COURAGEOUS ARGUMENTS AND DEEP DISAGREEMENTS

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Abstract. Deep disagreements are characteristically resistant to rational resolution. This paper explores the contribution a virtue theoretic approach to argumentation can make towards settling the practical matter of what to do when confronted with apparent deep disagreement, with particular attention to the virtue of courage.

Deep disagreements are characteristically resistant to rational resolution. In this paper I will explore one contribution a virtue theoretic approach to argumentation can make towards settling the practical matter of what to do when confronted with apparent deep disagreement. Specifically, I shall focus on the virtue of courage. In §1 I provide a brief overview of the virtue approach to argumentation and in §2 I explore the definition of deep disagreement and propose an analogy with the concept of topographic prominence. §3 addresses courage directly and the role that it could play in a virtue theoretic response to deep disagreement. Lastly, §4 draws some conclusions from the picture presented.

1. Virtues of Argument

Deaf dogmatist	Eager Believer	Quietism
↑	↑	↑
Willingness to Listen/Modify	**Willingness to Question**	**Willingness to Engage**
↓	↓	↓
Concessionaire	Unassuring Assurer	Argument Provocateur

Figure 1. Daniel Cohen's argumentational vices and virtues

Daniel Cohen originated the modern application of virtue theory to argumentation.[1] Fig. 1 is my reconstruction of what I shall call Cohen's cardinal virtues of argument: willingness to listen to others and willingness to modify your own arguments; willingness to question; and willingness to engage in argument in the first place (Cohen, 2005, 64). Insofar as willingness (or unwillingness) implies a reflectively aware choice, these virtues (and any virtues subordinate to them)

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[1]Cohen was at least partially anticipated by some scholars in adjacent areas, such as critical thinking. Notably, Richard Paul states that to "cultivate the kind of intellectual independence implied in the concept of strong sense critical thinking, we must foster intellectual (epistemological) humility, courage, integrity, perseverance, empathy, and fairmindedness" (Paul, 2000, 166).

must be understood in terms of the responsibilist (broadly internalist) approach to virtue, rather than the reliabilist (broadly externalist) approach (Axtell, 1997, 3). Responsibilist virtues and vices are usually seen as attracting praise or blame, unlike reliabilist virtues and vices (Axtell, 1997, 18). This is, perhaps, a more natural fit for argumentation than for epistemology.

Cohen presents his virtues in Aristotelian terms as means between vices of excess and deficiency. The deaf dogmatist is someone who just doesn't listen, or won't modify; the concessionaire concedes rather too much far too readily; the eager believer is gullible; unassuring assurers undercut their own positions, by offering arguments for what might have been accepted without argument. The argument provocateur is forever getting into arguments, often needlessly. Although I have characterized these positions as vicious, Cohen is more subtle: he refers to some of their exemplars as "tragic heroes" (Cohen, 2005, 62). There is something each of them is doing which is in some respects admirable, despite a regrettable tendency to take it to extremes. It is the argument provocateur, I shall suggest, whose admirable qualities we need to capture if we are to deal successfully with deep disagreements. But that spirit will need to be constrained by other virtues.

In my own account of the virtues of argument, I have complicated the simplicity of Cohen's system. I start with the same four basic "cardinal" virtues of argument but then subdivide them:

(1) willingness to engage in argumentation
  (a) being communicative
  (b) faith in reason
  (c) intellectual courage
    (i) sense of duty
(2) willingness to listen to others
  (a) intellectual empathy
    (i) insight into persons
    (ii) insight into problems
    (iii) insight into theories
  (b) fairmindedness
    (i) justice
    (ii) fairness in evaluating the arguments of others
    (iii) open-mindedness in collecting and appraising evidence
  (c) recognition of reliable authority
  (d) recognition of salient facts
    (i) sensitivity to detail
(3) willingness to modify one's own position
  (a) common sense
  (b) intellectual candour
  (c) intellectual humility
  (d) intellectual integrity
    (i) honour
    (ii) responsibility
    (iii) sincerity
(4) willingness to question the obvious
  (a) appropriate respect for public opinion

(b) autonomy
(c) intellectual perseverance
  (i) diligence
  (ii) care
  (iii) thoroughness (Aberdein, 2010, 175).

