed the challenges of making an independent assessment in the presence of united opinion. Another problem that the study demonstrates is the possibility of consensus unreliability. This example contrasts Thomas Kelly's position, which maintained that individuals should follow consensus thought in most occasions. See Solomon Asch, *Social Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Solomon Asch "Studies of Independence and Conformity: A Minority of One against a Unanimous Majority" *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied* 70, no. 9 (1956): 1-70.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup>Miriam Solomon, "A More Social Epistemology" in *Socializing Epistemology*, ed. Frederick F. Schmitt (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), 218.

might take place on an inferior theory."<sup>41</sup> Novices and nonprofessionals do not possess these sorts of investments, which would create an opportunity for a more open discussion.

Richard Foley's work on balancing autonomous knowledge with testimonial knowledge also focuses on the balance of trusting one's beliefs against trusting experts. He states, "Few things are more difficult than resisting domination by one's intellectual environment." Oftentimes, groups will not recognize those views that oppose the consensus because these views are in disagreement with the majority position.

An epistemology has become excessively social if it *a priori* precludes the possibility of individuals engaging in radical but rational critiques of the prevailing standards, practices, methods, and opinions of their communities and traditions. No matter how entrenched or widely accepted these standards, practices, methods, and opinions may be, our epistemologies ought not to imply that it is utterly impossible for an individual within the community to reject them and yet still be rational in an important sense.<sup>43</sup>

Foley's social epistemology factors into disagreement with experts as well. On the level of peers, epistemic universalism contends that conflict is a reason for a severance of trust. Background factors inform the individual in how to respond to a particular disagreement. When a non-specialist's opinion conflicts with the expert opinion, there is a prima facie break in trust. This break in trust prima facie dissolves the credibility of the epistemic superior. Foley argues that the criticism of the non-specialist and the specialist occurs when the layperson has good reason to believe that the "mechanisms" of the scientific procedure have failed; which is to say that something has gone wrong in terms of reproduction of results, observability, or pre-theoretical commitments.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup>Solomon, "A More Social Epistemology," 225.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup>Richard Foley, *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 126.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup>Ibid., 128.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup>Foley notes that there are two factors that position the expert in a superior stance. The first

He claims that widespread bias is problematic. Consensus thought can supplant the value of testimony by restricting divergent thought and only accepting those ideas that are already accepted. <sup>45</sup> Consensus can be dangerous for a community. When non-specialists defer to experts, the danger lies in the unchallenged and unquestioned sovereignty of a group. This act is the conflation of agreement with truth:

Disagreements encourage further evidence gathering and, thus, are in the long-term conducive to the search for truth. A corollary of this thesis is that anything that discourages disagreements is potentially dangerous. Indeed . . . consensus is sometimes a mark that unhealthy pressures are at work on the community. 46

Apologists also hold a certain value in disagreement. Their work is centered on disagreement by actively pursuing objections to Christianity. Disagreement can uncover errors in arguments, demonstrating weaknesses in the arguments. William Lane Craig finds value in theological disagreement and its instrumentality in producing stronger apologetical claims. He suggests that disagreement should push further investigation into why the premises and conclusions are held to be true or false. Extended reflection may reveal that the apologist is the one in error.<sup>47</sup>

An example of this perspective of disagreement *qua* instrumental good is demonstrated throughout Church history. Prior to the resolutions of the ecumenical

reason is that experts have already formed opinions on the matter because it is simply their specialty. An expert has considered the matter as well as consulted with others within the field. This aspect aligns with the Goldman's definitions of a general sense of experts as well as the weak sense. An expert may only have an expansive understanding of the many positions within the field. Next, the expert does not have a good reason to trust or place authority in a nonexpert. However, Foley does not hold the expert's position as socially impenetrable. "Even as an expert, I should be open to Socratic influence, and [another's] beliefs might contain enough information and ideas to persuade me to change my mind. However, as an expert, I am unlikely to have reasons simply to rely on [another's] authority." Foley, *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others*, 118. The latter qualification demonstrates the diminished view of social epistemology from the expert's vantage point.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup>Foley notes, "The public exchange of ideas is likely to be useful in canceling out individual biases and correcting for individual perspectives. On the other hand, if the sources of distortion are widely and uniformly distributed throughout the entire community, public debate and exchange of ideas will themselves be shaped by bias and, hence, may serve to reinforce biases rather than correct for them. Marxists view class interests as shaping political debate in just this way." Ibid., 78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup>Ibid., 124.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup>William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 55.

councils, doctrinal development was initiated by the unsettled conflict among heterodox groups. Indeed, the councils were convened as a result of theological disagreement. The value of theological disagreement does not intend to claim that the doctrine of the Trinity or Christ's divinity would never have been settled if there where no prior conflict. In fact, the writings of the early church fathers illustrate that these doctrinal beliefs were held in some semblance. It should also be stated that valuing disagreement does not conclude in relishing the fact that individuals can be wrong. On the contrary, the view of disagreement held in this study is one that strives for an epistemically rational response to disagreement, which may take the form of a corrective for misjudgments viz., disagreement can serve as a correction rather than a condemnation.

### **Disagreement among Experts**

At this point, I conclude that the challenge of experts may not be so challenging. The identification of experts has shown that expertise is a very restricted notion. They are restricted to their specialization. Confusion enters when experts begin to speak authoritatively to fields outside their domain. It was also shown that disagreement with experts might lead to a more responsible epistemology. Extending absolute deference to expertise can lead to the crippling of social knowledge. In addition to these issues, there is another matter that further attenuates the challenge. Experts tend to disagree with other experts. Rather than seeing this as a complication, this chapter intends to show that the fact of disagreement between experts demonstrates a weakness in the traditional views of disagreement. Conciliatory and steadfast views are unable to address the challenge of experts.

There are numerous examples of experts conflicting with other experts.

Journalist David Freedman highlights several issues in deferring to expertise, particularly the challenge of disagreement between experts. 

48 Through his investigative analysis, he

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup>David H. Freedman, Wrong: Why Experts Keep Failing Us—and How Not to Trust Them

claims that experts are frequently wrong on many issues. He cites the work of John Ioannidis, who researches the probabilities that medical studies are false. Freedman contends that expert error frequently occurs. Ioannidis claims, The facts suggest that for many, if not the majority, of fields, the majority of published studies are likely to be wrong. However, this claim does not intend to say that experts are always wrong. He argues for punctuated wrongness in the development of theories, which is to say that experts sometimes develop helpful theories. Freedman also claims that disagreement is the usual state of any given field as opposed to the assumption that expert thought typically clumps into a consensus. He states, "there is often nothing close to such a consensus" and no sign of a "convergence of truth."

Freedman identifies certain issues that factor into conflicting expertise. In medical research, he states that researchers frequently rely on proxy or surrogate measurements. These are taken to be markers of what truly requires research. These studies are understood to be reliable because they appear to run parallel to the focus of the study. Proxy measurements are easier to survey rather than having to endure the cost of ongoing research. In essence, the research follows one factor rather than accounting for multiple factors. Ioannidis found that 21 different asthma studies considered 487 different factors to account for improved states. He claims, "Every researcher seemed to have her own idea on the question." These types of approaches account for the lack of expert consensus.

(New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2010).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup>Freedman refers to Ioannidis as a "deconstructor of wrongness." Freedman, *Wrong*, 4. Ioannidis is Professor of Medicine and Health Research at Stanford University. He is a proponent of "evidence-based" medicine, which attempts to provide quantitative evidence to physicians. Evidence-based medicine intends to move physicians away from mere assumptions and move them to a greater degree of proof.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup>Ibid., 41.

Other factors include ethical issues in expert analysis. Freedman also looked at the work of Douglas Atman, the director of Oxford's Centre for Statistics in Medicine. Atman's work analyzes the raw data used in medical studies, and compares the data with what the study actually published. He concludes that in most of the research some of the raw data is omitted. In most cases, data is left out because it did not fit the study's conclusions. Another ethical issue concerns "industrial" research, which is conducted by drug manufacturers. Freedman notes that it is typical for companies to present "ghost authored" studies that are conducted and written by the company, but university researchers are named as the authors.<sup>53</sup> One prime example of this conflict of interest is associated with the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV)*. All of the psychiatric experts who contributed to the *DSM IV* have "financial ties" with manufacturers of psychiatric drugs.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, the pressures of publication (or the pressure of "production" in science) are connected to these ethical issues. Brian Martinson, a research investigator with HealthPartners Research Foundation, conducted a survey on misconduct and "scientific fraud." The main focus of the study was on the "serious but rare infractions of falsification, fabrication, and plagiarism (FFP)." The study found that the pressure to produce did not appear to violate (FFP); yet, ethical standards were betrayed. The issues of misconduct included: manipulating the review system, "unreported conflicts of interest," and "the theft of ideas from conference papers and grant proposals." The

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup>See Joseph S. Ross, "Guest Authorship and Ghostwriting in Publications Related to Rofecoxib," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 299, no. 15 (2008): 1800-12. This study reviewed Merck's production of Rofecoxib. The review concludes that "sponsor" employees authored studies of the medication; yet, the authorship was attributed to "academically affiliated" researchers. In addition, many of the academic researchers did not disclose their financial support funded by Merck.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>See Shankar Vedantam, "Psychiatric Experts Found to Have Financial Links to Drugmakers," *Washington Post*, April 20, 2006.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup>Raymond De Vries, Melissa S. Anderson, and Brian C. Martinson, "Normal Misbehavior: Scientists Talk about the Ethics of Research," *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* 1, no. 1 (March 2006): 43.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup>lbid., 49. One respondent to the survey expanded on the problem of stealing ideas from grant

pressure to produce is frustrated by the problem of "publication bias." Publication bias occurs when journals prefer "positive" findings to "negative" ones. Freedman states that "positive" findings are exciting because the conclusions support the hypothesis—whatever the study sets out to prove has been proved. However, John Ioannidis notes, "The more surprising, novel, and exciting an idea, the less likely it is to be right." <sup>57</sup>

Given the fact that experts disagree and the reality of their error, the looming question regards which ones can be trusted; for that matter, can any expert be trusted? Alvin Goldman looks to the question from the perspective of a novice. In his formulation of the problem, he defines a "novice" as an individual who has not formed an opinion and stands in an open trust toward expertise. (This study does not consider apologetists to be uninformed novices; however, Goldman's essay is beneficial in characterizing the issue of experts.) While he affirms the necessity of experts in society, he objects to blind deference because it entails a degree of skepticism. If a novice blindly trusts an expert, he is "not rationally justified" in that trust. <sup>58</sup> In order to reasonably trust expert testimony, one's trust has to be based on an awareness of credentials.

His approach is based on the idea that an expert's "reliability or unreliability can often *bolster* or *defeat* the hearer's justifiedness in accepting testimony" from that expert.<sup>59</sup> The evidence supporting or defeating expert status is based on prior experience

proposals: "I'm always wary of submitting grants to study sections, because those people who sit on the study sections, it's not unknown for them to take your ideas, kill your grant, and then take and do it. And I think all of us have either had that happen to them or know somebody who had that happen to them." Vries, Anderson, and Martinson, "Normal Misbehavior," 49.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup>Freedman, Wrong, 111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup>Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?" 86.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup>Ibid., 88. This statement is in line with a general account of the epistemic nature of testimony. Individuals are naturally open to testimony when it does not violate other beliefs. The speaker's credibility plays a significant factor in testimony. This account is similar to Audi's notion of "testimonial credibility." Audi maintains that there are two aspects of credibility: sincerity and competence. For the role of expert, competence is the relevant feature to note. Crediting one with competence concerns "the attester's having experience or knowledge sufficient to make it at least likely that if the attester holds a belief of the proposition in question or of closely related ones, then they are true." Robert Audi, *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 138. One's estimation of how likely the belief would be true would receive a higher standing when an individual is granted expert status; yet, it would seem that there would be higher standards for granting

and other testimonial accounts. According to Goldman, experience plays a critical role in assessing expert status. This evidence also serves the novice in choosing an expert when two experts disagree. Another source of evidence, drawn from experience, is argument-based evidence. A novice may hear the conflicting experts debate on the matter. Following Goldman's definition of novice, the novice may not have epistemic access to the terms or concepts in the debate. Thus, a novice will adjudicate between the dialectical superiority. One expert may possess "a superior fund of information in the domain," or display "a superior method for manipulating her information." This evidence is performance based, which Goldman finds insufficient.

A novice could also consider the testimony of other experts. Goldman sees this as finding agreement from other experts. Other figures in the field can be utilized to rate and certify authorities. He also considers this type of evaluation to be flawed because majority views can be wrong. However, Goldman does mention a hypothetical consensus case. Goldman considers a possible world where "scientific creationists" are in the majority, outweighing the voices of evolutionary theorists. He contends that a novice would not be justified in favoring "creationists" because he assumes that creation science has a greater dependence on "leaders" as compared to those holding to evolutionary theory. Accordingly, independent thought holds greater value than dependent thought. This example shows striking similarity to Kelly's "originality" principle.

Finally, the novice could also research the background beliefs of each expert.

Goldman holds that backgrounds beliefs are the interests and biases that everyone

expert status.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup>Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?" 95.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup>He discusses the superficiality of performances in a debate, too. One debater may have been coached or may have more experience in debates. Thus, the novice is not appraising the "superior" expert on the issue, but is merely estimating the "superior" debater.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup>The next section will provide a response to this dubious case.

possesses. In large part, these are the elements that were discussed above. The work of Atman, Freedman, and Ioannidis reveals the pressure of academia as well as the biases that follow from other interests. Experts are not immune from "sins of commission" or "omission." Goldman notes the "pecuniary" interests that may be attached to some experts. He does not note this example, but these financial interests can be associated with certain celebrity scientists who seem to have a ubiquitous presence on television. Ultimately, Goldman claims that the novice can research the expert's past track record in order to verify reliability. He finds this to be the best option for novices. He acknowledges that he has not solved the challenge of disagreeing experts, but he rejects holding a skeptical view on experts.

### **A Virtuous Response to Experts**

A virtuous response to this challenge must first acknowledge its difficulty. The nature of the challenge rests in finding a solution to overcome the obstacle of choosing the "superior" expert. According to Goldman, he has not presented a clear response to the problem. Instead, he has merely highlighted options that are available to novices. Aside from this advice, Goldman contends that he has not truly ameliorated the challenge. David Coady and Axel Gelfert have reached similar estimations. This dissertation holds a virtuous response that is in line with the intellectual virtues of courage and openmindedness.

