Virtues and Vices in Public and Political Debates

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**Abstract:** In this chapter, after a review of some existent empirical and philosophical literature that suggests that human beings are essentially incapable of changing their mind in response to counter-evidence, I argue that motivation makes a significant difference to individuals’ ability rationally to evaluate information. I rely on empirical work on group deliberation to argue that the motivation to learn from others, as opposed to the desire to win arguments, promotes good quality group deliberation. Finally I provide an overview of some epistemic virtues and vices crucial to the politico-epistemic activities of arguing, debating, and listening to a contrary point of view.

**Keywords:** Motivated cognition; Arguing to win; Arguing to learn; group deliberation; virtues of argumentation

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One does not need to subscribe to deliberative approaches to democracy and its institutions to grant that the exchange of ideas and arguments in debates and discussion plays a focal role in liberal democracies. For instance, politicians debate each other in televised head to head encounters. The press challenges elective representatives and informs the public. Ordinary citizens discuss political issues, ask questions of politicians, and try to acquire information on political matters. Hence, debates and discussions involve heterogenous activities by diverse actors in different contexts.

These activities can be performed well or badly. Many factors contribute to success or failure. The most important are likely to be environmental. For instance, debates when people struggle to hear each other are unlikely to be fruitful. But psychological features of the individuals and groups involved are also likely to have significant impact. This chapter provides an overview of the negative effects of cognitive biases and intellectual vices on political decision making and debate. It seeks to counter some of the widespread scepticism about people’s capacity to engage fairly, rationally, and open-mindedly with viewpoints alternative to their own. Instead, it proposes that people can adopt virtuous motivations that promote individuals’ ability to argue, listen, and deliberate well.

The chapter consists of three sections. In the first, after a review of some existent empirical and philosophical literature that suggests that human beings are essentially incapable of changing their mind in response to counter-evidence, I argue that motivation makes a significant difference to individuals’ ability rationally to evaluate information. The second section relies on empirical work on group deliberation to argue that the motivation to learn from others, as opposed to the desire to win arguments, promotes good quality group deliberation. The third section provides an overview of some epistemic virtues and vices crucial to the politico-epistemic activities of arguing, debating, and listening to a contrary point of view.

1. **Shared biases and political deliberation**

Research by political and social scientists on the epistemic quality of the political reasoning, decision-making, and debates carried out by citizens and public officials alike makes grim reading. First, citizens’ ignorance about political matters is widespread, extending even to basic information. Second, citizens and politicians are often in denial; they are seemingly unable to evaluate fairly views that are opposed to their own. Third, when citizens come together to deliberate as a group individuals’ epistemic shortcomings are amplified resulting in worse errors, polarisation, informational cascades, and common knowledge effects. In this section I first review some of these results, before discussing whether the in-built nature of the biases that are responsible for these epistemic shortcomings entails that any effective solution must be structural. If so, one might argue that virtue epistemology has little to contribute to addressing these problems.

The evidence that citizens express views on politically relevant factual matters that are at variance with reality is robust. Citizens in the UK for example vastly overestimate the number of teenage pregnancies, of immigrants and unemployed individuals.[[1]](#endnote-1) There is reason to believe that these shocking levels of misinformation have multiple causes. Undoubtedly, these include political propaganda and various concerted campaigns of political spin and disinformation. However, widely shared cognitive biases are also thought to be involved. Citizens, but also officials, are biased in their evaluation of politically relevant evidence. They are motivated to accept, fairly unquestioningly, information that agrees with their pre-existing opinions, whilst dismissing views that do not accord with them (Lodge & Taber, 2013; Taber et al., 2008).[[2]](#endnote-2) Biased evaluation of the evidence, unsurprisingly, is an important source of many widespread false political beliefs. The presence of these biases is not explained by general intellectual abilities or educational attainment but by motivated reasoning that serves to protect individuals from challenges that are perceived as identity threats (Kahan, 2013). Paradoxically, individuals whose qualifications suggest a high level of general intelligence seem to exhibit higher level of bias in processing political information.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Some of the political ignorance on display beggars belief to such an extent that it requires an explanation. Two related strategies prevail among those who think people’s political ignorance cannot be fully explained by individuals’ shockingly bad reasoning and inability to discern genuine information from false or misleading claims. Some argue that voters are rationally ignorant (Caplan, 2006; Somin, 2016). Others claim that citizen’s responses do not reflect false beliefs but are expressive of one’s support for one’s party or political group (Hannon, 2019).