Elsewhere I have also suggested how each of these virtues may be seen as a mean between vices of excess and deficiency (Aberdein, 2016, 416). The content of my subdivisions is not intended to be particularly original: it owes much to Linda Zagzebski's responsibilist approach to virtue epistemology (Zagzebski, 1996, 114). Thus many of these virtues overlap, at least in name, with virtues not intended as (solely) argumentational. For present purposes, I will leave it as an open question whether argumentational virtues must be distinct from virtues associated with other activities, such as epistemic or ethical virtues. It may well be that some virtues require localization to argumentation, whereas others are best treated uniformly across argumentation, epistemology, ethics, and perhaps other areas. The numbering in my list is at best suggestive. I do not maintain that virtues can be given a definitive species/genus classification: on the contrary, they overlap on multiple dimensions. As a particular example, notice that courage and perseverance are in quite different positions, although as we will see in §3, some authors treat them as intertwined.

2. Deep Disagreement

Deep disagreements have been a topic of debate within informal logic (and *Informal Logic*) since Robert Fogelin's 1985 article, "The logic of deep disagreements". Fogelin states that

> A disagreement can be intense without being deep. A disagreement can also be unresolvable without being deep. I can argue myself blue in the face trying to convince you of something without succeeding. The explanation might be that one of us is dense or pig-headed. And this is a matter that could be established beyond doubt to, say, an impartial spectator. But we get a very different sort of disagreement when it proceeds from a clash in underlying principles. Under these circumstances, the parties may be unbiased, free of prejudice, consistent, coherent, precise and rigorous, yet still disagree. And disagree profoundly, not just marginally. Now when I speak about underlying principles, I am thinking about what others (Putnam) have called framework propositions or what Wittgenstein was inclined to call rules. We get a deep disagreement when the argument is generated by a clash of framework propositions (Fogelin, 1985, 5).

Fogelin's contention is that deep disagreements pose a sceptical challenge to the informal logic movement, specifically to the enthusiastic presumption that there's no sort of disagreement that we can't reason our way out of. Notice that Fogelin explicitly invokes what we may identify as argumentational virtues—being "unbiased, free of prejudice, consistent, coherent, precise and rigorous"—but only in order to suggest that such qualities will be of no avail in the event of deep disagreement.

Fogelin goes on to stress that "when we inquire into the source of a deep disagreement, we do not simply find isolated propositions" (Fogelin, 1985, 5 f.). Rather, deep disagreements proceed from a clash of "form of life" or worldview, "a whole system of mutually supporting propositions" (Fogelin, 1985, 6). But, if this difference were too profound, then there would not even be disagreement, just two positions talking past each other. As David Godden and William Brenner summarize matters, "Meaningful deep disagreements seem to occur either at the intersection of two different but overlapping forms of life, or within a single but heterogenous *Weltbild*, where different, similar but incompatible language games are in play" (Godden and Brenner, 2010, 47). Their terminology is overtly Wittgensteinian, since this is the context in which Fogelin situates deep disagreement. However, he might just as plausibly have proceeded from a Kuhnian foundation and defined deep disagreement in terms of incommensurable paradigms. Indeed, some more recent presentations of deep disagreement are explicitly framed in terms of incommensurability (for example: Zarefsky, 2012; Pritchard, 2019). Nonetheless, I shall resist the temptation to offer an exegesis of either Wittgenstein or Kuhn, and concentrate instead on the explication of Fogelin.

Fogelin is careful to distinguish the depth of a disagreement from its intensity, the strength of feeling with which the disputants maintain their positions. In principle, a disagreement could be deep, yet invariably debated dispassionately; in practice, deep disagreements can be notoriously heated. John Stuart Mill offers a plausible aetiology for at least some such affective deep disagreements:

> So long as an opinion is strongly rooted in the feelings, it gains rather than loses in stability by having a preponderating weight of argument against it. For if it were accepted as a result of argument, the refutation of the argument might shake the solidity of the conviction; but when it rests solely on feeling, the worse it fares in argumentative contest, the more persuaded its adherents are that their feeling must have some deeper ground, which the arguments do not reach: and while the feeling remains, it is always throwing up fresh intrenchments of argument to repair any breach made in the old (Mill, 1869, 261).