Before outlining a virtuous response, a distinction must be noted on the qualification of apologists. The general view on experts involves their relationship with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup>David Coady, "When Experts Disagree," *Episteme* 3 nos. 1-2 (2006): 68-79; and chapter 9 of Axel Gelfert, *A Critical Introduction to Testimony* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014). For the most part, Coady and Gelfert interact with Goldman's essay. Coady's article objects to Goldman's suspicion of the "numbers game." As I have already noted, Goldman did not support the consensus view about experts, claiming that it was not entirely satisfactory. Positions that were not reached independently cannot be taken to add further support for credentialing a favored expert. According to Goldman, this instance could be the result of "disciples" blindly deferring to an expert. Coady does not find that this situation weakens the force of numbers. He claims that instances exist in which novices are justified in following the majority *qua* evidence of credentials.

novices. This dissertation does not place apologists in the novice category. Furthermore, it is difficult to define a layman or novice. However, Goldman and others have understood a novice to have no opinions or training on the issue. In contrast, the assumption is that apologists are educated and trained. The reason for this qualification is to present individuals who qualify as "epistemic peers" defined by the literature. Many contributors to the field of apologetics are trained philosophers or scientists. Some would be considered experts in their field. For example, Douglas Axe has contributed to the apologetical defense of intelligent design. His credentials include research in chemical engineering. Another example of an apologist qua expert is Hugh Ross who is an astrophysicist. Axe and Ross fit the descriptions of experts; they possess training and experience. They also both contend for evidence that points to God's existence. What's more, it is obvious that some apologists are not experts in some domain. Yet, they may have a specialization in which they may qualify as Goldman's weak sense of an expert. These apologists may be knowledgeable in the sense that they have acquired a robust view of the positions and arguments within a specific field. They have examined and considered the most prominent views within a particular domain.<sup>64</sup>

A virtuous response will not forestall discussion. The view developed in the last chapter considers intellectual goods to be the aim of intellectual virtue. To nullify the discussion is to hinder the pursuit of epistemic goods. This statement does not claim that every pursuit is a wise pursuit. However, the presence of disagreement at the expert level should not suspend discussion or the consideration of alternative views. Additionally, a virtuous response will not dismiss expert testimony. Allowing an upfront dismissal of expert testimony would betray the virtuous position. Intellectual courage is demonstrated when an individual perseveres despite intellectual challenges such as disagreement. This

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup>David Coady identifies this knowledge as "meta-expertise." It involves the skill of adjudicating between experts and their credentials. David Coady, "When Experts Disagree," 71.

action should not be equated with the vicious dismissal of testimony. The conclusion of the last chapter discussed the robust nature of these virtues. In this instance, one trait of intellectual courage is openness to counter-evidence and opposing arguments.

Another aspect of intellectual virtue in disagreement is the disposition of openness to dialogue. The challenge of experts can be illustrated as a means of suppressing further inquiry into the issue. When it comes to apologetics and science, open-mindedness is demonstrated in the serious reflection on the opposing viewpoint, such as evolutionary models. A virtuous openness does not dismiss those who hold to evolutionary understanding. It is no surprise that many individuals would support evolutionary metaphysics. It is the prominent school of thought. It is the only form of biology taught in public schools. Many of evolutionary proponents are hostile toward any objections. The virtue of open-mindedness is characterized as a serious consideration of the evidence and thus to follow the evidence. In following the evidence, one of the challenges of experts is the presence of disagreement between experts.

The call for expert deference or accepting the consensus is problematic. The disagreement between experts proves that one cannot simply agree with every position. Experts challenge other experts. In evolutionary theory for example, Denis Noble challenges Richard Dawkins' notion of the "selfish gene." He further challenges the neo-Darwinian or modern synthesis paradigm. According to his findings, the modern synthesis is too restrictive. Noble intends to conserve Darwin's original thesis. He contends that the "central assumptions" of Modern Synthesis have been "disproved" by molecular biology. Thus, "Molecular biology can now be seen to have systematically deconstructed its own dogmas."

<sup>65</sup>Denis Noble, *The Music of Life: Biology beyond Genes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Denis Noble "Neo-Darwinism, the Modern Synthesis and Selfish Genes: Are They of Use in Physiology?" *Journal of Physiology* 589, no. 5 (2011): 1007-15; and Denis Noble "Physiology Is Rocking the Foundations of Evolutionary Biology," *Experimental Physiology* 98, no. 8 (2013): 1235-43. Noble has worked in the fields of physiology, anatomy, genetics, and computational physiology.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup>Noble, "Physiology Is Rocking the Foundations of Evolutionary Biology," 1236.

Deferring to experts operates on a vicious view of testimony because it amounts to a sense of credibility excess. A virtuous response to experts allows for disagreement because it does not succumb to the excessive burden of testimony seen in conciliating. It is possible to disagree with experts because it is impossible to accept all expert testimony. It has been shown that experts are not free from error. They are generally reliable, but they are also restricted by human error. Moreover, they are restricted in their highly specified discipline. Their expertise resides within a highly narrowed category of a field. However, they must also depend on others in order to fulfill the description as an expert.<sup>67</sup> More importantly, testimonial injustice occurs when the sciences dismiss outside views. As I have shown, an appropriate and consistent view of testimony does not preclude testimony even when its source is outside the realm of expertise.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup>Robert Audi contends for the necessity of testimony, even in the realm of experts. He states that testimonial dependence is the only option in certain conditions. "Fact-checking" testimony can be extremely difficult without relying on other accounts of testimony—this is especially true in the sciences and experts. "Consider, for instance, testimony about technical matters on which, apart from relying on the testimony of colleagues or teachers, even experts do not know all one needs to know in order to understand these matters" Robert Audi, "The Epistemic Authority of Testimony and the Ethics of Belief," in *God and the Ethics of Belief: New Essays in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Andrew Dole and Andrew Chignell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 188. Plantinga demonstrates this in the analogy of cartographers. In order to create an extensive map, cartographers must rely on the skills of others. They cannot independently develop a broad-ranging survey—they are too limited. Instead, it is a collective effort. Similarly, in the sciences, experts must rely on others to garner knowledge. Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 87.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup>In many cases, absolute deference to experts is an untenable deference to authority. John G. West warns against absolute deference to scientific authorities. In his work, he looks back on mainstream science's acceptance and propagation of eugenics. He shows that eugenics was not the product of a fringe group, but that researchers from prominent universities promoted the practice. West also contends that this example should not be confused with the adage that science corrects itself. For the most part, nonscientific groups, particularly religious conservatives, caused the demise of eugenics. John G. West, Darwin Day in America: How Our Politics and Culture Have Been Dehumanized in the Name of Science (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2007). Concerning the political realm, Jason Brennan, professor of economics and public policy at Georgetown University, has argued that the masses should defer to experts when it comes to politics. According to his view, democracy has been shown that it cannot work in the hands of nonexperts. Jason Brennan, Against Democracy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016). Yuval Levin's book review is helpful because it compares Brennan with the works of other political-science experts who develop similar arguments. See Yuval Levin, "Constitutionalism for Realists," *Claremont Review of Books* 17, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 14-16. Writing in *The New Atlantis*, Robert Herritt warns against epistemological outsourcing. Robert Herritt, "Hard to Believe," *The New Atlantis: A Journal of Technology & Society* 48 (Winter 2016): 79-89. He portrays the difficulty of picking experts as a technological issue, as well. Herritt sees some matters of disagreement as merely choosing an expert who will both support one's own position and serve as a defeater for the opposing position. Herritt states that this hardly ameliorates the disagreement, since it does nothing in the way of convincing or persuading one's interlocutor; rather, the experts are paraded around as sources manipulated by novices, who have no true insight in the field. It is a

This dissertation argues that a virtuous response to scientific expertise calls for criticism, which offers a bold position that is marked by open-mindedness. It is bold because it challenges the assumption that scientists operate by pure rationality. As Raphael Sassower states, "Following this line of argument, one could say that since expert knowledge is based on rationality alone, only irrational people will disagree with experts' scientific views." Sassower's comment illustrates more than what he intends to offer, which is that experts operating on rationality would ostensibly always reach agreement. If those who disagree were irrational, then many experts should be considered irrational given the presence of disagreement between experts.

Douglas Axe is an example of a critic of experts within the domain of science. However, he would qualify as an expert himself. Axe is a professional chemical engineer. He demonstrates intellectual courage by challenging the consensus. He considers it to be intellectually honest to challenge "claims that ought to be challenged." Axe's work

technological issue because of the open access to a cornucopia of viewpoints. Herritt questions the trust individuals place in these sources. For example, some websites proclaim their pursuit of the truth; yet, they do not divulge their methodology in approaching the truth. This instance has been witnessed in the attention directed to the *Snopes* website. Their masthead reads, "The definitive fact-checking and internet reference source for urban legends, folklore, myths, rumors and misinformation." *Snopes*, "Home Page," accessed January 8, 2017, www.snopes.com. Kalev Leetaru, a contributor for *Forbes*, questions the methods and principles that inform *Snopes*' practices, including procedures for hiring "fact-checkers." Leetaru contacted the website regarding accusations from the British tabloid, *The Daily Mail*. The allegations concerned revelations that were uncovered during the divorce proceedings of *Snopes*' founders. Leetaru contacted those who oversee the "expert" fact-checkers. According to Leetaru, he grew skeptical of the site's practices when it refused to disclose its practices. He was more troubled as a journalist because the realm of journalism usually relies on the website for fact-checking purposes. He states that it is generally considered to be a reliable and trustworthy source. However, no one questioned the fact-checkers' credentials. Kalev Leetaru, "The Daily Mail Snopes Story and Fact Checking the Fact Checkers," *Forbes*, December 22, 2016, accessed January 8, 2017, https://www.forbes.com/sites/kalevleetaru/2016/12/22/the-daily-mail-snopes-story-and-fact-checking-the-fact-checkers/#35418352227f. Herritt identifies this issue as "epistemological outsourcing." It is an oversight to place trust in sources that have not been vetted, but the action seems reasonable because everyone considered the site to be trustworthy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup>Raphael Sassower, *Knowledge without Expertise: On the Status of Scientists* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 67. Although Sassower's contentions are developed on postmodern premises, he does not reduce expertise to mere relativism or a covert operation to suppress communities. Instead, Sassower argues that experts can contribute worth to the community when they are held in a more critical perspective. In his view, experts have been granted unquestioned authority and privilege. He ultimately concludes that the appropriate role of experts is in the capacity of public servants.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup>Douglas Axe, *Undeniable: How Biology Confirms Our Intuition That Life Is Designed* (New York: HarperOne, 2016), 9. These challenges are not derived from one side of the philosophical spectrum. He looks to Thomas Nagel's challenges to materialism as well. Axe considers Nagel as one who also "opposes the stream" with a rebellious demeanor. I have already referenced Nagel's openness toward proponents of intelligent design. He has also challenged the reductionism of evolutionary thought across

began when he developed inclinations against prominent evolutionary theories. During his graduate studies he was further influenced by the presentations from the Wistar Conference in 1966.<sup>71</sup> According to Axe, the presentations were given by prominent figures in the field "who aren't easily ignored." He states, "The very fact that serious scientists were thinking and expressing these anti-Darwinian thoughts was intriguing." Rather than opting for skepticism or merely dismissing expertise, Axe was further motivated by expert disagreement in the area of evolutionary theory. In this way, he characterizes the balanced traits of openness and courage.

Axe accounts for the "human factor" of science. He challenges what he calls a "utopian view of science." Axe contends that this is the view of Neil deGrasse Tyson, who claims that science rests on following the evidence where it leads. However, this view overlooks human fallibility. Axe states, "Perhaps this tendency to idolize the legends of science is connected to a skewed view of the whole scientific enterprise." His view is not anti-science because the criticisms are directed toward scientists. He also does not call for global skepticism in science. Instead, there is a balance given the complicated nature of humans and their practice of science:

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the spectrum of the sciences. Following his honest declaration that he does not want God to exist, he goes on to suspect that this psychological response plays a large part in the expansive role of evolutionary materialism. Nagel states that the "cosmic authority problem" is "responsible for much of the scientism and reductionism of our time. One of the tendencies it supports is the ludicrous overuse of evolutionary biology to explain everything about life, including everything about the human mind." Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 131.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup>See Paul S. Moorhead and Martin M. Kaplan, eds., *Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution: The Wistar Institute Symposium Monograph* no. 5 (Philadelphia: Wistar Institute Press, 1967).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup>Axe, *Undeniable*, 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup>Ibid., 37. Axe contends that his aim is to "promote a realistic view of humanity and of science as a human undertaking." Ibid., 40. Similarly, Charles Malik's solution to the charge of scientists and experts speaking as "experts" outside of their expertise contends that they be properly "chastened." Malik suggests that they be humbled, as well. Malik states that scientists should remember that the "illiterate peasant" woman can teach them many things, and perhaps what she can teach scientists is, in fact, more important than the things that they could teach her. "The scientist should never forget that he is a simple, limited, living-dying human being, and that the more he gives himself wholly to his science the more he is in danger of being warped by it." Malik, "The Limitations of Natural Science," 385.

Nowhere are these complications more evident than in the discussion of big ideas that touch the way we live, because here we find that *everyone*—scientists included—has a strongly held view. And the very biggest ideas are those that offer answers to the all-important question of how we got here. We should by all means trust the scientific community to tell us how many moons orbit Neptune or how many protons are packed into the nucleus of a cobalt atom. Why would anyone distort facts of that kind? Matters where everyone wants to see things a certain way, however, are a completely different story. With *those* we should always apply a healthy dose of skepticism.<sup>75</sup>

Another example of science criticism comes from Rupert Sheldrake.<sup>76</sup> His research includes biochemistry and the history and philosophy of science. He is another fellow scientist who challenges supposed "dogmas" held within the consensus of the scientific community. Sheldrake's challenge to science is not against the methods of science, rather he is suspicious of its ideological assumptions. Having spent his adult life as a scientist he has "become increasingly convinced that the sciences have lost much of their vigor, vitality, and curiosity. Dogmatic ideology, fear-based conformity and institutional inertia are inhibiting scientific creativity."

He argues that these dogmas have stifled scientific inquiry. While he identifies ten specific dogmas, Sheldrake claims that the most fundamental and the most devastating scientific dogma is its omniscient assumptions, claiming that it has solved all mysteries or it will solve them in the future. He finds this assumption so entrenched in the scientific community that it restricts the freedom of thought and openness toward discussing divergent views. He posits that the worldview that "governs conventional scientific thinking is an act of faith, grounded in a nineteenth-century ideology."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup>Axe, *Undeniable*, 38. He further emphasizes his opposition against "authoritarian" science, which holds that experts are unquestionably reliable. Axe states, "We ordinary folks need not concern ourselves with the details when the elites are challenged. Instead, we wait patiently for them to relay their official response, which is sure to be correct, we assume." Ibid., 40. Although, Axe is not considered to be "ordinary folk." He is an expert who can be "concerned with the details" and mount an opposition against the consensus.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup>Rupert Sheldrake, *The Science Delusion: Freeing the Spirit of Enquiry* (London: Coronet, 2013).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup>Sheldrake, *The Science Delusion*, 7.

Science operates on many un-scientific assumptions. These assumptions include metaphysical materialism, physical monism, dysteleogical evolution, and atheism. He states, "These beliefs are powerful, not because most scientists think about them critically but because they don't." He claims that these views were never open for debate. Instead, materialism and epiphenomenalism are dogmatically inserted scientific training. These dogmas discredit science in its pursuit of truth.

One example is the proposal of the multiverse as a response to the cosmological anthropic principle. Sheldrake accuses the multiverse theory to be a mere guise to circumvent teleological explanations. He states that the theory is "the ultimate violation of Occam's Razor" and jests that it has the major disadvantage of being unverifiable. In another example, he contends that the dogmatism of mechanical models undercuts experience and observation. Mechanism contends that all biological entities are machines; this view is in contrast to vitalism, which states that these entities possess life and purpose. He posits that the mechanical view is contrary to experience and how science understands growth and development. Sheldrake contends that these are just

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup>Sheldrake, *The Science Delusion*, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup>Sheldrake criticizes the idealistic notion that science is an open-minded enterprise, which is open to examine all the evidence. He states that this view overlooks the context of the sociology of science: "It portrays scientists as open-minded seekers of truth, not ordinary people competing for funds and prestige, constrained by peer-group pressures and hemmed in by prejudices and taboos." Ibid., 27. This idealized view is what Sheldrake hopes to obtain for science. He aspires to eliminate the scientific community's narrow-mindedness. In one way, Sheldrake and Axe share the same sentiment in looking at the psychological aspects of science as well as promoting open inquiry. Yet, it clear that they do not share the same vision. It seems that Sheldrake is optimistic in believing that personal flaws can be overcome. Axe does not provide a solution to supplant fallibilism aside from extending a greater sphere of accountability.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup>Ibid., 12. Another example is witnessed in the conundrum in the materialist's viewpoint and its inability to study dark energy and dark matter. Sheldrake notes that these are "hypothetical" entities that are reserved for providing scientific explanations; yet, the community does not know much about dark energy and dark matter. This fact further clouds the notion that science can adequately explain reality. Sheldrake notes, "Far from providing a satisfyingly complete explanation of the universe, modern physics suggests that we understand less than one twentieth of it." Ibid., 68.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup>One of the many examples he provides is the dissection of sea-urchin embryos. When one embryo is cut in half, the two pieces will form two smaller, complete urchins. He states that commonsense states that these entities have a purpose. In contrast, machines cannot replicate or reproduce parts. Furthermore, the dogma of mechanism undercuts evolutionary theory. Evolutionary theory portrays entities as having organic ("vitalistic") traits; yet, the theory must contend that entities are machines, having no purpose or life.

two of several examples of scientists betraying scientific methods in order to remain faithful to their dogmas.