Since the choices of each individual voter make almost no difference to the electoral outcome, it could be argued that it would be practically irrational to invest time and energy in becoming politically informed (Somin, 2016).[[4]](#endnote-4) In addition, citizens’ motivated reasoning might also be seen as a case of ‘rational irrationality’ (Caplan, 2006). If, as some argue, citizens’ engagement with political issues is not driven by a desire to figure out the truth but to get the benefits of feeling good about oneself as a member or fan of the winning group, we would expect individuals to process information defensively with the goal of protecting one’s identity-defining views from the attack of criticism (Mason, 2018). If this is right, citizens treat politics as an activity where, like a sporting competition, winning is what matters while pleasure is gained through affective identification with the winning team. Hence, although motivated reasoning might be part of the explanation of political ignorance, it might also be true that people are less ignorant than political scientists have assumed. Some of the most blatant seeming endorsements of self-evident falsities might occur because people respond to survey questions not by selecting answers that they judge to be factually accurate, but by choosing those responses that best express their partisan identities (Hannon, 2019).

Be that as it may, these differing interpretations of how citizens arrived at their expressed political views all point to the thought that the results are from a purely epistemic point of view largely at variance with reality. Further, and perhaps, even more depressingly, these outcomes stem from features of human psychology, such as in-group favouritism, that are universal and entrenched since they might have been adaptive in early human societies where individuals lived in small closely-knit communities (Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018)

Empirical research on group deliberation provides further grounds for scepticism about the epistemic quality of decision-making following group deliberation in all areas including the political domain. There is evidence that, at least under some circumstances, groups arrive at even worse decisions than individuals working in isolation. Groups would thus suffer from several epistemic shortcomings (Sunstein, 2006). First, in cases where agents rely on heuristics to reach their decisions, group judgments amplify individuals’ errors. So, for example, the effects of the availability bias are more profound on deliberating groups than on lone reasoners. Second, groups are not good at sharing information that is not commonly held prior to deliberation. Thus, they do not reap the benefits of adding to their informational basis.[[5]](#endnote-5) Third, groups suffer from informational cascades where members defer to the opinion of the majority, even though that opinion might have been formed in ignorance of information known only to the deferential members. Fourth, deliberating groups, especially when they primarily include like-minded individuals tend to polarise (Sunstein, 2009).

Polarisation can take many forms. It might consists in the adoption of more extreme and opposing beliefs among members of different groups or it might instead mostly consist in increased hostility and animosity directed toward an outgroup (Mason, 2018). There are also differing accounts of how polarisation in all its guises occurs. One theory holds that when deliberating with others who share one’s views, one acquires novel evidence in their favour (Sunstein, 2009, ch. 2). Undoubtedly there is some truth in this account but it cannot be the whole story because it cannot explain why individuals end up holding more extreme views (rather than becoming more certain of their pre-existing opinions) and why the phenomenon occurs despite the absence of discussion. Another account holds that what drives polarisation is the desire to identify with the group. Since individuals who hold more extreme viewpoints are more vocal in debates and more prominent in the group, other members’ desire to identify pushes them toward becoming more like those prominent individuals who also happen to hold the more extreme points of view. In short, polarisation occurs as a result of the need to affirm one’s group identity resulting in a more entrenched commitment to a more extreme version of one’s pre-existing views (For an overview see Talisse, 2019, pp., ch 4.).

These considerations raise grave epistemic concerns about the quality of group deliberations. Whilst the results on which they rely are robust, they can be misleading because they hide the fact that there are equally robust results that, in other circumstances, deliberating groups outperform lone reasoners (De Dreu et al., 2008; Mercier & Sperber, 2017). I return to this topic below when I consider what it might take to deliberate well with others.