Fogelin is concerned with cases where disagreement really does proceed from "deeper ground"; Mill with cases where the appeal to conflicting worldviews is illusory or insincere. Yet, where there is a genuine clash of worldviews, the strength of feeling with which they are embraced may predict the tenacity of their adherents. Since shared feelings are a powerful source of camaraderie, this may also go some way to explain the polarization of opinion into rival factions (see, for example, Suhay, 2015). If you know where someone stands on one high-profile contentious matter, you can often predict where they will stand on many others. So disagreement on one issue may correlate with disagreement on others. (But it would be a mistake to assume that such correlated disagreements must be equally deep.)

There is an old Emo Philips joke that articulates some of these aspects of deep disagreement: supposedly he meets a suicidal co-religionist, or rather *near* co-religionist, who is about to throw himself off a bridge. They work through a long list of how much they have in common until eventually they discover that one of

them is Northern Conservative Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1879 and the other Northern Conservative Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1912, at which point Philips shouts, "Die heretic!", and pushes the other man over the bridge (Philips, 2005; cf. Wittgenstein, 1972, ¶611). Of course this is a joke, but it drives home several points: deep disagreements are between worldviews, not just propositions; they require some shared beliefs; they frequently provoke (or result from) extreme emotion; and a disagreement can be deep without being broad. The parties may have an extraordinary amount in common, yet at some point reach an utterly irresoluble difference.

In the hope of clarifying some of the definitional issues that deep disagreements give rise to, I shall make a somewhat speculative digression into physical geography. Here are two equivalent definitions of the concept of "prominence":

(1) The minimum vertical distance one must descend from a point in order to reach a higher point.
(2) The difference between the elevation of a point, and the elevation of the lowest contour line that contains it and no higher point (Kirmse and de Ferranti, 2017, 788).

Prominence explains why the world's second highest mountain is K2, not the South peak of Everest, even though the latter is further above sea level than the former. Why is it not the South peak of Everest? Because the South peak of Everest is just a little bump. If you look at a photograph of Everest from the right angle you can make out a squiggle on one side of it: that's the South peak. Prominence is the amount of height that you have to lose before you can start climbing something taller. For K2, that's more than 13,000 ft; for the South peak of Everest it's about 30 ft: mountaineers regularly scramble over the top of the South peak on their way to the main peak. It is because it has negligible prominence that it is not the world's second highest mountain: lists of highest peaks have prominence thresholds.[2]

Prominence provides a measure of depth: how far down you have to climb before you can start climbing back up. Consider three peaks on an island, as in Fig. 2. The prominence of the highest peak is its height above sea level, since you would have to leave the island to find anything higher. The prominence of the second highest peak is its height above the highest col it shares with the highest peak and the prominence of the lowest peak is its height above the highest col it shares with the second highest peak. Hence the prominence of the lowest peak represents a lower bound on how far down individuals on the two lower peaks would need to climb in order to be on the same level. It is only a lower bound because the peaks may differ significantly in height.[3] And, just as lists of peaks have prominence thresholds, we may reserve "deep" for disagreements that exceed a certain threshold.

So far I have not stated the analogue of height. Precisely how this is cashed out will ultimately turn on the metaphysical status of deep disagreements, a question

[2]Traditionally, 100, 300, or 2000 ft: worldwide more than seven million peaks meet the first threshold, over 250 times as many as meet the last (Kirmse and de Ferranti, 2017, 800).

[3]More generally, we might define the *relative prominence* of one peak with respect to some higher peak as its prominence ignoring all peaks of intermediate height. Thus, for any pair of peaks, the relative prominence of the lower peak is a lower bound on how far down individuals on each peak would need to climb to attain the same level.

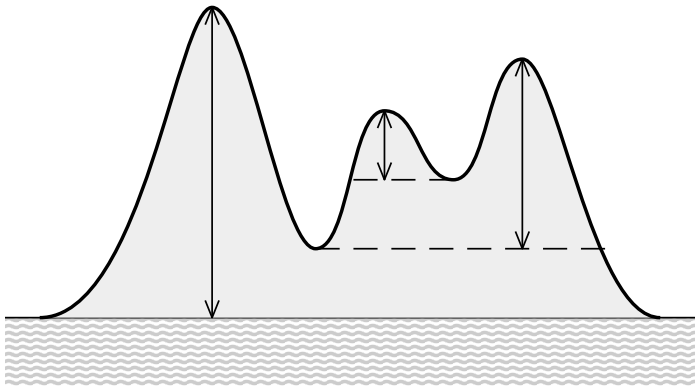

FIGURE 2. An island with three peaks: the vertical lines indicate the prominence of each peak; the horizontal lines the lowest contour line encircling it but no higher summit. (Adapted from `https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topographic_prominence`.)