Don Ihde, a philosopher of science and technology, argues for science criticism. <sup>83</sup> His claims are helpful in characterizing how this form of criticism can operate in a responsible way. Ihde holds that science criticism can look like other forms of accepted criticism. He shows that art critics and literary critics are not considered to be anti-art or anti-literature. However, the same has not been said concerning critics of science. Ihde claims that those who criticize science are ostracized, whereas art and literary criticism dwells within the field. He contends for a space much like the dialogue between artists and critics. <sup>84</sup>

Inde claims that the resistance to criticism has a theological flavor: "To be critical of the new 'true faith' was to be, in effect, 'heretical,' now called 'irrational.' Functionally speaking, this resistance of criticism serves to keep the critics externally located, as 'others.'"<sup>85</sup> Ihde identifies two types of criticism. The first is external criticism in which someone outside the realm of expertise is critical. <sup>86</sup> One of the challenges for the external critic is the sovereign force of the expert, which has been generated by colleagues and culture. Because of these factors, the external critic falls prey to the "myth of expertise." Ihde cites Raphael Sassower's work on Expertise:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup>Don Ihde, "Why Not Science Critics?" in Selinger and Crease, *The Philosophy of Expertise*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup>His argument is drawn from his own experience with the group North American Philosophy of Technology. The group has received an "anti-technology" label due to their critical stance toward technology. Indee calls for an institutionalization of technology and science criticism in order to legitimize science criticism and grant it authority, much like the organization of art criticism.

<sup>85</sup> Idhe, "Why Not Science Critics?" 396.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup>He relates this to an encounter with physicist Max Dresden. Ihde sat on an interdisciplinary panel of scientists, discussing the Shoreham nuclear plant on Long Island. Ihde claims that Dresden presented a defense of expertise and exclusion, rather substance regarding the plant. "He contended (this was before Chernobyl) that nuclear energy was the cleanest, safest, and ultimately the cheapest source of electric power and that it was 'irrational' to oppose—out of ignorance—the opening of the Shoreham plant." Idhe, "Why Not Science Critics?" 399. Ihde argued that the debate centered on politics, leaving out Dresden due to his lack of expertise in the political field. "The next day at the Faculty Club, Max came over and as loudly as possible attacked me, saying he wished the entire Philosophy Department could be dismantled given its 'antiscientific' tendencies!" Ibid., 400.

If accepted, the myth has an immediate pragmatic consequence since it suggests that only experts can and should make decisions about their specialty, and that only experts in the same field may judge each other's decisions. What about the non-experts? They seem unqualified to be external reviewers of the decisions of experts, for they do not possess the specialized knowledge that qualifies experts to make certainty claims. In this sense, then the myth of expertise guarantees . . . that experts judge other experts and that experts are shielded and even insulated from public reproach.<sup>87</sup>

Ihde's second type of criticism comes from within the field, taking the form of an internal critic.<sup>88</sup> He suggests that science critics should be "well-informed" to such a level that they are beyond amateur status. The critic balances two spheres of remaining within the knowledge of the field but not the "total insider." Science critics should reside on the inside and on the outside, refraining from being a fully practicing expert because self-criticism may soften the critical stance. Instead, Ihde observes, "Something broader, something more interdisciplinary, something more 'distant' is needed for criticism." To

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup>Sassower, Knowledge without Expertise, 65, quoted in Ihde, "Why Not Science Critics?" 399. Tom Wolfe has written an informative and amusing account of the science community's feud over glossogenesis. As an outsider, Wolfe was intrigued by the dramatic conflict over the "origin of speech." Through his literary adroitness, Wolfe portrays the competitive surge behind Darwin's first publication, racing to publish before Alfred Wallace could submit his research. Wolfe relates this pivotal event is to the heated conflict between Noam Chomsky and Daniel Everett, a linguistic anthropologist who challenged the consensus. Wolfe characterizes the persona of expertise as an unstoppable charismatic force. He claims, "Charismatic leaders radiate more than simple confidence. They radiate authority. They don't tell jokes or speak ironically, except to rebuke—as in 'Kindly spare me your "originality." Irony, like plain humor, invariably turns upon some indulgence of human weakness. Charismatic figures show only strength. They refuse to buckle under in the face of threats, including physical threats. They are usually prophets of some new idea or cause." Tom Wolfe, *The Kingdom of Speech* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2016), 91. Wolfe delineates a parallel of the class struggle between Darwin and Wallace, and the dispute between Chomsky and Everett. He perceives Darwin and Chomsky as individuals who had connections with the community, while Wallace and Everett had connections in research. The latter two had corroborating evidence, which they diligently performed the "dirty" work outside the academic halls. For instance, Everett's work in anthropological linguists was based in his extended stays with the Pirahã people in the Amazon. Wolfe claims that Chomsky rarely left his office. The dispute arose when Everett produced research that undermined two of Chomsky's theories: Universal Grammar and Recursion. Chomsky posited that language had evolved due to a "language organ," which everyone possessed. Furthermore, every language manifested the trait of recursion, in which expressions are "folded" into other expressions. Everett's field research challenged both theories. Wolfe shows how Chomsky's ascension to the field created an impenetrable expertise. He also illustrates Chomsky's overreach into a field outside of his specialization: political theory. While Wolfe's Kingdom of Speech is not a technical work, it does narrate the vitriolic challenges of "settled" expert analysis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup>Ihde suggests that the internal critic is forced to the outside because of his criticism. He cites a study in *Science* January 5, 1993 that reports the negative effects experienced by internal critics. These critics witness coercion and ostracism. Ihde refers to the "David Baltimore" incident as a situation in which the whistle blower was fired, rather than the individual who fabricated data. Ihde, "Why Not Science Critics?" 401.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup>Ihde, "Why Not Science Critics?" 402.

achieve this middle-ground position, Ihde suggests a collaborative effort between scientists and critics.

In a similar way, Douglas Axe argues for "open science," which extends the practice of science to the public. Rather than solidifying a cult of expertise, "common science" incorporates well-informed novices into the discussion. Axe claims, "Because everyone practices common science, public reception of scientific claims is arguably the most significant form of peer review." He states that the practice of science qualifies everyone to have a voice in the practice. Axe opens science to everyone, therefore opening science criticism to everyone who "does" science: "Embracing open science empowers people who will never earn Ph.D.'s to become full participants in the scientific debates that matter to them."

At this point, a virtuous response can be applied to Alvin Goldman's article on experts. In choosing experts, he is apprehensive in accepting a position based on consensus. To expand on this notion, he considers a possible world where the majority of scientists are creationists. According to Goldman, the creationist's position possesses less value because it has a greater dependence on others as opposed to those who subscribe to evolutionary theory. Goldman states, "I am assuming that believers in creation science have greater (conditional) dependence on the opinion of leaders of their general viewpoint than do believers in evolutionary theory." This assertion is similar to Kelly's principle of originality. It assumes that evolutionary scientists are uninfluenced by other scientists. In this way, scientists attain their evolutionary perspectives independent from presuppositions or external influence, whereas "creation" scientists are guilty of smuggling in their biases. Novices can reject a consensus of creationists because of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup>Axe, *Undeniable*, 62.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup>Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?" 104n21.

influence factor, while at the same time novices are required to accept an evolutionary consensus because this consensus was developed free from influence.

Goldman does not show how a consensus view bears no influence on a community, particularly when evolutionary theory is introduced to students early in their academic studies. Axe's account demonstrates the dominant force of evolutionary scientists. His story contradicts Goldman's assumptions. In contrast, a virtuous response accounts for balancing and resisting influence. Goldman assumes that evolutionary scientists are free from influence. Furthermore, he assumes that influence is a weakness. In his account, creationism is not as viable as evolutionary theory because of social elements. A virtuous response to experts is based on a balance between social and first person epistemology. Goldman's argument illustrates an inconsistent epistemology. It does not recognize the reality that experts are influenced by others thinkers as well as other factors. While his argument attempts to build a case for resisting experts, he builds an attenuated epistemology in the process. His view reflects the steadfast position in that it appeals to the principle of originality.

Conciliatory and steadfast positions are unable to respond to the challenge of experts. The conciliatory position opts for skepticism. <sup>93</sup> It makes too many concessions in

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See Kornblith, "Belief in the Face of Controversy," in Feldman and Warfield, *Disagreement*; and Sanford Goldberg, "Disagreement, Defeat, and Assertion," in Christensen and Lackey, *The Epistemology of Disagreement: New Essays*, ed. David Christensen and Jennifer Lackey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). Bryan Frances has also argued for metaphilosophical skepticism. This claim is based on the notion that one is not justified to stand in disagreement with a seasoned philosopher respective to that philosopher's specialization. This skepticism applies to philosophers who are not specialists in that particular field, but nevertheless still oppose the superior philosopher's argument. Bryan Frances, "Philosophical Renegades," in Christensen and Lackey, *The Epistemology of Disagreement.* If this claim were false, Frances argues, it would result in the fact that most expert philosophers are wrong, and the "amateur" philosophers are right. Frances contends, "The startling consequence is that large portions of metaphysics, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of logic, the philosophy of physics, and metaethics are bunk and philosophers should give up most of their error theories despite the fact that their supporting arguments are generally as good as or even better than other philosophical arguments." Frances, "Philosophical Renegades," 123. Frances defines "error theories" as claims that oppose common sense belief. Sanford Goldberg argues that systematic disagreement presents one with evidence that most philosophers are not reliable in the respective field. He applies this same argument to religious knowledge. Sanford Goldberg, "Does Externalist Epistemology Rationalize Religious Commitment?" in *Religious Faith and Intellectual Virtue*, ed. Laura Frances Callahan and Timothy O'Connor (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). He claims, "We have good reason to think that there is no reliable route to religious truths; but even if there were, no subject would be entitled to rely on it—at least not in an

cases of disagreement. Regarding the reality of disagreement between experts, conciliating offers no grounds for intellectual pursuits. Scientists would have a difficult time applying conciliation to their method. It would stifle scientific progress and revolutionary ideas—both oppose consensus thought. Expert analysis would eliminate any other expert research that came into conflict with other reports. In addition, conciliation offers no advice for the novice or "lesser" expert in choosing an expert. Weak conciliation may offer splitting the difference, but this provides no assistance in wading through the cacophony of expert epistemic conflict.

On the other hand, the steadfast position would seem to be dismissive of expert testimony. However, Thomas Kelly contends that the most rational stance is to conciliate to the expert consensus, which has been shown to be a difficult move due to the lack of a consensus. Steadfast positions can be identified in other cases, such as David Christensen's opposition to creationists. He can be seen as opposing expert testimony, although he does not qualify "evolution deniers" as peers because their worldview does not adhere with *the* scientific method. In this case, he is dismissing many of his epistemic superiors who do not dismiss *a* scientific method and are still not convinced of one of the

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like ours, in which religious disagreement is systematic." Goldberg, "Does Externalist Epistemology Rationalize Religious Commitment?" 280. The various routes to religious knowledge are rife with disagreement, and thus the disagreement serves as a defeater for these methods of attaining religious knowledge. Peter van Inwagen argues that a form of conciliating, to be logically consistent, must be applied to other fields of philosophical study. The question could be posed to Goldberg's charges against philosophy of religion: why does the burden of disagreement stand exclusively on religious thought? Van Inwagen's claim bears force on Goldberg's skeptical conclusion: "I think that any philosopher who does not wish to be a philosophical skeptic—I know of no philosopher who is a philosophical skeptic—must agree with me that . . . whatever the reason, it must be possible for one to be justified in accepting a philosophical thesis when there are philosophers who, by all objective and external criteria, are at least equally well qualified to pronounce on that thesis and who reject it." Peter van Inwagen, "Quam Dilecta," in God and the Philosophers: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason, ed. Thomas V. Morris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 42. Not only does this prescription apply to Goldberg's challenge to religious thought, but additionally it is relevant to Frances' case for metaphilosophical skepticism. According to van Inwagen's claim, Frances has taken a "philosophical thesis" on metaphilosophical skepticism. Yet, Frances' argument stands in contrast with a seasoned philosopher, van Inwagen, who opposes philosophical skepticism. Consequently, Frances ought to be skeptical about metaphilosophical skepticism, given his credence toward doxastic deference when conflicting with a philosopher who is just as qualified or is one's philosophical superior.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup>David Christensen, "Disagreement and Public Controversy," in *Essays in Collective Epistemology*, ed. Jennifer Lackey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 156-57.

many nuances of evolutionary theory. Shristensen argues that "evolution-deniers" can be demoted based on their emotional attachment to their belief. After considering the high number of his fellow citizens who disagree with him, he argues that he can justifiably remain steadfast. His position is *ad hoc* given his arguments for moderate conciliationism based on the impact of disagreement. It is also interesting that Christensen does not remark on the notable academic disagreement regarding theories of macroevolution. His response submits a peremptory dismissal given the amount of conflict with high-level philosophers. It also shows the weaknesses of the steadfast position.

Bryan Frances has also offered a haughty dismissal of "creationist" views by referring to the position as "idiotic." In the context, he states that many atheists have the fallacious notion that theists have little scientific knowledge. He contends that this is an erroneous attitude. Yet, Frances states that there is some truth to this attitude because there are some theists who hold to the "idiotic" notion of a young earth. He gives no support to this assertion, which is understandable given that his focus was not on geology. However, Frances' *ad hominem* reveals his own false impression of superiority given the fact that some of his "epistemic superiors" favor a young earth framework. 98

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup>Epistemic superiors would be those individuals who know more about the evidence and arguments. In the case of experts, this idea would align with both of Goldman's conceptions of expertise in a general and a weak sense. Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?" 92.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup>For instance, Thomas Nagel claims the arguments from ID proponents to be worth considering and the atmosphere that has greeted them is unjustified. "Even if one is not drawn to the alternative of an explanation by the actions of a designer, the problems that these iconoclasts pose for the orthodox scientific consensus should be taken seriously. They do not deserve the scorn with which they are commonly met. It is manifestly unfair." Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 10. Other volumes are also dedicated to the ongoing debate: Neil A. Manson, ed., *God and Design: The Teleological Argument and Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 2003); and William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse, eds., *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA* (New York: Cambridge, 2011).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup>Bryan Frances, *Disagreement* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2014), 167.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup>The work of John F. Ashton is particularly notable in this instance. Ashton compiled the thoughts of fifty scientists who affirm a literal understanding of the six days of creation. The fifty scientists simply responded to one query: "Why do you believe in a literal six-day biblical creation as the origin of life on earth?" John F. Ashton, *Six Days: Why Fifty Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2001), 6. The impetus for this book occurred at a university lecture. Ashton heard a research scientist comment that he "did not believe that any scientist with a Ph.D. would advocate a literal interoperation of the six days of creation." Ibid., 5. After the facilitator named two well-known

In contrast, the virtuous response finds a balance between dismissing expertise and absolute deference. This response distinguishes between dismissal and disagreement. In the manner of Augustine's approach in *Against the Academicians*, disagreement with experts can be accomplished in a responsible way. Augustine acknowledges the credentials of Cicero and his contemporary skeptics. However, Augustine could also be critical of their insights, remaining undeterred by their philosophical acumen. In the same way, a virtuous response to expert disagreement can deliver criticism toward expertise. Because the aim is intellectual goods, the skeptical position can also be challenged as well. Intellectual open-mindedness acknowledges the influence of experts. In this way, apologists grant expert status, but expertise does not go unchallenged. Disagreement between experts opens the path for the pursuit of truth. Rather than precluding debate, a virtuous response to experts allows different viewpoints to be examined.