One of the lessons that can be drawn from the prevalence of biased searching, dissemination and evaluation of information resulting in epistemically bad political judgements is that human minds are naturally vicious (Olin & Doris, 2014).[[6]](#endnote-6) Human cognitive processing in any domain, according to this view, is highly unreliable. Importantly, contra Samuelson and Church (2015) unreliability does not merely affect fast associative thinking but is equally prevalent when people reflect or deliberate. In short, motivated reasoning would not be limited to heuristic or automatic cognitive processes but would extend to deliberate reflection (Kahan et al., 2017).[[7]](#endnote-7)

Two further pessimistic conclusions follow from this lesson. First, since these cognitive defects are in-built and arguably fixed, we cannot eradicate them. Instead, we need to look at developing structural solutions designed to minimise their impact (Anderson, 2012). Second, virtue epistemology in both its reliabilist and responsibilist incarnations, has little to offer when searching for strategies to ameliorate the situation. Reflection, de-biasing, self-cultivation and virtue habituation seem to be largely unattainable (Ahlström, 2013; Boult, forthcoming; Kornblith, 2012).

I argue below that these conclusions are premature. In what follows I begin to cast doubt on this bleak picture by drawing attention to evidence that shows that individual psychological differences can make a difference to the epistemic quality of individual and group reasoning and deliberation.

1. **Motivation and group behaviour**

In the previous section I have offered some empirical evidence that when people discuss matters in a group the epistemic quality of the outcome of these discussions is often poor. These bad outcomes would be attributable to features of human cognition that are so entrenched that nothing can be done to eradicate them. This evidence implies that belief in the epistemic benefits of the rational exchanges of ideas is largely misguided. In this section I explore some of the ways in which scepticism about the epistemic value of deliberation can be countered. I do not take issues with those who claim that group political debate often leads to unsatisfactory outcomes. My criticism is addressed to diagnoses of poor performance that attribute it to facts about human psychology that are so entrenched to be essentially hardwired. Instead, I show that the factors responsible for poor performance are neither universal nor unchangeable.

Deliberation is usually characterised as the exchange of views through reasoned argumentation that aims at convergence onto the truth by means of rational persuasion. The thought that the free exchange of ideas leads to the formation of, and renewed commitment to, true beliefs is due to Mill (1974) who aptly argued that discussion promotes believing the truth because it forces one to fully articulate the reasons for one’s beliefs and to respond with reasons to contrary viewpoints. Mill’s argument though is premised on the assumption that people would be receptive to reason. He noted that the debaters themselves might be too invested to be capable of persuasion, but he thought that even heated debates might nevertheless be of epistemic benefit to an audience capable of rational reflection. Section 1 has cast doubt on human’s ability to respond to reasons and thus seemingly undermined the epistemic value of deliberation. More strongly, it might raise the suspicion that deliberation is epistemically dis-valuable since people’s views are often more accurate if they avoid listening to debates and engaging in political collective deliberation.

The cognitive psychological research presented in section 1 is designed to elide individual psychological difference to report aggregate results about statistical relations. Crudely put, it tells us that most people do not listen to reason, suffer from confirmation and my-side bias, and when discussing matters with others they polarise. Contrary to some of the lessons drawn by philosophers but also by the psychologists and political scientists themselves, this evidence cannot establish that these shortcomings are universal or unshakeable.

Further, as a matter of fact, the evidence on these matters is much more complex than it might appear at first. In reality, some groups polarise after deliberation and some do not. Some groups reach poor decisions, and some make excellent ones. This variety in the epistemic quality of performance is not limited to simple factual decisions but it is also present in group political deliberations (Karpowitz & Mendelberg, 2018; Myers & Mendelberg, 2013 for overviews).The variety of results is so stark to suggest that the main determinants of epistemic quality are not hardwired, or at least not near universal psychological characteristics. Rather, the most significant predictors of deliberative behaviours must be variables that are situational and/or that pertain to the psychological differences among the individuals involved. There is abundant evidence that both factors are crucial (See De Dreu et al., 2008 for an overview). My interest here, however, lies with psychological individual differences. I mention two kinds.