which is still open (Ranalli, 2019). I certainly will not settle the matter here; on the contrary I intend my topographic analogy to be neutral between different candidates. Nonetheless, some putative analogues for height may be ruled out. For example, it can't just be a measure of emotional intensity: as we have seen, it is merely a contingent fact about deep disagreements that they are often heated. Nor can it be a measure on revision of belief sets: the proportion of each disputant's beliefs that would need to be suspended or revised in order for common ground to be reached. As the Emo Philips joke illustrates, the difference between deeply disagreeing points of view need not be all that great. A more plausible candidate would be a measure on how deeply entrenched are the points of contention (or the principles upon which they depend) within each disputant's belief set. Only disagreements that reach the worldview of at least one of disputants will count as deep. If worldviews have internal structure, such that some of their principles or propositions are more fundamental than others, then some deep disagreements would count as deeper than others. Conversely, if worldviews are homogenous, then all deep disagreements must be equally deep. But whatever was at issue between the Councils of 1879 and 1912, we may presume that it is very deeply entrenched within the belief systems of their respective adherents, even if (perhaps especially if) it has few practical consequences.

Reluctance to revise a belief upon which many other beliefs depend could well be epistemically virtuous and even beliefs that have few consequences could be legitimately insulated from criticism in some circumstances. Conversely, in some cases, neglecting to revise a belief, even a deeply entrenched belief, could be seen as dogmatic, that is deficient in the virtue of willingness to modify one's position. This raises an important issue. I have suggested above that the virtues of argument are responsibilist virtues, and therefore that their presence should be seen as praiseworthy and their absence blameworthy. But deep disagreements can have sources outside the disputants' control, since worldviews are often inculcated from earliest youth by contingent social factors. In other words, disputants

may fall into deep disagreement through sheer bad luck, not because of any conscious failing.[4] There are several lines of response a virtue theory of argument could take. We could acknowledge that some issues lie beyond the scope of a virtue approach, and include the origins of (some) deep disagreements among them. Or we could augment responsibilist virtues with reliabilist virtues, either independently of Cohen's cardinal virtues, or as a reinterpretation of them. As a case in point, we could broaden the understanding of *willingness* to modify one's own position to include a mere *disposition* to modify one's own position, something which may or may not reflect a purposeful act of will. Hence we could attribute all deep disagreements to the (perhaps blameless) absence in at least one disputant of this disposition. In any event, one thing that can be said of deeply disagreeing disputants is that they are not ignoring or talking past each other; they are engaging in argument. In the useful formulation of Andrew Lugg, what makes deep disagreement interesting is that "individuals are able to argue yet unable to settle their differences"; in other words, "there exists a framework for disagreement but not one for bringing about its resolution" (Lugg, 1986, 47). This (presumably conscious, reflective) willingness to engage in argument represents some degree of argumentational virtue, even if this virtue is circumscribed by an unwillingness (or inability) to accept certain outcomes to that argument.

To summarize my topographic analogy, two disputants who at least suspend (dis)belief on the matters at issue for the duration of their argument are on shared level ground. Insofar as they disagree, either or both disputants stand on a summit from which they would need to climb down to reach level ground. For most disagreements, that is a simple exercise, trivially discharged; but for deep disagreements, the descent will be an arduous endeavour, requiring substantial (and risky) restructuring of worldviews. There may be no clear path down and it may take some courage even to attempt the journey. Many disputants arrive at their summits by chance, others by choice. Notably, Mill's emotive arguers, whose disagreement "rests solely on feeling", purposefully avoid the level ground on which honest debate may take place by racing up the highest available peak and refusing to descend, conduct we may judge cynical or cowardly.