In conclusion, experts can be justifiably resisted. Experts can be wrong. Other experts in the field can expose their error. More importantly, experts must be open to criticism in order to advance the discussion. In this way, informed apologists may stand justified in their disagreement with experts. This claim is partially based on the level of sophisticated disagreement between experts. These informed apologists might have initially desisted based on other inclinations. For example, they did not find the evidence compelling even when the experts found the evidence substantial. Through further confirmation the apologists became knowledgeable of nuanced positions and challenges within the consensus.

While they are not dismissive of expert testimony, this category of apologists can reasonably disagree with experts. A virtuous response is manifested in a critique of

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scientists who affirmed that belief, Ashton was compelled to identify more scientists. Throughout the fifty essays, many scientists provide their evidence for a young-earth understanding. All of the contributors have a doctorate in some field of research science, including biology, botany, chemistry, engineering, geology, mathematics, and physics. It would be safe to say that these would qualify as epistemic superiors, or experts regarding Frances' assertion. I mention this case not to dismiss Frances' geological stance, but to object to *how* he dismissed other views.

expertise based on informed inquiry. Disagreement with an expert may also be based on deference to an expert who challenges the position of the particular expert in question. Finally, Christian apologetics' criticism toward science must not be misconstrued with an anti-science position. For example, apologists show a degree of deference in their use of the Fine-Tuning argument. While they are not experts in cosmology or physics, apologists use the anthropic principle in order to make an inductive case for teleology.

## **Disagreement in Religious Diversity**

While the issue of religious diversity is distinct from the challenge of experts, both issues entail a disagreement problem. Both must respond to the challenge of disagreement with majorities. Sometimes an expert's view can be taken as the consensus. In the same way, religious views can also manifest as a consensus or the majority view. The distinction between the experts and religious diversity rests in the notion of symmetry and asymmetry. Symmetry may be assumed between religious groups because one may not be epistemically superior.

In other words, opposing groups may contain an equal share of academics. In contrast, epistemic asymmetry is more than apparent in the relationship between experts and novices because one group is privileged. Religious diversity can be seen as a form of disagreement with a majority or a consensus. In another way, the challenge of religious diversity is seen as a challenge because the disagreement occurs between two reasonable groups. This fact broaches questions about one's response to diversity: Is it rational to disagree with a group with an overwhelming number of adherents?

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup>For instance, Carl Henry claims, "Common sense requires modern man's recognition of the scientific method as a spectacularly useful instrumentality for transferring our environment. Respect and gratitude are indeed due the scientist for many comforts and conveniences furnished to modern living, often as the fruit of painstakingly sacrificial research and experimentation, although in recent times not often without financial reward." Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, 83. His sentiment is another demonstration of holding a critical position toward science, while not adopting a position that would be considered "anti-science."

This section of the chapter will provide a virtuous response to the challenge of religious diversity. While the problem of diversity was discussed in the introductory chapter, this section will focus on the work of two philosophers who have approached religious diversity from the perspective of the epistemology of disagreement. Mara Brecht's work is pertinent for this study because she adopts virtue epistemology in her analysis of religious diversity and disagreement. Her dissertation considers the impact of disagreement from an *a posteriori* position as opposed to a theoretical reflection. She focuses on a women's group comprised of religiously diverse members. Brecht's work

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup>Other philosophers have also engaged religious diversity from the vantage of disagreement. For example, Joseph Kim, who is executive vice-president of Christ Bible Institute Japan, uses reformed epistemology as a means of approaching the challenge of religious disagreement. Joseph Kim, Reformed Epistemology and the Problem of Religious Diversity: Proper Function, Epistemic Disagreement, and Christian Exclusivism (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications. 2011). Kim's motive behind the book is confronting the conclusion of the equal weight view applied to religious diversity: mutually exclusive religious beliefs serve as defeaters for other religious beliefs. His support comes from the work of reformed epistemologists, namely Alvin Plantinga. Kim's argument attacks the premises of the equal weight view, as well as the notion that mutually exclusive beliefs are defeaters. Kim attempts to demonstrate that Plantinga's view of warrant will serve to defeat the argument that mutually exclusive religious beliefs are defeaters. If it is the case that diversity does not serve as a defeater, then Plantinga's epistemic model and Christian exclusivism are both reasonable. In response to Christian exclusivism, Kim provides a similar answer as Plantinga's defense of exclusivism. Kim argues that opposition to exclusivism is self-refuting. To alleviate this burden, one would have to adhere to other exclusivist positions, as well. According to his position, the negation of Christian exclusivism is an exclusive position, claiming a privileged position calling exclusivists wrong; and supporting a skeptical or agnostic view is a privileged position from those in an exclusive position. The epistemic objection to exclusivism states that those holding the position are not within their epistemic right to be exclusive. However, the non-exclusivist falls prey to the same objection because he is stubbornly clinging to the position. The epistemic objection also claims that exclusivism betrays epistemic duties. Yet, it can be said of both objections, they are not exclusive to exclusivist positions; the objections apply to the non-exclusivist and skeptic/agnostic. Kim also follows Thomas Kelly's argument against the equal weight view. Kim and Kelly both posit that epistemic peers can fall short in some areas, giving evidence (the shared evidence) too much priority or not enough weight. Therefore, it is reasonable to resist the equal weight stance. Kim claims that one should not remove any weight from one's belief in the presence of disagreement when the disagreement serves as the evidence. Prior to awareness of disagreement the doxastic agent has carefully formed the belief; he contends that the introduction of disagreeing evidence should not alter the previously formed belief. The disagreement does not serve as evidence for belief formation. However, he does claim that disagreement may serve as psychological support to re-evaluate the belief, but it is not sufficient to believe that it is irrational to remain steadfast. Kim's work does not approach the problems inherent in the steadfast position. Instead, his work is a defense of Plantinga's approach to religious diversity. He presents a strong critique of the conciliatory position. He rightly criticizes its oppressive view of epistemic peers and evidence. Yet, Kim's analysis does not extend far enough in questioning the merits of the steadfast position. He ultimately sides with steadfastness as the most reasonable response, which is in line with reformed epistemology. It is not clear that Kim supports epistemic egoism or self-reliance, which are both features of steadfastness. However, it is noteworthy that Plantinga, who is Kim's main protagonist, is vocal on the epistemic value of testimony.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup>Mara Brecht, "Taking the Epistemology of Interreligious Dialogue Seriously: Belief, Religious Diversity, and Interreligious Dialogue as a Virtuous Doxastic Practice" (PhD diss., Fordham University, 2010).

begins in response to the scholarship on religious diversity as disagreement, including the work of Paul Griffiths. <sup>102</sup> She rejects a conciliatory position in advancement of a balanced response based on virtue theory. According to Brecht, diversity does not defeat belief, but forces one to take other believers seriously. <sup>103</sup> Virtue epistemology is critical for Brecht's analysis. "Taking others seriously" is a demonstration of virtuous judiciousness, which refrains from problems of gullibility and excessive circumspection. <sup>104</sup>

James Kraft also considers religious diversity a form of religious disagreement. Although he does not adopt a virtuous perspective, he does argue for a reasonable response to disagreement using counterfactual epistemology. This approach accounts for nearby errors that one could have performed or potential errors where something goes wrong. Given this modal approach, Kraft ponders, "Is it *possible* that I am mistaken?" He employs the concept of peers, which factors into the possibility of error based on one's environment. The environmental aspect introduces the idea that religious belief may be merely sociological. It is the idea that religious belief is arbitrarily based on one's social upbringing. This awareness of the possibility of error in the presence of disagreement provides an epistemic obstacle for religious belief. According to Kraft, a conciliatory response is the most justified position in light of the sociological basis for religious belief.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup>Paul Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup>Brecht, "Taking the Epistemology of Interreligious Dialogue Seriously," 55.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup>Ibid., 255.

 $<sup>^{105}</sup> James \ Kraft,$  The Epistemology of Religious Disagreement: A Better Understanding (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup>Counterfactual epistemology focuses on the proximity of possible worlds and contingent truths. In the sense of social variability (or Hick's "biographical fact"), it is merely a contingent truth about one's social upbringing. Thus, it is possible that one's parents, family members, friends, community (etc.) could have held a different set of beliefs, which would have altered one's own set of beliefs.

# **A Critique of Religious Diversity**

Before providing responses to Brecht and Kraft, it will be beneficial to revisit the positions of diversity that were introduced in the first chapter. The views of Gutting, McKim, Griffiths, and Basinger can now be viewed through the lens of virtuous disagreement. Because their views were introduced prior to the chapters that discussed disagreement and developed a case for intellectual virtues, we can now see how each corresponds to the stances on disagreement. In addition to this analysis, their views will also be reviewed from the stance of virtue responsibilism.

Gary Gutting's position contends for a skeptical stance in response to the challenge of diversity. The awareness of peer disagreement provides individuals with an external defeater for their belief. He objected to Plantinga's argument, which maintains that there is no obligation to give a response to disagreement. Gutting's position leans toward the conciliatory side; however, he also suggests that arguments could bolster one's position. While his stance would appear to align with weak conciliationism, his call for skepticism does not follow from disagreement, but from the failure of theistic arguments.

In regards to intellectual virtue, Gutting appears to value epistemic self-trust. He maintains that many beliefs may be indeterminate, and furthermore, challenged by experts. However, he states that disagreement does not force one to relinquish belief. Gutting states, "Surely we do not want to be so skeptical as to say that (almost) all of us ought to give up (almost) all our most important and characteristic beliefs." Many of our most cherished beliefs are those that are controversial. According to Gutting, these beliefs are "central" to one's character and identity. Because of the weight of these

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup>The third chapter of *Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism* is dedicated to the notion that disagreement necessitates justification.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Gary Gutting, *Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 101.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup>Gutting, Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism, 101.

sorts of beliefs, Gutting appears to align with a form of steadfastness; although, he also rejects epistemic egoism.

Robert McKim's position holds to a tentative position in response to religious disagreement. The imposing reality of diversity forces one to reduce doxastic confidence. He argues that the tentative position is the reasonable response to diversity. His position is also in line with weak conciliationism by rejecting reasonable disagreement. It is untenable to maintain a strong position in light of religious disagreement. Instead, McKim calls for tentativeness in the presence of disagreement. While he does not explicitly articulate a skeptical position, he contends that disagreement indicates that the available evidence leads to religious ambiguity. Skepticism can be incorporated in a tentative position.

McKim also claims that a tentative position does not eliminate religious commitment. He argues for a distinction between cognitive commitments and practical commitments. For example, a Christian can be practically committed to Christianity without having cognitive commitment. In other words, Christians do not have to believe the "challenged" historicity of the faith, but they can still adhere to Christian practice. McKim's tentativeness is also employed in order to promote tolerance and openness toward other systems of belief. However, the definition set forth in the last chapter argued that openness does not require epistemic insecurity.

Concerning intellectual virtue, McKim attempts to balance self-trust and testimony. He affirms, "We cannot be expected to take the beliefs of others as seriously as our own beliefs." At the same time he also affirms the need for consistency, which would be directed toward external sources of knowledge. Thus, the beliefs of others do have merit. In line with the virtue of open-mindedness, McKim objects to immediately

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup>Robert McKim, *Religious Ambiguity and Religious Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 132.

dismissing foreign beliefs through "discrediting mechanisms." However, McKim does not develop a balanced view of open-mindedness; his idea of openness is not facilitated by another virtue. An excessive openness results from this position, which collapses in a skeptical position. In order to be logically consistent, the skeptic must be both internally and externally skeptical regarding religious belief.

Paul Griffiths' position stands in contrast to conciliation. There may be occasions when individuals forfeit or reduce epistemic confidence. On the other hand, there are grounds for remaining firm. By contending for engaging in the disagreement, Griffiths' position goes beyond steadfastness. He does not articulate a position on reasonable disagreement, but Griffiths does contend for the rationality of "converting" individuals who hold to different beliefs. He uses "evangelize" in a broad manner. For instance, groups that are against smoking can be seen as missionaries who are evangelizing smokers. Griffiths claims that there is no argument against this conversion. He finds this example similar to Christian evangelism.

Elsewhere he has made the case for an apologetic response to the awareness of disagreement. The demands of diversity require interreligious dialogue—the NOIA principle: "the necessity of interreligious apologetics." The principle obligates intellectual authorities of a particular tradition to engage in both positive and negative apologetics. It is their duty to engage in apologetics based on epistemic premises. The epistemic duty is to respond to challenges and objections, which can be in the form of

<sup>111</sup> McKim, *Religious Ambiguity and Religious Diversity*, 134-35. He describes these attitudes as a means for a tradition to explain that other traditions are based on incoherent foundations. Later, McKim disparages such mechanisms by categorizing these views as suffering from egoistic tendencies: "The 'we alone know' and 'their judgments don't count' attitude in the intellectual sphere has much the same unassailability as has ethical egoism, the view that the interests of others do not matter, in the moral sphere." Ibid., 141. It should be noted that McKim's conciliatory position objects to epistemic egoism, but it does not make a case against self-trust in the form that Feldman and Christensen rejected epistemic self-trust in disagreement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup>Paul Griffiths, *An Apology for Apologetics: A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup>Ibid., 1-18.

religious diversity. By proposing apologetics as a response to diversity, Griffiths has opened an avenue for continued dialogue and debate. 114

David Basinger's position shares many similarities with Griffiths' stance. Basinger also contends for the practice of negative and positive apologetics. In order to "maximize truth," he argues that an individual is required to attempt to explain the reasons for the disagreement. While he does not always support standing unmoved by disagreement, he does hold that there are occasions for reasonable disagreement. One can stand firm by searching "for reasons for continuing to consider his perspective superior to that of his epistemic competitors." He argues that a persistent position entails an obligation to practice positive apologetics. In an implicit opposition to the uniqueness thesis, Basinger argues that an apologist can accept the reality that he does not have an "objective basis" that universally demonstrates the superiority of his perspective.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup>Griffiths has personally demonstrated a stand for debate in the presence of disagreement. In response to an imbroglio over diversity training at Duke University, Griffiths resigned from his faculty position. He claims that the issue arose regarding his resistance to the training. He opposed the training because he believed it to be a means to stifle opposing views. Griffiths commented that the training would reveal "illiberal and totalitarian" roots. Because of these comments via email, the administration began disciplinary proceedings against Griffiths. In response, Griffiths drafted an open letter, which stated that the disciplinary proceedings against Offinitis. In response, Offinitis drafted an open fetter, which stated that it disciplinary proceedings were not meant to "engage and rebut" his views, but to castigate him for having expressed dissenting views. It was mere "discipline for their opponents." In an article titled, "To the University with Love: Why I Resigned from Duke," Griffiths expands on the value of diversity, disagreement, and debate. He states, "The agony of distinction and argument, the search for clarity by dramatizing and exploring difference — these no longer have the place they once had in the university. Harsh and direct disagreement places thought under pressure. That's its point. Pressure can be intellectually productive: Being forced to look closely at arguments against a beloved position helps those who hold it to burnish and buttress it as often as it moves them to abandon it. But pressure also causes pain and fear; and when those under pressure find these things difficult to bear, they'll sometimes use any means possible to make the pressure and the pain go away. They feel unsafe, threatened, put upon, and so they react by deploying the soft violence of the law or the harder violence of the aggressive and speech-denying protest. Both moves are common enough in our élite universities now, as is their support by the powers that be. Tolerance for intellectual pain is less than it was. So is tolerance for argument." Commenting on this incident, R. R. Reno labels Griffiths a "truth-teller" and concludes, "Power now supersedes argument." Paul J. Griffiths, "To the University with Love: Why I Resigned from Duke," *Commonweal*, May 18, 2017, accessed July 23, 2017, www.commonwealmagazine.org/university-love; Peter Schmidt, "Duke Professor Resigns after Facing Discipline for Challenging Diversity Training," The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 9, 2017, accessed July 23, 2017, www.chronicle.com/blogs/ticker/duke-professor-resigns-after-facingdiscipline-for-challenging-diversity-training/118283; and R. R. Reno, "Paul Griffiths, Truth-Teller," First Things (August/September 2017): 64-66. Also, for the line of correspondence, see Rod Dreher, "Duke Divinity Crisis: The Documents Are Out," *The American Conservative*, May 7, 2017, accessed July 23, 2017, http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/duke-divinity-crisis-griffiths-documents.