First, people differ from each other in their dispositional needs for closure and for cognition. Those who are high in their dispositional need for closure desire to reach quickly an unambiguous conclusion. Hence, when undecided on a topic or issue they tend to seize on information and then to become resistant to persuasion once they have frozen on their position. Everyone to some extent exhibits this need to close down issues. Further, everyone exhibits it more or less depending on situational pressures. Nevertheless, some individuals are more deeply marked by these tendencies in a broader range of circumstances. Thus, they are said to be high in dispositional need for closure (Kruglanski, 2004). Other people are high on a dispositional need for cognition. These individuals enjoy thinking through issues and finding out a lot of information that they assess carefully (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Research on groups negotiation indicates that the presence of individuals who are high in the need for cognition is predictive of better joint outcomes where both parties get more of what they want (De Dreu et al., 2008). There is also evidence that enjoying cognition and being curious to learn reduces bias and polarisation when reasoning specifically on political issues (Kahan et al., 2017).

Second, individuals differ from each other in their motivations. Research shows that motivational factors are crucial in determining the epistemic quality of conclusions reached through deliberation. When deliberating or debating individuals might be highly epistemically motivated or have low motivation (De Dreu et al., 2008). When his epistemic motivation is high, the individual is prone to acquire and reflectively to evaluate information. Thus, high epistemic motivation is proportional to need for cognition and inversely related to the need for closure. When her epistemic motivation is low, the person tends to reach a conclusion quickly often by relying on heuristics (Chen et al., 1999). Individuals’ levels of epistemic motivation vary depending on the circumstances – e.g., urgency- and personal factors -e.g., dispositional need for closure. High epistemic motivation leads people to engage in reflection. But reflection can be highly biased so it should not be assumed that higher epistemic motivation is equivalent to a disposition to form more accurate beliefs.

Another set of motivations, orthogonal to epistemic motivation, are also determinant of the epistemic outcome of group deliberation. Some individuals when engaging in a group task are mostly concerned with the effects of the activity and its outcomes on themselves, while others are mostly concerned with the effects on everyone. The first family of pro-self motivations includes for example, the desire to win an argument at all costs, or to get the most for oneself in a negotiation. The second group of motivations are pro-social. They include the desire to get along, to cooperate, to get the best joint outcome.

In the context of group deliberations or debates between dyads the interactions between individuals with differing motivations lead to outcomes of different epistemic quality. In short, when epistemic motivation is low, and individuals’ motivations are pro-self, group discussions and decision-making are characterised by inaction and free-riding problems. Initial disagreements lead to vetoing and stalemates. When epistemic motivation is high groups composed by pro-self motivated individuals are good at brainstorming, but are poor at collective decision making and deliberation. They promote adversarial debates and thus the presentation of arguments and objections. However, highly epistemically motivated individuals whose motivations are pro-self are disposed to lie, spin and mislead to win the argument (De Dreu et al., 2008, p. 34). They also engage in behaviour designed to shut their opponents down.

Groups composed by individuals whose motivations are pro-social also have distinctive characteristics. When epistemic motivation is low these groups tend to compromise too quickly; their members tend to mutually enhance, and to share only information that is already widely known. They tend to self-silence when they are inclined to disagree with the majority’s opinion. However, when epistemic motivation is high, these groups perform well. Members of these groups pay attention to each other ideas. Discussion is information-driven with accuracy as its aim (De Dreu et al., 2008). In conclusion, the best performing groups in collective deliberation are, everything else being equal, those where members have high epistemic and pro-social motivations. Even when epistemic motivation is low, groups with socially motivated individuals outperform those whose motivation is pro-self.[[8]](#endnote-8) These results strongly suggest that motivations make a difference to group performance. Individuals if they can be suitably motivated are capable of deliberating reasonably well, of listening to each other’s arguments, and of evaluating these accurately. [[9]](#endnote-9)

This research also chimes with recent studies of the development of children’s ability to argue. Fisher and Keil (2016) have discovered that initially children have an arguing to learn mindset. They are cooperative, they trust other people and ask questions. At a later stage in adulthood, people start arguing to win. Fisher and Keil claim that this mind set is mostly counterproductive from an epistemic point of view. In conditions of low epistemic motivation, these individuals engage in spurious attacks of their opponents, using *ad hominem* argumentation. When epistemic motivation is high, those who are driven by the desire to win the argument engage with the opposite point of view, but are prone to evaluate it in a biased way.

Finally, they note that it is possible for adults to become less invested in the argument and to be motivated to learn. When group members are motivated to learn, they become less tribal and more able to acknowledge that there might be some truth in the viewpoint of their opponents (Fisher et al., 2018). Their collective deliberations outperform those of individuals and of groups whose members are driven by the desire to win. I think of this motivation to learn as a combination of both high epistemic and pro-social motivations since individuals who have it are keen to acquire and evaluate information but are also cooperative (as opposed to competitive) since they listen to others in order to learn from them.