3. Courage

What makes an argument courageous? Sometimes, perhaps especially in legal contexts, "courageous argument" is used to suggest that the arguer is overreaching, that the conclusion goes further than the premisses reasonably warrant. The arguer evinces courage only figuratively, within the context of an argument-as-war metaphor, perhaps. Few if any adverse consequences are foreseeable for arguers who employ such arguments (besides losing the argument!). But, in other contexts, arguments are described as courageous because the arguer is taking a significant risk in making the argument. Here are two recent examples. The conservative evangelical pastor Rob Schenck has advanced a pro-life argument for gun control, generalizing from his long-standing opposition to abortion. As another clergyman observes, "It is a courageous argument for him to make, and

[4]Hence this problem is a special case of the broader problem that luck poses for virtue theories, raised in the context of virtue theories of argument by Fabio Paglieri (2015, 72 ff.). A more comprehensive response will have to wait for another occasion.

I'll bet he lost friends—if not some of his influence—for making it" (Van Nostran, 2017). Likewise Timothy Snyder comments of an analogy drawn by the Russian historian Andrei Zubov between Russia's annexation of the Crimea and the Anschluss that, "This was a courageous argument for him to make—he says he was immediately fired from his position" (Snyder, 2014). Both Schenck and Zubov argued in ways that exposed them to actual risks. Notice, firstly, that their arguments were said to be courageous *for them* to make—in both cases the ascription of courage makes this explicit (with identical wording, indeed). Other arguers, in other circumstances, might face no risk in arguing in the same manner, and would not be thought courageous for so doing. Secondly, we don't have to find an argument convincing to find it courageous. One might, for example, think Zubov's Anschluss analogy overblown, while still being impressed by the courage it took him to make it. But describing an argument as courageous does suggest that it is not wholly worthless in other respects. Whatever risks holocaust deniers face, it seems perverse to characterize them as courageous.

How should argumentative courage best be characterized? Intellectual courage is one promising candidate, recently much discussed by virtue epistemologists in terms of intellectual perseverance. Here is Jason Baehr: "Intellectual courage is a disposition to persist in or with a state or course of action aimed at an epistemically good end despite the fact that doing so involves an apparent threat to one's own well-being" (Baehr, 2011, 177). Heather Battaly cites several virtue epistemologists, including Baehr, as endorsing an account of intellectual courage as a "subset" of intellectual perseverance, which she analyses as comprising five dispositions:

(1) to make good judgments about one's intellectual goals;
(2) to reliably perceive obstacles to one's intellectual goals;
(3) to respond to obstacles with the appropriate degree of confidence and calmness;
(4) to overcome obstacles, or otherwise act as the context demands; and
(5) to do so because one cares appropriately about epistemic goods (Battaly, 2017, 688).

Battaly notes that, as a subset of intellectual perseverance, intellectual courage may require additional dispositions, for example, "a disposition to be appropriately daunted by (and confident with respect to) obstacles, as the context demands" (Battaly, 2017, 689). Nonetheless, one might wonder whether all arguers exhibiting these dispositions should be seen as courageous, or whether this account adequately addresses arguments such as those made by Schenck and Zubov.

One serious question which deep disagreements present for intellectual perseverance as an account of argumentational courage is whether perseverance is always a virtue for arguers. That we should always try to reason our way out of our problems is certainly a broad-based intuition, but not beyond dispute. Chris Campolo, for one, has challenged it in the following terms:

> "Don't give in to misology," Socrates tells Phaedo, "we are not truly lost until we give up on argument—keep trying." If we take Socrates to mean that we should never stop producing reasons, never recognize that some gaps are too large to close with

> reasons, then, if there *are* deep disagreements, we have to recognize it as very bad advice. It's bad in two ways. First, it will lead us, if it leads us anywhere, to conclusions, and then actions, that have no appropriate connection to our understanding. Second, it will seriously harm our reasoning skills (Campolo, 2019, 3).

In certain arguments, with certain arguers, plugging ahead remorselessly will not be productive. Campolo is concerned that arguers may reach an illusory sense of common ground. In terms of the geographic analogy from §2, the disputants may imagine that they have each climbed down to a shared col, when they are still separated by a concealed crevasse. They may carry on talking, but any resolution that they arrive at will involve an essential element of self-delusion. This is bad, because if we use it as a basis for deciding what to do, then we will not decide well; and it is also bad because if we make a habit of such thinking, then we will end up worse arguers than we might otherwise be: it will be corrosive of our argumentational characters. So this is a situation where the right thing to do is to call time on the argument, at least until we have the resources to tackle it properly.