David Basinger, Religious Diversity: A Philosophical Assessment (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 99.

Griffiths and Basinger's positions do not precisely resonant with either position, but resemble steadfastness over conciliation. They agree on the rationality of reasonable disagreement. They also implicitly reject the uniqueness thesis, implying permissivism. However, they appear to progress beyond the bounds of steadfastness. According to my critique of steadfastness, Griffiths and Basinger are not averse to influence. In fact, their positions explicitly embrace influence and persuasion. While they do not appeal to a virtue epistemology, their stances on diversity and apologetics cohere with the nature of the intellectual virtues that have been outlined in this study.

### **Brecht on Virtue and Diversity**

Mara Brecht's work is particularly relevant to the focus of this dissertation due to her focus on religious disagreement *via* virtue epistemology. Her research considers the study of religious diversity in light of the beliefs and experiences of average believers. Although her work does not involve apologetics, Brecht's study is pertinent because it argues for steadfastness in the face of disagreement. She maintains that reasonable disagreement can be justified by virtuous responses to conflict. While Brecht's work does respond to scholars who have worked on the problem of religious diversity, she intends to focus on the practical responses. She looks to empirical data of responses to disagreement *qua* diversity. According to Brecht, this approach is the "bottom up" aspect of religious diversity. The "top down" side involves scholarship and begins with theology. She posits that theology influences how academics respond to disagreement.

In examining the work of Robert McKim and Richard Feldman, she finds fault with both approaches because their positions separate belief and practice. Their conciliatory response erodes the justification of belief, and yet the religious practice still

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup>She identifies the substance of her dissertation as the idea that religious diversity is an instance of "epistemic disagreement." Brecht, "Taking the Epistemology of Interreligious Dialogue Seriously," 59.

holds fast. Brecht is also critical of their claims because they are grounded in "evidential-foundationalism and internalist assumptions." She rejects their method, in which McKim and Feldman examine mundane beliefs rather than religious beliefs to make a case against faith. Brecht claims that this is an example of *a priori* assumptions toward religious belief: "Their epistemologies are *a priori* on the issue of religion in the sense that they do not draw from instances of actual religious belief but rather, draw from other (prior) epistemic circumstances that are then applied to the religious situation."

To build her case for steadfastness, Brecht argues against the conciliatory conclusions within religious diversity. She contends that McKim and Feldman attempt to use evidence in a "Cliffordian" manner; but as William James argues, there are occasions when evidence is not present or overwhelming. Therefore they also look to an internalist and normative structure. The religious believer who is aware of diversity should either be tentative toward his belief or entirely suspend it. However, McKim and Feldman do not call for decreasing or withdrawing the practice itself. This point is the emphasis of Brecht's objection. She claims that practice often reinforces belief; therefore, the two philosophers overlook the direct connection between practice and belief.

For her work, she presents a case study of a women's interreligious dialogue group. Brecht followed and interviewed the group over the course of two years. She particularly focuses on responses to disagreement within the group. Similar to her thesis, the group was intent on "taking belief seriously." Thus, the group was open-minded toward disparate views and did not attempt to persuade or convert other members of the group. She adopts a virtuous response to categorize the group's atmosphere. The group displays steadfastness in disagreement. In light of this behavior, Brecht proposes a steadfast response constructed on virtue. The virtue of intellectual judiciousness attributes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup>Brecht, "Taking the Epistemology of Interreligious Dialogue Seriously," 91.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup>Ibid., 90.

justice to dissenting views; opposing views are given a fair hearing. She claims, "Epistemic steadfastness is modeled on ethical temperance. A temperate person restrains herself from impulsivity and overindulgence." According to Brecht, steadfastness involves

Taking a proper attitude toward one's own beliefs in light of other beliefs. Steadfastness is the quality of how an agent holds what she believes. To be too steadfast about one's background beliefs is to be obstinate, stubborn, or even zealous about what one already knows. This recalcitrant knower refuses to reexamine her background beliefs in light of new information. To not be steadfast enough or to not be constant about one's beliefs is to be tractable about one's beliefs or even acquiescent toward all new ideas. She may be hasty or impulsive about reforming background beliefs. If an agent exhibits steadfastness, she embraces her background beliefs but also shows a willingness to reconsider them in light of new information or new experiences. <sup>120</sup>

The intellectual virtue of judiciousness plays a significant role in disagreement. To be judicious one exhibits fairness in believing and perceiving information. Brecht maintains that intellectual judiciousness involves "having a balanced perspective, seeing one's sources with clarity, and being open-minded about those sources." The vices of judiciousness demonstrate gullibility concerning testimony (being deficient) or the excess is too "circumspect or overly cautious." She also aligns the intellectual virtue of creativity with fortitude or courage. However, steadfastness would also be in accord with fortitude or courage: "A person musters fortitude when the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup>Brecht, "Taking the Epistemology of Interreligious Dialogue Seriously," 248.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup>Ibid. Regarding belief formation, Brecht claims that if the belief is formed through a reliable process, then the belief possesses *prima facie* justification. Her virtuous doxastic practice is two-pronged: communal doxastic practice and the virtues. Virtuous doxastic practice (VDP) demonstrates four cardinal virtues: steadfastness, judiciousness, prudence, and creativity. The traditional cardinal virtues are the basis for these intellectual virtues.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup>Brecht's definition of intellectual judiciousness can be understood to be a virtue that is upstream from open-mindedness. Openness is subsumed under judiciousness. As we have seen, other virtue epistemologists have isolated open-mindedness; however, Brecht's work is prior to the influx of work on the virtue of open-mindedness.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup>Brecht, "Taking the Epistemology of Interreligious Dialogue Seriously," 249.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup>Ibid., 251. There is not a clear distinction between excessive judiciousness and tempered steadfastness. Brecht indicates that judiciousness is not characterized by overt cautiousness; yet, that would be considered to be a virtue *via* steadfastness.

stakes are high and when something important is on the line."<sup>124</sup> Her description is similar to the descriptions of steadfastness. It involves being bold in the presence of adversity, holding to unpopular beliefs. These descriptions align with her qualification for fortitude: "To have fortitude is to be courageous and strong, particularly in the face of adversity or difficulty."<sup>125</sup>

In response, Brecht's study is helpful by clarifying the positions of disagreement in the setting of religious diversity. She shows the problems of conciliation as well as the value of religious practice. Her research also provides helpful explanations of showing how steadfastness might be a virtue. Furthermore, her work on the interreligious women's group has the potential to expand on the tension between steadfastness and conciliation. Unfortunately, her argument does not manifest a steadfast position. After reading through the numerous interviews and tacit comments, one quickly reaches the conclusion that the group is predicated upon conciliatory views. The initial comments discuss the tension between holding doctrinal beliefs and socializing with those who do not hold those beliefs. Yet, as the interviews progress, the full scope of the group results in a consolatory pluralism. Brecht never illuminates the point that one of the exemplary figures is of the Baha'i Faith—a pluralistic and syncretic community.

It is also mentioned that the experience supplants epistemic logic. Furthermore, experience precedes theology. Because experience is valued over belief, statements such as the following characterize the nature of the group: "We have to create God in the way that we relate to each other. The more we are connected we [sic] each other and respect that, the more we are strengthening the force of what we see as God." Because experience is a commodity, group members discuss how they are eager to try out other

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup>Brecht, "Taking the Epistemology of Interreligious Dialogue Seriously," 257.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup>These are comments from a group member. Ibid., 134.

practices because they witness how the experience affects others. These practices are the conventional practices of communion or Passover. The group compartmentalizes their external community of faith. It is apparent that the group has no room for an exclusivist position.

Ultimately, Brecht's analysis leaves little explanation for how to hold fast to one's beliefs in the presence of disagreement. The employment of her case study intended to develop a portrait of openness in diversity. However, it becomes clear that the women do not consistently hold to their original beliefs. Their beliefs have been transformed by the system of the group. Brecht rejects the epistemology of Clifford and Feldman because it is theoretical. Her case study is *a posteriori*, citing the women's group as an example of religious disagreement that does not result in defeat. Every participant can remain steadfast. Yet, she does not provide data or interviews with those who hold exclusive beliefs. If there were any group members who were exclusivists, they conciliated that view or conciliated their membership. Unfortunately, Brecht's case study and conclusion resemble conciliatory positions. The members of the group demonstrate that they have forfeited their pre-disagreement beliefs in order to be open to the beliefs of others.

Brecht's theoretical position on virtue coheres with the larger corpus on virtue epistemology, particularly responsibilism. Her position on open-mindedness reflects definitions from the literature. Brecht expresses the intellectual virtue of "seriously considering" other religious viewpoints. This perspective resonates with Baehr's principle of transcendence. The aspect of transcendence appeared to be the atmosphere of the women's group. As it was phrased, the group was open-minded toward the views of the other women. The group was formed in order to begin a conversation that would not typically happen due to the separation of culture according to religious beliefs. However, her argument for a tempered judiciousness *qua* open-mindedness was demonstrated to result in an excessive open-mindedness. Furthermore, it is not clear how this position would respond to the project of apologetics. It is true that the intention of the group was

to learn about other beliefs. This experience was aimed at openness, but the members could not have been open to every conflicting belief. If they disagreed, it was not shown how they could still maintain their original belief.

# A Critique of Social Variability

The challenge from historical or social variability has been used to further advance the problem of religious diversity. Similar to the general challenge of religious diversity, the main thrust of the social variability argument questions one's support for religious belief. For instance, religious belief is contingent upon several factors, which are also contingent. Birthplace is a contingent truth. A change in birthplace may result in a change of beliefs, including religious beliefs. James Kraft incorporates the literature

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup>Some link the origin of this argument to John Stuart Mill, who claims that one's placement is an "accident" of birth. He also implicitly supports a conciliatory stance. He holds that those who stand firm despite disagreement should be less confident because they are aware of others who disagree. Mill states, "And the world, to each individual, means the part of it with which he comes in contact: his party, his sect, his church, his class of society; the man may be called, by comparison, almost liberal and largeminded to whom it means anything so comprehensive as his own country or his own age. Nor is his faith in this collective authority at all shaken by his being aware that other ages, countries, sects, churches, classes. and parties have thought, and even now think, the exact reverse. He devolves upon his own world the responsibility of being in the right against the dissentient worlds of other people; and it never troubles him that mere accident has decided which of these numerous worlds is the object of his reliance, and that the same causes which make him a churchman in London would have made him a Buddhist or a Confucian in Peking. Yet it is as evident in itself, as any amount of argument can make it, that ages are no more infallible than individuals—every age having held many opinions which subsequent ages have deemed not only false but absurd; and it is as certain that many opinions, now general, will be rejected by future ages, as it is that many, once general, are rejected by the present." John Stuart Mill, On Liberty, ed. Elizabeth Rapaport (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), 17. John Hick adopts the notion of "accidents of births." He states, "For it is evident that in some ninety-nine percent of cases the religion which an individual professes and to which he or she adheres depends upon the accidents of birth. Someone born to Buddhist parents in Thailand is very likely to be a Buddhist, someone born to Muslim parents in Saudi Arabia to be a Muslim, someone born to Christian parents in Mexico to be a Christian, and so on." John Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 2. Other contemporary philosophers identify this problem. For example, Peter van Inwagen posits, "If I and some child born in Cairo or Mecca had been exchanged in our cradles, very likely I should be a devout Muslim. (I'm not so sure about the other child, however. I was not raised a Christian.)" Peter van Inwagen, "Non Est Hick," in *The Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith: Essays in Honor of William P. Alston*, ed. Thomas D. Senor (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 238. Alvin Plantinga responds to Hick's challenge, which Plantinga took to be directed toward exclusivists. Plantinga argues that the sociological nature of belief may have merit, but it does not eradicate one's epistemic support. If the exclusivist's exclusivism is sociological, then the same sociological influence applies for the pluralist's pluralism as well. Alvin Plantinga, "Pluralism: A Defense of Religious Exclusivism," 187. Also see Alvin Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 437-57. More recently, Roger White reflects on this argument from the view of epistemic causes concerning philosophical beliefs. He considers the influence of prestigious universities on the trends in philosophy. Roger White, "You Just Believe That Because," Philosophical Perspectives 24 (2010): 573-615. For a similar argument, see Nathan Ballantyne, "The Problem of Historical Variability," in Disagreement and Skepticism, ed. Diego E. Machuca (New York: Routledge, 2013).

of disagreement into the challenges of religious diversity. He also responds to the issue of social variability.