One might object that although it is possible to be motivated to learn about non politicised matters, the adoption of this stance would be practically impossible in the political realm. I grant that the current political climate in many nations is a cause for concern. Nevertheless, people are able to hear the other side when they are appropriately motivated (Mutz, 2006). Importantly, there is also evidence that some people display the appropriate motivations including curiosity, the desire to learn, and a dispositional need for cognition when discussing political matters (Fisher et al., 2018; Kahan et al., 2017).

One might further object that even though some individuals are appropriately motivated, it might be impossible for others to acquire these motivations and thus improvement is beyond their reach (Ahlstrom-Vij, 2013). In response I note that there is evidence that people want to change their personalities and become, for instance, more open to experience (Hudson et al., 2019).[[10]](#endnote-10) Clearly, simply wishing to change is not enough to effect change. However, research has shown that people can voluntarily bring about these changes through setting for themselves relevant goals (Hudson et al., 2019). This is a process of habituation that is akin to virtue cultivation (Snow, 2010).

1. **Virtues and vices of argumentation, advocacy, and deliberation**

Many debates and deliberations are pointless because the participants are only interested in point scoring. The argument so far has shown that this sorry state of affairs is not inevitable. Debates and discussions can be epistemically beneficial because it is possible for people to improve. One avenue for improvement is the development of virtues through work on motivation within contexts that offer the opportunity for such work. For simplicity sake, I sidestep debates about the nature of virtues here and merely presume that virtues are character traits and skills that promote the epistemic ends of debate and discussion including understanding, the full articulation of reasons and arguments, the dissemination of information, the reduction of epistemic injustices and convergence on the truth. These traits and skills either include good epistemic motivations or have been cultivated through habituation or repeated practice sustained by good epistemic motivations.

Argumentation virtue theorists have offered a number of distinct candidates for the virtues that would be characteristic of good arguers and deliberators. Aberdein (2010), for instance, has defended the view that the virtuous arguer is excellent at disseminating truths, as opposed to merely acquiring them for herself. Thus, partly borrowing from Cohen (2005), Aberdein identifies four broad attitudes characteristic of those who articulate, and respond to, arguments well. These are: willingness to engage in argumentation, to listen to others, to modify one’s positions, to question the obvious (Aberdein, 2010, p. 175). Each of these four attitudes is associated with characteristic virtues such as intellectual courage, empathy and open-mindedness, intellectual humility, and perseverance. Opposed to these clusters of virtues lie distinctive vices of excess and deficiency. Thus, in Cohen’s (2005) terminology the proper willingness to engage in argumentation is flanked by the vices of being an Argument Provocateur who is too willing to engage in argument even when the situation makes it inappropriate and a Quietist who fails to engage. Willingness to listen is opposed by deaf dogmatism and concessionism, whilst willingness to question is contrasted with the disposition to defend what no one questions (typical of the Unassuring Assurer) and the tendency to believe uncritically (characteristic of the Eager Believer) (cf., Aberdein, 2010, p. 174).

There are also interesting lines of convergence between work in virtue argumentative theory and psychological research on arguing to win or to learn. Discussions about the role of adversariality in debates are longstanding and unresolved (Dutilh Novaes, 2014).[[11]](#endnote-11) More recently, Stevens (2016) has defended the view that it takes practical wisdom to appreciate which debates require the virtues of adversariality and which those of cooperation. She proposes that adversariality is epistemically beneficial when debaters already understand the other’s point of view and their arguments are fully articulated. However, when individuals are still trying to figure out the best way of making their point or there is reason to fear that the debaters do not really understand the other’s position, then the motive of cooperation and its attendant argumentative virtues are best at promoting the dissemination of true beliefs. Important among these would be the virtues attendant to treating the argument as a joint project (Cohen & Miller, 2016). At times, this joint activity would require that arguments be subjected to intense scrutiny. In other circumstances, however, the success of the joint project demands the deployment of techniques of argument repair designed to help the person with whom we disagree to develop the best version of the argument they wish to defend (Hundleby, 2019).