Campolo's concerns would suggest that deep disagreements may represent a limit to the virtue of perseverance, or rather an instance of the associated vice of excess. Battaly does acknowledge that it is consistent with intellectual perseverance to "also give up, in the face of obstacles, when it is appropriate to do so" (Battaly, 2017, 683). She proposes that intellectual perseverance be seen as "a mean between a vice of excess—call it recalcitrance—and a vice of deficiency—capitulation" (ibid.). So we might be able to reconcile Campolo's concerns to an account of argumentational courage as intellectual perseverance, by identifying the type of deep disagreement he describes as a case of recalcitrance. That would explain why some apparent instances of perseverance in argument are not courageous, but it would not explain the converse problem, that some instances of argumentational courage, such as that exhibited by Schenck and Zubov, do not seem to be perseverance. Rather, theirs seems to be the sort of courage displayed by the argument provocateur, the courage to engage in arguments in the first place. As Cohen observes, "In some circumstances, arguing is bad form. If we are too sensitive to that, we can become . . . *gun shy* about arguing. Argument Provocateurs are not gun shy about arguing. Nor are they deferential about including sacred cows in their gun-sights" (Cohen, 2005, 64). The gun shy arguer is reluctant to engage. The argument provocateur does not have that problem; he will charge into any argument, irrespective of how sensitive the issues are. This may well be rashness, but it does not seem like recalcitrance. Likewise, when such conduct hits the mean, as perhaps it did for Schenck and Zubov, it seems obviously courageous, but not obviously to have much to do with perseverance.

One remedy for this problem would be to assimilate argumentational courage not to intellectual courage (and thereby to intellectual perseverance) but to moral courage. The distinction between intellectual and moral courage has been drawn in various ways. For example, Per Bauhn distinguishes the (intellectual) "courage of creativity" from the (moral) "courage of conviction": the former involves overcoming the fear of failure to realise one's goals; the latter involves overcoming the fear of social harm to act from a sense of moral responsibility (Bauhn, 2007, 65). Similarly, Matthew Pianalto defines moral courage as "the type of courage

exhibited by those who risk punishment for taking a morally motivated stand" (Pianalto, 2012, 168). And for Silvia Osswald and collaborators it is "a prosocial behavior with high social costs and no (or rare) direct rewards for the actor" (Osswald et al., 2010, 150). For that matter, Cicero distinguishes the "deliberate encountering of danger" and the "enduring of labour" as components of fortitude (Cicero, 1853, §II.54). The former encompasses moral courage; the latter intellectual courage—and perseverance. (Indeed, Cicero makes perseverance a sub-virtue of fortitude, rather than the other way around.) But, for present purposes, the most appropriate source may be Douglas Walton.

Walton is one of the most influential modern authors on argumentation. He does not subscribe to a virtue theory of argumentation nor, to the best of my knowledge, even discuss such theories. However, he is the author of a book on courage. He analyses courageous acts in terms of a "practical reasoning base":[5]

(P1) In order to bring about B, *a* considers that it is necessary to bring about A.
(P2) *a* brings about A.
(P3) *a* could have not brought about A.

and an "ethical matrix":

(E1) *a* considers that B is [highly] worth *a*'s bringing about.
(E2) *a* considers that his bringing about A is dangerous or difficult [to a formidable extent] (Walton, 1986, 86, parentheses in original).

He goes on to stipulate that "Morally courageous acts are those where the difficulty or danger, specified in (E2), is ... a threat to one's social standing, financial prospects, relations with one's colleagues, approval of one's constituents, and so forth" (Walton, 1986, 107). This seems to fit the Schenck and Zubov cases precisely. Of course, Walton is defining courage in terms of acts, whereas Baehr and Battaly are defining it in terms of dispositions. While the two approaches are in principle inter-translatable, this might be thought to stack the deck with respect to which better analyzes Schenck and Zubov, since we can more readily identify their acts than their dispositions. Nonetheless, each man displayed courage in the moment that he advanced his argument, rather than scoping out and tackling a series of obstacles to his intellectual goals. If their actions are characteristic, it is because they are disposed to act in this way on separate, unrelated occasions.