Kraft finds disagreement to be another source of evidence. It is first-order evidence against one's evidence for belief. "The issue of disagreement hinges, in a crucial way, on understanding the mistake proposed by the opponent as a nearby counterfactual that fails." According to Kraft, the use of counterfactual epistemology is a suitable approach to religious disagreement. He posits similarities between religious disagreement and responses to Gettier challenges. They both show that fallibilism is inevitable. He attempts to demonstrate how all other epistemic strategies fail in light of Gettier problems. Kraft argues that Gettier problems show how systems fail because they do not account for error in nearby possible worlds. The best strategy against religious disagreement is one that also avoids counterfactual errors. Because of the potential for nearby errors, one should conciliate or reduce confidence. Kraft maintains that conciliating one's religious beliefs is justified due to the presence of *peer* disagreement, which he calls "symmetry recognition." His argument for conciliation is based on the social and symmetrical nature of epistemic abilities. He claims that steadfast views "often overlook the social origin and maintenance of the epistemic skills we use," while also neglecting the symmetry of peerhood found in disagreement. 129

lasgreement is the attempt to persuade an individual or a group of two things: "you are right and they are wrong." Based on counterfactual epistemology, disagreement is the demonstration that one's belief has appropriately considered nearby error-generating possibilities while the opposing view has fallen into error. "Thus, disagreements aren't simply about what the truth is. They are just as importantly about how well we are held in the truth by a tether that anticipates and avoids relevant error possibilities. Disagreements are a fight over what error possibilities are relevant, or, in the new language, what possible worlds are near." Ibid., 69. Kraft's analogy of religious disagreement illustrates how boats are tethered to a dock. The tether represents the justification that supports the religious belief—the belief being the boat. Justification secures belief against any opposition, such as disagreement; in the analogy, the disagreement is represented by any potential danger, e.g., hurricane. Kraft understands that these "dangers" are mistakes in our epistemological endeavor to avoid falsity, seeking knowledge. In facing epistemic peers, our reduction in justification appears more frequently in form of possible mistakes in our reasoning, as opposed to actual mistakes. One's justification might tether to belief in the actual world, but it may not withstand potential error that the individual did not consider.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup>Ibid., 76-77. He identifies four types of the steadfast position. Kraft connects three of these with a trait that Thomas Kelly calls the "upward push." The upward push occurs when lower-order evidence is so well supported that it can push upward to stabilize high-order evidence. In one sense the

Kraft emphasizes the social force of beliefs by observing how beliefs have been passed on to others. Without the social setting, individuals would not have an appreciation for the justification of their beliefs. However, he also rejects the notion that epistemic trust (self-trust) can be reduced to the individual. No one can claim that the individual is the final authority on the matter. He argues that the concept of self-trust is adopted from others. By appealing to self-trust, steadfastness separates individuals from their social setting. Kraft disagrees: "No ego is an island." <sup>130</sup>

For Kraft, peerhood is inescapable. In order to make this case, he presents a scenario of a murder trial where the accused knows she is innocent, but the evidence unambiguously points to her guilt. In addition, a psychiatrist also gives evidence of psychotic breaks occurring in individuals undergoing extreme stress. Given all the evidence against her belief, she should conciliate even if she is "certain" of her innocence. Kraft argues that peerage cannot be eliminated. A reduction would betray all the evidence pointed against her.<sup>131</sup> He contends that other philosophers are too hasty in their peer-reduction:

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upward push is based on the separation between personal lower-order evidence and social lower-order counter evidence. It is the gulf between the public and private domain. This argument is the essence of Ernest Sosa's claims in Ernest Sosa, "The Epistemology of Disagreement," in *Social Epistemology*, ed. Adrian Haddock, Alan Millar, and Duncan Pritchard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Asymmetry can support peer reduction, which is the second form of "nonreduction" (steadfastness). A third form claims that lower-order evidence can be so deeply entrenched within the agent that she no longer has access to them. Kraft calls these "incommunicable insights." Kraft, *The Epistemology of Religious Disagreement*, 75. Peter van Inwagen also employs this terminology to explain his disagreement with David Lewis in his article, "It Is Wrong, Everywhere, Always, and for Anyone, to Believe Anything upon Insufficient Evidence," in *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality: Philosophy of Religion Today*, ed. Jeff Jordan and Daniel Howard-Snyder (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 137-53, reprinted in *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Michael J. Murray (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 273-84. A fourth type of "nonreduction" is based on an internalist structure. It claims that the agent has the higher-order evidence of his skills in appraising the evidence. The higher-order evidence then has the downward-push effect on the lower-order evidence, where the disagreement is found. Kraft writes, "We know even before a disagreement what our abilities are, what is in our black box. We can see how well the belief has been formed. And so the disagreement needn't precipitate a reduction in confidence, and this is so because the personal higher-order evidence can be so compelling." Kraft, *The Epistemology of Religious Disagreement*, 76.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup>Kraft, The Epistemology of Religious Disagreement, 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup>Bryan Frances provides a similar case when an individual disagrees with an expert panel. This particular case is based on one's first-person authority and experience. An individual knows he has a toothache, but the medical community cannot find anything physically wrong. After speaking with his wife, the medical experts come to find out that he has trouble telling the truth. The medical community has

It is always possible in a religious disagreement to demote the person from peerage, or to refuse to acknowledge symmetry in an epistemic situation. Detour strategies often do just this. Yet peerage belittlement just isn't appealing for many who rigorously take religious diversity seriously. It is sometimes hard to find an epistemic peer, that is true. But my heart and mind tell me positions like Plantinga's simply don't take the intelligence, creativity, and rigorous truth-seeking skills and motives—not to mention moral fortitude—of alternative religious practitioners seriously enough. Plantinga, Bergmann, and Craig, like Lackey, Sosa, Fumerton, and Kelly, don't adequately acknowledge the creative challenge of the true epistemic peer. 132

Ultimately, Kraft proposes a "liminal" stance that relates religious belief to the lottery paradox. The reasonable lotto player could be wrong, but he is almost certain he did not win. In contrast, the unreasonable player is certain he will win. The unreasonable player does not have knowledge because the belief is based on luck. Likewise, there are many possible worlds where one's religious belief would be different. Therefore, religious belief should be held tentatively. 134

Because of the weight of these social features of epistemology, Kraft maintains that religious belief is challenged by social variability, or what he calls "cultural contingency." A different setting is a possible world where one was influenced by a

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reached a consensus that his toothache is not true pain, but a mere fabrication. "That is the majority expert opinion. [The expert] only knows so much about pain and nerve endings. Even so, [the expert] does *know* that you're in pain. On the doctors' advice you might give up until your belief that it's your *tooth* that's the source of your pain, but you insist—and know—that you are in pain." Frances, *Disagreement*, 31. Frances concludes that one requires "some epistemically impressive item" to support the rationality of one's belief. "But you *have* it via some special experiences (the painful ones, naturally)." Ibid., 32. The takeaway from this scenario: "There can be serious expert doubt cast on your belief, you are no genius in rebutting those experts, and yet your belief is reasonable anyway if it comes from experience in the right way." Ibid. Obviously, this case has implications for peer reduction, as well as expert conflict.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup>Kraft, The Epistemology of Religious Disagreement, 145.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>133</sup>His proposal for the liminal stance is based on a very strong view of knowledge: "If we go liminal, and knowledge requires that one is held across *all* nearby possible worlds, then we don't have knowledge. Even so, we can have strong justification that isn't stubborn. You wouldn't say the lottery player is stubborn for living her life as usual without planning for a Paris trip, even though she doesn't know that she has lost the lottery. The liminal stance is livable even without the extra confidence the word *know* brings." Ibid., 150.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>134</sup>Kraft acknowledges the difficulty of determining near worlds and far worlds. He places the nearness margin between the knowledge of winning the lottery and accounting for Gettier problems. The nearness boundary is "the boundary between those possible worlds that just barely must be taken into account for there to be knowledge (like the win in the lottery case), and those possible worlds that just barely don't need to be taken into account for determining knowledge (like the Gettier possible worlds when one is in a normal situation.)" Ibid., 49. Accounting for nearness is the consideration of what normally happens and those events that could probably occur, which would hinder normal instances.

different religious system. According to Kraft, we know that this is possible because we are aware of the presence of diversity. It is reasonable to look at adherents of other religions and see them as "possible" selves. He further develops this argument by framing one's potential self in terms of epistemic symmetry: the reasonable perspective holds foreign believers as peers. When the challenge of religious diversity is developed in this manner it takes on the form of conciliation. For Kraft, religious diversity is religious disagreement between peers. Potential errors resist peer reduction. When the disagreement is recognized as peer conflict, the reasonable response is weak conciliation. Religious belief may be justified through social settings, but the justification is weakened by the challenge of diversity. Therefore, individuals who are aware of religious diversity may prima facie justification, but religious beliefs must be held tentatively.

In response, this dissertation affirms the reality of influence. Likewise, cultural influence is a factor in everyone's noetic structure. Influence and testimony are ineluctable aspects of reality. They are valuable epistemic resources. Thus, caution must be shown to assumptions, which indiscriminately attenuate any influence and testimony. This study challenges the steadfast position for incorporating a weak view of testimony. In this way, Kraft's argument rightly illustrates the problems of steadfast positions. However, the challenge of social variability extends beyond merely appraising cultural influence. Rather, it implies that religious belief is accepted without reflection. In other words, societal influence explains religious belief.

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<sup>135</sup>Likewise, Alvin Plantinga has acknowledged that there may be some force to this argument. He states that the content of the argument may be right "as a matter of sociological" fact. Plantinga, "Pluralism: A Defense of Religious Exclusivism," 187. Plantinga remarks that it does create "intellectual vertigo." It is difficult to follow the precise conclusion of this argument. If the ending suggests that one should question influence, then it seems that this skepticism can be directed at every belief—even the conclusion of the argument. Plantinga exposes the "self-referential" problems of this contention. The original force of the social variability argument was to question the premises of exclusivism, which would render pluralism to be a more reasonable option. However, Plantinga rejects this clean conclusion. The argument's conclusion affects every belief. Pluralism is not beyond the reach of the skeptical conclusion. Skepticism is influential, and thus should be cast in the lot of external influences. Therefore, Plantinga is rightly puzzled as to how proponents of social variability can manage its devastating conclusion.

The very presence of diversity undermines the force of the argument. If social influence had such an impressive force, then uniformity would be the anticipated outcome. However, families do not produce epistemic reproductions. Christians can come from atheist or agnostic homes; likewise, Christians also find themselves to be the parents of atheists or non-Christians. Furthermore, communities do not produce uniformity. Research shows that "inherited" religious belief is decreasing, while "chosen" religion is increasing. Thus, the claims of "accidents of birth" are unable to explain diversity. Additionally, sociologists have come to reject the older theory of modernism, which held to the secularization theory. Traditionally, modernism was understood to increase secular belief. Sociologists used to claim, "modernity secularizes." However, many sociologists now believe that the research shows "modernity pluralizes," maintaining that diversity is increasing within communities. 137

What's more, some forms of diversity appear to betray the concept of "plausibility structures." Sociologist Peter Berger states that plausibility structures are the standards through which a community accepts or rejects concepts or actions. These are social constructs that determine "what's plausible, and what's not plausible." Concerning religious belief, it would be extremely difficult for lone believers to maintain their beliefs in a community of non-believers. Berger states that it would be easier if there were "two of you," or correspondence was available with believers outside the community. Yet it appears that plausibility structures do not restrict religious aberration.

<sup>136</sup> Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "Christianity Faces Sharp Decline as Americans Are Becoming Even Less Affiliated with Religion," *Washington Post*, May 12, 2015. Tim Keller has used these statistics to argue against the claim that religion is declining. The claim appears to be a provincial assertion made by residents of the United States or Western Europe. According to empirical data, the growth is global, occurring in countries such as China and India. Keller also remarks on the growth of "chosen" religion. This type of religion is "based not on ethnicity or solely on upbringing but on personal decision." Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical* (New York: Viking Press, 2016), 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup>Peter L. Berger and Anton C. Zijderveld, *In Praise of Doubt: How to Have Convictions without Becoming a Fanatic* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup>Ibid., 35.

The presence of mass religious persecution and martyrdom indicate that these structures do not dictate every belief.<sup>139</sup> While it is true that persecuted groups do have external support by being aware of like-minded believers, in terms of life-threatening persecution, this awareness hardly seems *plausible* or viable when one's life and family is in peril.<sup>140</sup> The growth of Christianity in areas of severe persecution is dependent upon testimony and influence; yet, the growth of these groups resists the sociological standards. More importantly, the growth of Christianity betrays the consensus views of many communities.

Kraft's attempt to weaken religious belief through social variability is premised on an excessive view of testimony. 141 It supplants forms of autonomous thought. It follows that he rejects a conception of self-trust. He notes that disagreement is ubiquitous and epistemology is rife with conflict, concerning epistemic rules, authorities, sources, and evidence. For example, Kraft disagrees with other philosophers on their understanding of peer reduction. He lists a number of philosophers who argue for a warranted or justified means for reducing peers. Yet, Kraft's high estimation of peers does

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup>J. P. Moreland and Klaus Issler explain plausibility structures as background assumptions, which members of a society may not even notice—they rarely reflect on these assumptions. Moreland and Issler place naturalism and scientism within these structures. These structures reveal the hidden influence of one's community. Moreland and Issler provide an example of an Oxford University Press publication "may be taken by a reader to be more credible and to exhibit greater scholarship" than a book published by an evangelical publisher. J. P. Moreland and Klaus Issler, *In Search of a Confident Faith: Overcoming Barriers to Trusting in God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 46. They argue that doubts emerge from the plausibility structures of the culture. They are not suggesting that these are conspiratorial claims, which are intentional. Instead, these assumptions are subtle and unconscious.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup>The organization known as "Open Doors" places North Korea in the first spot on its "world watch list." They approximate there are 300,000 Christians in North Korea. Open Doors describes the atmosphere: "Tens of thousands of Christians are incarcerated in horrific labour camps, and thousands more keep their faith in Christ a complete secret—often their own family members do not know of their faith." OpenDoors, "North Korea, World Watch List Rank: 1," accessed August 1, 2017, www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/worldwatch/north korea.php.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>141</sup>Kraft contends that testimony operates at the level of first-order evidence. By contrast, Kvanvig notes that testimony is considered to be higher-order evidence and when there is no such defeat, testimony then passes into first-order evidence. Therefore, disagreement would stand in the meta-level. Based on Kvanvig's argument, Kraft is confusing levels when he describes the nature of disagreement. Of course, this does not object to counterfactual epistemology. It only illustrates an objection to his categorization of the essence of disagreement and where it would operate in our evidence for belief. Jonathan Kvanvig, *Rationality & Reflection: How to Think about What to Think* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 108-17.

not appear to apply in this scenario. He rejects the views of many philosophers considered to be his peers. In this way, he manages to stay firm in disagreement through reducing peers.

## A Virtuous Response to Religious Diversity

The virtuous perspective can overcome the concerns inherent in Brecht and Kraft. As their arguments have shown, disagreement is manifested in religious diversity and social variability. In the challenge of religious diversity, the virtuous perspective will be shown to have an advantage over the other perspectives on disagreement. Conciliatory and steadfast positions are unable to address the problem of religious diversity without facing serious challenges. Apologetics can therefore reject both positions and adopt a virtuous approach to disagreement.

The conciliatory stance carries an excessive view of testimony. Concerning the challenge of diversity, the conciliatory view is unable to present a satisfactory response. (What follows will forgo the objections to peers and will assume peerhood as uncontroversial for the sake of argument.) Diversity does not present itself as the idealized situations that are portrayed in disagreement literature. The most frequent test case of disagreement is an epistemic conflict between two peers. Thus, these cases do not possess the essence of diversity; instead, these cases portray dichotomy. Conciliationism prescribes withdrawing from one's belief or reducing one's belief. Both responses are unsatisfactory in diverse situations. When considering splitting the difference, the optimal situation is between two individuals. In these cases, moving closer to a peer's stance is feasible. However, diversity aggravates the scenario. The positions are numerous. Some beliefs overlap in areas, but conflict in other areas. Many religious systems uphold a theistic belief, but conflict in many other areas. On the other had, reducing to skepticism—completely withdrawing all doxastic confidence—resembles the steadfast

position. In the face of diversity, the call for skepticism calls for global peer reduction including epistemic superiors.

This dissertation views Brecht's argument as a form of conciliation. Although she appeals to steadfastness, her research reveals signs of conciliation. Brecht's position does not uphold the virtue of courage, which would demonstrate intellectual perseverance. Thus, the women's group did not demonstrate a virtuous openness, but a sense of excessive openness. Both the research and the group were based on the concept that diverse groups could communicate in openness without withdrawing from their own religious beliefs. Religious groups are to extend intellectual judiciousness to other viewpoints in the women's group. Accordingly, open-mindedness demonstrates a serious reflection on outside views, following the evidence where it leads. If the group's definition is true openness, then there was nothing preventing the women from adopting other views. Their steadfastness is not supported with reasons or explanation that they should remain firm in their belief. From all appearances, it seems that the women's group did not remain steadfast. Open-mindedness without restraint is not a virtue.

Kraft's position places too heavy a burden on external influences, diminishing a sense of responsibility for individuals to manage their beliefs. The argument from social variability presents a serious challenge to the conciliatory stance. The argument contends that one's beliefs are the results of outside influences. These outside influences are taken to be arbitrary. According to Mill and Hick, one's beliefs can be reduced to an accident of birth. Social and historical influences are thus highly contingent. The argument assumes that this weakens one's beliefs because the noetic structure is contingent upon a highly a contingent landscape. This premise can be taken to be a serious challenge to conciliation because it appears to eliminate peerhood. Social variability eliminates peers because background beliefs and experiences are inoculated by the arbitrary nature of their beliefs. An alleged peer cannot be taken seriously because his beliefs are arbitrary.

The steadfast view also presents an unsatisfactory response to religious diversity and social variability. Both arguments reveal the reality and strength of influence and testimony. The case of social variability makes a strong argument for influence. Kelly's principle of originality is difficult to manage with many beliefs. Social variability shows that outside influences are inevitable even in cases of religious or irreligious belief, illustrating that atheistic and agnostic beliefs are not free from influence.

By contrast, intellectual virtue is open to the reality that belief is influenced by one's surroundings. This openness is also directed toward other's beliefs as well.

Apologetics can appreciate other viewpoints through appreciating the premises of social variability. There is truth in social influence; however, this fact does not reduce to mindless adherents. In some ways social influence should be met with caution and reflection. Moreland and Issler argue that cultural influence can be managed with responsible reflection. The culture can impose doubts on one's beliefs by imposing plausibility structures or "influence canopies." They contend that people are often unaware of the influencing assumptions of one's culture. In response they claim,

Even though such assumptions are usually easy to answer, finding such answers does not, by itself, resolve the doubts. This can only be done by making these cultural assumptions explicit, by exposing them for the intellectual frauds they actually are, and by being vigilant in keeping them before one's mind and spotting their presence in the ordinary reception of input each day from newspapers, magazines, office conversation, television, movies and so on. 142

In response to religious disagreement, apologetics is able to provide an advantageous epistemic response through the manifestation of the intellectual

others." Ibid., 48.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>142</sup>Moreland and Issler, *In Search of a Confident Faith*, 48. They list seven of the most influential "doubt-inducing" assumptions in western culture: (1) Doubt is the intelligent position. Religious individuals are gullible and uneducated. (2) University professors are usually atheists because they are smarter than the average person. (3) Religion should be bracketed from the public square. (4) Scientism. (5) Strong empiricism. (6) Disagreement, even among the experts, is reduced to skepticism. (7) "Enlightened people are tolerant, nonjudgmental and compassionate. They are unwilling to impose their views on

virtues. Apologetics appeals to a sense of communication despite epistemic conflict. This view is set in contrast to the most fundamental problem of conciliation and steadfastness. This dissertation contends that both positions on disagreement preclude debate and dialogue due to the pressure of disagreement. Conciliation attempts to solve the disagreement by appealing to skepticism. By appealing to egoism, steadfast positions do not attempt to solve the disagreement. In contrast, apologetics attempts to resolve disagreement *via* persuasion while persisting in the belief.

Furthermore, social variability attempts to weaken religious belief merely by showing that other people have different religious beliefs. From the conciliatory perspective, belief is weakened simply because large groups of people hold a different view. The steadfast view weakens religious belief for a different reason. It enervates belief because religious thought is derivative. Steadfastness assumes that religious belief should be held loosely because it is unoriginal. The implied premise maintains the originality principle: derived belief is weak belief. This dissertation notes a few problems with this principle. Mainly, it betrays the reality of social epistemology. Secondly, the principle is detrimental to a number of beliefs. History, philosophy, and science are unable to operate according to this principle, leading to the collapse of the principle itself—it is not an original belief.

Conversely, a virtuous response to religious diversity observes the value of testimony while also providing agents a means to resist it. Testimony tout court does not have to be accepted without additional reasons. Many reasons are provided in apologetical arguments, which are a means of influence. Apologetics provides explanatory options for belief. Rather than cutting off debate, which is the result of conciliation and steadfastness, apologetics uses reasons for belief. Testimony is useful, but it does not dominate. Steadfastness does not find it useful, while conciliation allows testimony to dominate. The advantageous response to religious diversity and social variability possesses a balanced view of testimony. Apologetics uses testimony, but it also

provides reasons for rejecting testimony. These are characteristics of virtuous disagreement.

A virtuous response values an ongoing dialogue between disagreeing groups. Brecht's appreciation for interreligious dialogue is commendable, but it does not go far enough in having a virtuous basis. One example of a virtuous response to diversity is a view developed by Winfried Corduan. His view expands on Brecht's concept of virtue in interreligious dialogue. Corduan approaches the problem of diversity by first examining the similarities that Christianity shares with other religions. Agreements can "build bridges" despite diversity. He argues for open-mindedness and courage in religious diversity, aiming at intellectual goods that are the products of interreligious dialogue. Openness can lead to an awareness of agreement. The virtuous approach engages diversity with both open-mindedness and courage. Interreligious dialogue is a means of openly and courageously exposing Christian views to the challenges of religious diversity.

This position provides a response to Brecht and Kraft. In essence, it is a response to the epistemology of disagreement in demonstrating the advantages of a virtuous position in disagreement. The virtuous position can appreciate the value of diversity and the value of social influence. Rather than rejecting these notions in order to remain steadfast, the virtuous position shows intellectual openness through appreciating the fact that differing beliefs can share an understanding through agreement. In the same manner of open-mindedness, it is open to testimony and crediting other's viewpoints.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>143</sup>Winfried Corduan, A Tapestry of Faiths: The Common Threads between Christianity & World Religions (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>144</sup>Similarities include notions of revelation, ethics, salvation, and messianic figures.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup>He writes, "Interreligious dialogue is only meaningful so long as truth is an overriding concern." Corduan, *A Tapestry of Faiths*, 216.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup>Corduan expresses the essence of an open dialogue: "I dare say that we may have a greater influence by listening to them and talking to them than by dismissing contact a priori." Ibid., 229.

These traits are the characteristics of open-mindedness demonstrated in Westphal's approach. This sense of open-mindedness is aimed at understanding. At the same time, the virtuous position calls for perseverance in religious belief. Instead of developing an unrestrained openness, the virtue of intellectual courage facilitates open-mindedness when considering disagreement in diversity. Courage in diversity undergirds boldness in apologetics despite the obvious impediments of diversity. These dispositions are described in King and Baehr's accounts of intellectual courage and perseverance. It also resembles Augustine's approach to the obstacles of challenging formidable thinkers and boldly pursuing intellectual aims. Open-mindedness and courage manage a virtuous response to religious diversity. These are balanced in the idea of virtuous disagreement.

## CHAPTER 7

## **CONCLUSION**

One of the aims of this dissertation is to demonstrate the weaknesses of the standard positions in the epistemology of disagreement. In essence, conciliation and steadfast responses to disagreement are not responses to the substance of arguments. Instead, they focus solely on the fact of disagreement. This fact is highlighted in their reaction to the problem of religious diversity. The reality that other individuals hold different beliefs is used to weaken one's belief. The substance of the beliefs is not held in question; rather, different beliefs are given credence merely due to the fact that groups hold these ideas. This view is problematic because groups can adhere to erroneous notions. Conciliation weakens belief because other individuals hold different views. Along the same lines, steadfastness weakens belief because the belief is a product of testimony. In order to remain steadfast, disputed beliefs must be free from influence.

Another aim of this dissertation is to provide an apologetic response to the epistemology of disagreement. Because of their insufficiencies, apologetics cannot accept either position. It may be obvious that apologetics and conciliation are contrasting positions; however, the discrepancies between steadfastness and apologetics may not be so obvious. Nonetheless, apologetics and steadfastness are also incongruent. One of the incongruities is the fact that steadfastness possesses a low view of testimony. This dissertation has shown that many reasonable beliefs are products of testimony. What's more, apologetics must reject steadfastness because of its prescribed response to experts and majorities. In these situations the steadfast position succumbs to testimonial deference. If apologetics adhered to steadfastness, it would have to conciliate to experts

and religious majorities. A more satisfactory response is one that scrutinizes the beliefs instead of giving weight to the number of subscribers. Apologetics examines evidence and stands on evidence. Rather than conciliating the position because it is accepted on testimony, apologetics affirms the fundamental "power" of social influence by building arguments based on explanations that may or may not be outsourced. This perspective coheres with the virtuous response by following the evidence of the arguments.

In some ways, apologetics is consistent with both positions. It agrees with the steadfast position by claiming that evidence of disagreement does not present prima facie defeaters. It also agrees with conciliatory positions by maintaining that testimony is a valid source of knowledge. However, apologetics finds a more suitable stance in virtue epistemology. A virtuous position finds balance with interdependent intellectual traits.

Fundamentally, disagreement is a question of balancing self-trust and testimony. Disagreement is rightly subsumed within the field of social epistemology because it analyzes how to respond to testimony that conflicts with other testimonial accounts or with one's own views. The standard positions on disagreement attempt to justify self-trust or testimony. However, their responses weaken one epistemic source by giving too much weight to the other. Virtue, on the other hand, is a suitable perspective because it seeks to balance inclinations by finding the mean between excess and deficit. Virtue epistemology gives a stronger response by explaining how intellectual virtues do not result in the weakening of testimony or the elimination of self-trust.

It should also be noted that disagreement is a natural product of the intellectual virtues of courage and open-mindedness. In the same way, disagreement is also the product of diversity and plurality. In order to have the unrestrained pursuit of intellectual aims, individuals will conclude in opposing thoughts. Intellectual courage and open-mindedness will lead to an enduring degree of disagreement. Courage endures disagreement because it resists easy persuasion, while open-mindedness produces standing disagreement because it will conflict with more extreme positions.

Due to their inherent epistemological weaknesses, apologetics cannot subscribe to the traditional responses to disagreement. According to the virtuous response, apologetics still has force because it requires evidential thought and insight. Apologists can consistently ask others to reflect on the arguments because apologists also respond to arguments rather than to the individuals who hold the arguments. It would be inconsistent for apologetics to restrain testimony, but still practiced persuasive argumentation. Virtue epistemology permits this practice.

This portrait is similar to the example of disagreement in the history of philosophy. The first chapter of this dissertation reflected on the practice of disagreement in ancient philosophy. The pre-Socratics responded to the reasons for disagreement rather than responding to disagreement itself. These thinkers were not dissuaded from argument because of disagreement. Instead, philosophical debate engages reasons rather than the people—including their status. The fact that an individual holds a belief is not a sufficient basis for not engaging. Neither conciliatory nor steadfast positions provide a satisfactory response to the examples in the history of philosophy. Conciliationism could contend that Thales did not have any peers to challenge his ideas. However, he opposed the beliefs of the majority. According to conciliation, the consensus carries more weight. On the other hand, steadfastness is challenged by the continuation of philosophical thought. Philosophers were influenced by their teachers. An appeal to egoism undercuts the foundations of their thought.

In contrast, apologetics engages in order to persuade. It does not stifle debate merely based on the fact of disagreement. Benjamin Franklin's "Junto club" is a good example of continued debate. A few of the club's principles align with a virtuous stance. In the Junto club, members were required to promote curiosity and thinking by asking questions. They had to discuss subjects often avoided in "polite" society, such as politics,

morality, and philosophy. Members possessed a spirit of enquiry for truth, "without fondness for dispute, or desire of victory." The club was not deterred by disagreement nor did it account for superiors, experts, or majority opinions. Its main vision was to influence greater thought. Franklin states that the club was developed for "mutual improvement."

The use of the term "steadfast" could be problematic for apologists. It is obvious that apologists are steadfast in their pursuit of the truth as well as in their adherence to orthodoxy. However, any similarity with the steadfast position is name only. It is a superficial connection, for apologetics remains firm on beliefs that are not original to the apologist. Their adherence to orthodoxy betrays the essence of the steadfast position. The standard steadfast position would have to be altered in order for apologists to accept it. These alterations have been articulated throughout this dissertation.

The steadfast position would have to abandon originality. This principle was shown to not only have problems with apologetics, but it also betrays the essence of social epistemology. In this way, steadfastness' most fundamental issue is its insufficient view of testimony. Biblical references exhorting Christians to remain steadfast contradict the steadfast position by exhorting Christians to accept testimony to remain firm, negating egoism and originality. For instance, James instructs Christians to stand firm when facing various trials. The instruction to stand firm is based on testimony from both James and Jesus. James is indirectly giving Jesus' promise that the one who perseveres "will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (Jas 1:12 NASB). James' testimony attempts to persuade Christians by using Jesus' testimony. This dissertation has shown that the steadfast position is opposed to persuasion, influence, and testimony. Accordingly, the biblical instruction to remain steadfast betrays

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography and Other Writings*, ed. Ormond Seavey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 61.

the steadfast position in epistemology of disagreement. Instead, the virtues that have been described in this dissertation are in accord with the biblical imperative to stand firm, or persevere.

Furthermore, epistemic egoism is incompatible with apologetics. For instance, apologists show deference in areas where they consult and rely on expertise. When apologists use cosmological arguments they rely on the testimony of scientific experts. In this way, the Fine-Tuning argument is the paragon of relying on experts. Additionally, egoism is particularly harmful for Christian apologetics concerning the reliance on testimony and the writers of the New Testament. The eyewitness testimony of the Gospel writers and the eyewitness accounts used in Mark and Luke are necessary for understanding the Christian faith. A defense of the reliability of the Gospel narratives takes into account the manuscript record and therefore relies on the work and profession of textual scholars and paleographers.

In this respect, there are questions that this dissertation did not answer. While it did address the nature of virtues, the argument did not fully address the relationship between the virtues. Some have argued that a true balance, or golden mean, is not realistically found equidistant between two vices.<sup>2</sup> Instead, a virtue will illustrate a stronger resemblance to one of the vices as opposed to the other. This fact was acknowledged in the concluding thoughts on chapter 4. Virtue in apologetics is closer to steadfastness as opposed to a conciliatory position. It is the nature of apologetics to persevere in a challenged belief. This dissertation has attempted to show the virtuous manner of courage and boldness. Excessive courage will result in stubbornness and thus ultimately forestall discussion and debate.

There is also an additional issue regarding peerhood. This study did not fully expand on the nature of epistemic peers. While it attempted to show that the standard

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Nathan L. King, "Perseverance as an Intellectual Virtue," *Synthese* 191 (2014): 3508.

definition of peers is too idealistic, there are subtle distinctions in understanding how individuals relate to others with opposing backgrounds. For example, J. P. Moreland broaches this concept in a debate with Kai Nielsen.<sup>3</sup> In the debate, Moreland argues that atheists are hindered by their presuppositions, which were psychological antagonisms toward belief in God. This second-order argument attacks their ability to rightly estimate first-order evidence. Taken at face value, Moreland's second-order argument could be equated with the concept of peerhood. Thus, Moreland implicitly utilizes the concept of peers in order to settle the dispute, claiming that Christians could rightly perceive the evidence while atheists are obstructed by their psychological proclivities. Their adherence to atheism compromises their reliable epistemic faculties. If this were the case, then Christians are not obligated to be open to atheists, nor be required to understand their position.

It is notable that Moreland did not attempt to settle the matter. Ronald Nash has made similar claims about the effects of sin on one's noetic structure. In contrast, this dissertation understands the matter to be much more complicated. Those who reject the arguments *qua* evidence are not a homogeneous group. Some theists do not find the arguments compelling. By definition, theists accept the existence of God; however, there are theists who are not convinced that the arguments serve as evidence for the existence of God. In addition, there are "friendly" atheists who believe the arguments do have some merit and yet they do not believe that God exists. Thus, disagreement about the merit of the arguments is not merely based on some level of peer hood.