How might treating argumentational courage as moral courage help us resolve deep disagreements? Walton observes that the "person of moral courage is open to persuasion and reasonable discussion, but will not give in to pressures until convinced the path is right. Compromise is therefore not intrinsically a sign of weakness or cowardice—it could in some cases actually be a mark of courage" (Walton, 1986, 128). In terms of the topographic analogy from §2, the further down you have to climb, the more deeply entrenched the beliefs that you are exposing to doubt, the greater the moral courage required. And that is only what is needed to reach common ground, that is, to concede that your interlocutor

[5]That Walton's account makes essential use of practical reasoning may be a weakness in a general account of courage, insofar as it leaves less room for courage to be spontaneous. However, without adjudicating this point, I note that it does not impact my use of Walton, since such spontaneity does not seem to be a feature of courageous arguments. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for raising this point.

might be right. Accepting that you were in the wrong, that you have lost the argument, and that your interlocutor actually *is* right takes even greater moral courage. Both of these steps towards compromise exhibit the important role that moral courage can play in finding resolutions to deep disagreements.

Courage can be a source of rather more specific assistance too. Here is Moses Maimonides, as summarized by Alexander Green:

> Maimonides advocates that the correct approach [to handling secret matters] is a form of courageous writing, just as courage is the proper mean between cowardice and rashness. This is writing through parables and hints that have a meaning both for the ordinary reader, which will not lead him astray, and a separate meaning for the philosophic reader, who can read between the lines and learn the secrets from these parables and hints (Green, 2015, 181 f.).

The secret matters Maimonides is concerned about are things like the names of God. The rash approach would be just to write them down where anyone could read them, but there are strict taboos against doing that; and the cowardly approach would be to write nothing, but then the knowledge is lost. At the risk of stretching it out of its original context, we could gloss "secret matters" as sensitive issues, that is beliefs that are unusually resistant to revision, whether because they are highly emotively charged, or because they are grounded in the holder's worldview and thereby likely to give rise to deep disagreements. Maimonides advocates the use of "parables and hints"; courageous writing is thereby allegorical writing. A connection might be drawn to Tim Dare's suggestion of "storytelling" as a "non-coercive, non-reasoned" way out of deep disagreement (Dare, 2016, 8). As an apposite example, consider the biblical story of David and Bathsheba (2. Sam. 11–12). King David takes a fancy to Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. King David should not be coveting other men's wives, but he has a stratagem: he arranges for Uriah the Hittite to be in the thick of the next major battle. It all comes off perfectly: no more Uriah and David is able to comfort the grieving widow with complete propriety. But Nathan the Prophet finds out about all this and thinks it deplorable, so he goes to David, but he doesn't just say, "You shouldn't have done that!" Instead he tells a story about a poor man, a rich man, and a sheep. David is suitably appalled by the fictitious behaviour analogous to his own, and is thereby condemned by his own words once Nathan unpacks the allegory. This was a much more effective strategy for Nathan than confronting David directly. As Tamar Szabó Gendler explains, Nathan's use of allegory is an example of the persuasive effectiveness of thought experiments, and specifically of their use as a means of overcoming first-person exceptionalism (Gendler, 2007, 81). As artificial devices to resolve apparently intractable deep disagreements, metaphors, allegories, thought experiments, and the like might be seen in terms of my topographic analogy as a sort of zipline or Tyrolean traverse: a temporary and artificial means of travel between prominent positions that does not require full descent from either. Just as both ropes and crevasses may give way unexpectedly, so the danger with such devices is that they may be as treacherous as Campolo finds brute persistence: an apparent resolution may fall apart since it does not connect with one or other participants' true commitments. Nonetheless,

as the above example illustrates, when such devices work they can be an effective shortcut to a lasting resolution.

4. Conclusions

Virtues of argument such as courage may ease the way to mutually acceptable resolution of deep disagreements. I have suggested that the courage required of arguers is best understood as moral courage. This includes the courage necessary for the defence of unpopular views, but also the courage required to expose one's deeply cherished beliefs to thorough critique and the courage essential for proper acknowledgement of defeat. I have suggested that Cohen's argument provocateur has a special connection to deep disagreement. His inveterate inclination to start unnecessary arguments can reveal or even initiate deep disagreements; but his courage in engaging in argument is indispensable if they are ever to be resolved.

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