Nevertheless, this study is valuable because of it engages and integrates the fields of disagreement and virtue epistemology. The discussion of disagreement is a

<sup>3</sup>See J. P. Moreland and Kai Nielsen, *Does God Exist? The Debate between Theists & Atheists* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1993), 79-86.

<sup>4</sup>Ronald Nash, *Faith & Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1988), 111.

burgeoning field of epistemology. Being a recent topic of debate, it has received fresh ideas and novel approaches. Because of disagreement's nascent development there has not been a substantial response from the apologetic stance. Yet, disagreement is a common feature of apologetics. Additionally, there are more applications of disagreement to explore. The issues of experts and diversity are only two examples.

The field of virtue epistemology has also witnessed a renewed interest. While the concept of virtue is a longstanding notion within moral philosophy, its relationship to epistemology is a contemporary discussion. The epistemological focus has produced new research on the nature of the intellectual virtues. However, references to the virtue in the apologetic literature—particularly the use of virtue in apologetics—have been sparse. The examination of intellectual virtues in disagreement is vital to the ongoing dialogue in the new challenges that face apologetics. Because apologetics is inherently directed toward engaging disagreement, apologists can find resources in the intellectual virtues concerning debate and discussion. Indeed, apologetics faces changes in disagreement due to the fluctuation of the intellectual landscape. The most contemporary changes in intellectual influence were witnessed in the dominance of postmodern and relativistic worldviews.

Finally, the branch of virtue studies also interacts with other disciplines; in this way, virtue is pervasive. It is not merely relegated to the field of apologetics but extends to other domains within the sciences. Christian psychologist Mark McMinn discusses the aspects of virtue from a scientific perspective. Due to its aspirational nature, Christian counselors have begun to employ virtue in a branch of study called positive psychology. Similar to the nature of the aims of intellectual virtues, the aspirational nature of specific virtues presents goals or aims for individuals in different settings. In McMinn's case, he argues that the church will benefit by focusing on the nature of virtues.

<sup>5</sup>Mark C. McMinn, *The Virtue of Science: Why Positive Psychology Matters to the Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2017).

## **Additional Applications**

McMinn's discussion brings this argument into the broader arena of a biblical understanding. In this wider context, the use of intellectual virtues in disagreement can be seated within ecclesiological disputes. My focus has been on a traditional view of apologetics. The general paradigm for making a defense in apologetics is attempting to persuade those who believe that there is no evidence for God's existence. However, disagreement is not restricted to this dispute alone. Instead, church bodies are faced with doctrinal differences. One approach may take the path of finding agreement in the differences. This method would place some groups closer in terms of agreement, while other Christian bodies will be found at a farther distance regarding shared doctrinal agreements.

With such great division within the Christian community, a virtuous approach would seek to develop a relationship in open conversation. In spite of the differences, an ongoing dialogue may help in revitalizing broken relationships. Some groups may have reservations concerning openness toward this type of dialogue. It may be objected that some groups are too open to suspicious doctrines; or for that matter, the rift is necessary in order to separate heterodox groups. After all, Paul required Corinthian Christians to separate themselves from "immoral people" (1 Cor 5:9 NASB). He further expands on his terms of immoral qualities: coveting, idolatry, reviling, drunkenness, or swindling. Paul firmly expresses that a believer should not even eat with a believer who reflects these qualities. It is clear that Paul calls for a form of dissociation; however, it is not clear that he intends complete ostracism. Some scholars claim that Paul does not mean refraining from ordinary meals, but excluding "immoral" members from the Lord's Table. Calling for an open dialogue is not a call for casting a blind eye toward distinct differences.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>See Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014), 141. Gordon Fee maintains that Paul simply refers to the corporate gathering of worship. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* 

Another objection to an open dialogue is that Paul was mandating purity. The anxiety may be directed toward "cogitation contamination" on orthodox believers. This objection is already addressed in the nature of the virtues. As I have shown, intellectual openness is a reflection on other viewpoints, whereas intellectual courage is persisting in one's belief. The balance of virtues does not necessitate universal openness. Therefore, there are many possibilities that are simply not open for accommodation. The nature of virtues calls for practical wisdom. It is according to the discernment of the communities to observe responsible engagement. This restriction does not collapse into closed-mindedness, but shows the application of practical wisdom.

This aspect turns to the biblical concept of wisdom. The book of Proverbs is an appropriate source for understanding wisdom. In turn, wisdom illustrates how individuals are to respond to disagreement. In his commentary on Proverbs, Derek Kidner observes that the literature discusses three varieties of "mind." The book discusses those who are closed-minded, empty-minded, and open-minded. The writer of Proverbs describes closed-minded individuals as scornful, representing them as scoffers. Empty minds are considered to be simpletons. In contrast, those who are open-minded have discernment.

The simple minded can be shown to relate to the excessive side of conciliation. They are burdened by testimonial acceptance. Conciliation is insufficient in that it eliminates the self from instances of disagreement. It is a vicious view in that it precludes debate. The scornful are narrow-minded in the sense of the steadfast view. It is an overweening stance in its dismissal of other views. This was shown in its appeal to epistemic egoism. I contend that it suffers from the same fundamental problem of conciliation in that it also forestalls debate and continued discussion. In both views

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 226.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 128.

disagreement takes on an excessive role. Rather than being open-minded to expanding on disagreement, the positions prevent diverse viewpoints to controversial issues. In the sense taken from the book of Proverbs, discerning minds are open to debate and disagreement. They also show courage by holding up their beliefs against counter evidence and opposing claims. Discerning minds are also aware of the ubiquity of disagreement. Thus, there is a basis for intellectual perseverance despite the challenges of disagreement.

By following a biblical model of wisdom in disagreement, Paul can be understood to be a virtuous exemplar. His disposition exhibits the balance of the intellectual virtues, particularly courage and open-mindedness. Luke's accounts of Paul's apologetic approach reflect the descriptions of these virtues. Paul's example is also fitting for a response to the literature on disagreement. His courage did not drift into coercion, nor did his open-minded approach reduce into relativism. Paul's approach to apologetics is intellectually courageous. In terms of epistemic peers, many members of Paul's audience were highly educated and academically trained. In his speech at the Areopagus, the Athenian audience would qualify as peers or even superiors.

Paul's intellectual character demonstrates courageously persisting against the cultural and academic establishments, which opposed the Christian faith. Paul also demonstrates open-mindedness in his apologetic engagements. In his attempts to persuade, Luke recounts that Paul would use reason. In Thessalonica, he "reasoned" with the Jews by "explaining and giving evidence," pointing to Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 17:1-4 NASB). This approach was in accord with his Jewish audience, meeting them in the synagogue on the Sabbath, pointing to the long awaited Messiah. Some of the Jews at Thessalonica were "persuaded" by Paul's reasoning and evidence. Later, Luke writes that Paul "was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present" (Acts 17:17).

In addressing the Athenians in the Areopagus, Paul demonstrates an exemplary *ethos* in addressing his audience. He was aware of the influential philosophies of his contemporaries. His disposition showed consideration to opposing viewpoints; and he openly engaged them in a sympathetic demeanor. However, Paul's openness was balanced with his intellectual persistence in the truth of the Gospel. His unwavering approach demonstrated intellectual firmness. In this way, his open-mindedness was not reduced to gullibility; and his courage was not mere stubbornness. Thus, the balance of both courage and openness is exemplified in Paul's approach to epistemic conflict.

## **Future Directions**

The conclusions of this study were directed to a specific method of apologetics. From the outset, it was mentioned that the focus centered on classical and evidential apologetics. The arguments also align with cumulative case models. Given the restricted scope of this thesis, it is granted that more work is required in determining the relationship between virtuous disagreement and other approaches to apologetics. Clearly, there are some points within the intellectual virtues that violate other methods. The most salient example is the disposition of openness in finding agreement in disagreement. This concept is rejected by presuppositional apologetics.

For example, John Frame holds that "it is important for the apologist to understand that in the final analysis, the position of the non-Christian is like this: often intellectually impressive, but at a deeper level ludicrous." The virtuous perspective would assist in fully analyzing the presuppositional approach. For example, Frame's sentiment appears to align with steadfastness as well as with the uniqueness thesis. He contends that the non-Christian response is not a reasonable response to the evidence. However, Frame's presuppositional approach may have difficulty in responding to

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>John Frame, *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief*, ed. Joseph E. Torres, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing 2015), 64.

Christians who reject the merit of the arguments. Peer reduction would not be a sufficient response to this sort of disagreement; thus, there may be more to one's response to theistic arguments than mere rationality.

From a virtuous perspective, apologetics would also benefit from extended work in the art of rhetoric and persuasion. In popular culture, "rhetoric" has been deemed a pejorative act. The goal of chapter 3 was to present the act of persuasion in a positive light. Rhetoric can be misused, but individuals can also use it responsibly. There are many implications for apologetics and virtue in the concept of responsibly using persuasion. Apologetics would benefit from an expansion on the notion of virtuous rhetoric and the errors of vicious rhetoric.

Another area for future research is the application of this approach to specific apologetical arguments. This study made very brief remarks on particular theistic arguments. For instance, the appeal to Fine-Tuning demonstrated a level of deference to expertise. Apologists who have no extensive training in cosmology and physics are required to depend on these experts in order to make an argument from design. In this instance, it illustrates a disposition of openness.

In regard to other arguments, the virtuous approach to disagreement may reveal other nuances. For example, the argument from religious experience would incorporate different virtues in response to disagreement. Again, conciliatory and steadfast positions provide unsatisfactory responses to conflict over religious experience. In the area of religious experience, conciliating shows a higher degree of enervating self-trust. Some philosophers have argued that religious experience has lost its explanatory power because of the high degree of disagreement within a culture. In other words, religious experience is acceptable where it is accepted. Aside from its troublesome basis

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>See Matthew C. Bagger, *Religious Experience, Justification, and History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

on relativism, this response reflects an excessive deference to testimony. Others have objected to the argument from experience because of its lack of consensus; and thus, disagreement defeats the argument. This response is similar to conciliating to experts or succumbing to the challenge of diversity. On the other hand, the steadfast stance's appeal to egoism would deflate the argument's potential to persuade other individuals. While these are only brief comments, they do hint toward virtue's approach to different arguments.

Although there is more work, the virtuous approach to disagreement has made a strong case for the project of apologetics. Apologetics faces disagreement on many fronts. There are those who oppose its arguments. There are also groups who object to the very project of apologetics. The model for intellectual virtues shows the responsible way to respond to disagreement. The virtues also reveal the weaknesses in the standard views on disagreement. Ultimately, the intellectual virtues demonstrate that disagreement does not defeat virtuous apologetics.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>See Richard Gale, *On the Nature and Existence of God* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

## APPENDIX 1

## **GLOSSARY**

- **boot-strapping.** Promoting one's view or demoting another's view without evidence, justification, or independent reason for the move.
- doxastic confidence. The degree of confidence one has in a particular belief's strength.
- epistemic egoism. Restricting the value of testimony. The excess of self-trust.
- **equal weight view.** Giving the same value to a peer's belief that is given to one's own belief. A requirement of conciliation.
- **first-order evidence.** Evidence drawn solely on a first-person perspective. Also known as "higher-order" evidence.
- **independence principle.** In order to remain firm in disagreement, one must have reasons that do not depend on the disagreement to continue to hold the belief. See bootstrapping.
- **originality.** Belief can withstand disagreement when it is not second-hand knowledge, based on testimony; i.e., uninfluenced belief.
- **peers.** Individuals sharing similar qualities including, evidence, training, and cognitive performance. Also known as epistemic symmetry.
- **permissivism.** Evidence permits more than one conclusion. In contrast to uniqueness.
- **second-order evidence.** Evidence drawn from factors outside a first-person perspective. Also known as "lower-order" evidence. Second-order evidence includes the beliefs and perspectives of other individuals.
- **splitting the difference.** Disagreeing peers should move closer to the other view. A form of weak conciliation.
- uniqueness thesis. Evidence allows only one reasonable conclusion.

# APPENDIX 2 POSITIONS IN EPISTEMOLOGY OF DISAGREEMENT

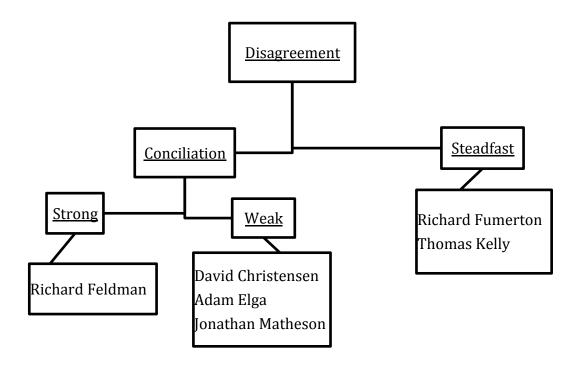


Figure A2. Positions in epistemology of disagreement

# APPENDIX 3 POSITIONS IN VIRTUE EPISTEMOLOGY

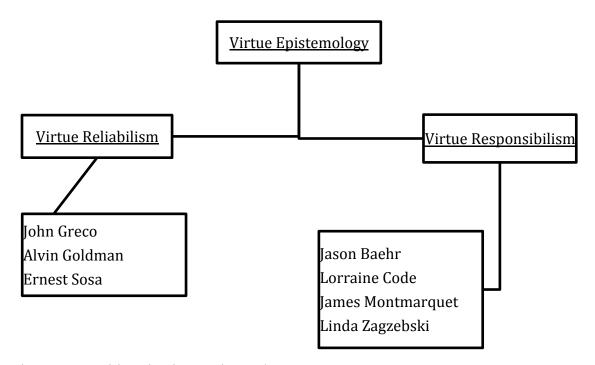


Figure A3. Positions in virtue epistemology

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#### **ABSTRACT**

## VIRTUOUS DISAGREEMENT IN APOLOGETICS: VIRTUE RESPONSIBILISM AS AN APOLOGETICAL RESPONSE TO THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF DISAGREEMENT

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018

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The two traditional views in the epistemology of disagreement have offered distinct responses to the challenge of epistemic conflict. The purpose of this dissertation is to challenge these responses and offer a satisfactory position. This position is congruent with social epistemology as well as Christian apologetics. Chapter 1 introduces the epistemology of disagreement, giving attention to the concepts of disagreement found in the literature on religious diversity. This introduction also demonstrates that the two responses to disagreement possess features that are problematic for apologetics. Chapter 2 addresses the epistemic problems of the conciliatory response to disagreement. This chapter concludes that conciliation possesses an excessive view of testimony, and a low view of self-trust. Chapter 3 focuses on the epistemological matters of the steadfast position. This chapter maintains that steadfastness is premised on a deficient view of testimony, and an excessive view of self-trust. These two chapters show the internal deficiencies of both positions; thus, weakening their challenge against apologetics. Chapter 4 presents the position of virtue responsibilism as a satisfactory and advantageous response to the epistemology of disagreement. This response is the virtuous response to disagreement. Chapter 5 expands on the natures of two intellectual virtues: intellectual courage and open-mindedness. These two intellectual virtues are particularly relevant to the discussion of disagreement and apologetics. Chapter 6 applies the virtuous

response to disagreement with experts and the challenge of religious diversity. The chapter shows that conciliation and steadfastness are unable to provide satisfactory responses to these issues, while the virtuous response presents an advantageous response for Christian apologetics. Chapter 7 summarizes the main points of the dissertation, offering practical applications as well as areas for further research.

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