Good arguers also display the virtues of the good listener. Being willing to learn is essential to acquire the skills required of a good listener (Cohen, 2019). These skills include the corrective virtue of testimonial justice that consists in the ability not to let identity prejudice colour one’s assessment of the credibility of subordinated individuals (Fricker, 2007).

The virtues that promote the ability to engage in debates, improve the standards of argumentation, and listen well overlap with those character traits identified by Aikin and Clanton (2010) as group deliberative virtues. These are defined as those traits and skills that promote good argumentation but that also facilitate, by different means, group synergy understood as capturing all cases where the knowledge or understanding achieved by a group outstrips what would be gained by a mere process of aggregation. Aikin and Clanton supply an extensive list that includes wit (as opposed to being a dullard or a buffoon), friendliness (as opposed to flattery and quarrelsomeness), but also collectedness (as opposed to excessive anger or excessive detachment), courage, humility and sincerity. Several of these are not exclusively virtues of collective deliberation. Rather, they might be included in generic lists comprising ethical and intellectual virtues. Aikin and Clayton’s work highlights their distinctive contribution to deliberation.

I have suggested that the willingness to learn from others is essential to good performance in debate and deliberation. It is therefore not surprising that intellectual arrogance has been singled out as an especially dangerous vice for deliberative democracy. Whilst this vice has heterogeneous manifestations, it is best understood as a defensive attitude that leads one to be so invested in one’s beliefs that any challenge to them feels like a personal attack. This defensiveness leads to a tendency to presume that one’s pronouncements must be correct because they are one’s own (Tanesini, 2016, 2018, 2019). This attitude is also manifested in a presumption that one’s point of view cannot be improved by others (Lynch, 2018a, 2018b). In short, epistemically arrogant people are driven by the desire to win and are unwilling to learn from others. Arrogant individuals have a corrosive effect on debate and deliberation because they do not take themselves to be answerable to others for their claims and do not treat others as epistemic peers but are disrespectful of them (Lynch, 2018a, 2018b; Tanesini, 2016).

In conclusion, I have shown that pessimistic conclusions about people’s ability to deliberate and debate well are premature. Spectacular ignorance, biased evaluation, point scoring are avoidable. I have argued that individuals’ motivations make a difference to the epistemic quality of deliberation and debate, and that people can improve their performance by acquiring the motivation to learn from others. Finally, I have provided an overview of some of the intellectual virtues and vices of argumentation and deliberation. This list of traits is not intended to be exhaustive, but it illustrates the pivotal role of epistemic arrogance as one of the vices that is most corrosive of democratic deliberation.[[12]](#endnote-12)

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1. Somin (2016) offers a review of evidence of widespread political ignorance in the USA. IPSOS Mori in collaboration with Kings’ College London and the Royal Statistical Society conducted surveys in 14 countries, each revealing shocking levels of political ignorance. See http://ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/perceptions-are-not-reality-things-world-gets-wrong for a summary of the results. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. These effects are not limited to the political domain. Human beings are motivated in every area of enquiry to seek evidence in favour of their views that they accept uncritically, whilst actively searching for counter-evidence for what they disagree with (Mercier & Sperber, 2017; Nickerson, 1998). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. See for instance the 2008 Pew Research Centre surveys showing that among Republicans individuals with higher educational qualifications were more likely to be climate sceptics than their less educated counterparts. For a summary of findings see <https://www.people-press.org/2008/05/08/a-deeper-partisan-divide-over-global-warming/> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. There are other reasons to value the making of an informed choice that are not wholly dependent on its influence on the final outcome. I cannot address these issues here. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. That said, at least in idealised conditions it is not always optimal for a community of enquirers motivated by the truth to share all the available information. See Zollman (2013) for a review of some of this issues applied to enquiry on purely factual matters. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Cognitive vice in this context is broadly equivalent to biased, in the sense of unreliable, cognition. These are vices because they systematically obstruct or block the achievement of knowledge. See Cassam (2019) for this definition of epistemic vice. As a matter of fact, these cognitive biases might not qualify as vices in Cassam’s view if they do not reflect badly on their possessors. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Kahneman (2012) offers a good introduction to so-called dual processing accounts of cognition. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. That said, there is a risk that in groups of mixed motivations cooperative individuals are misled by others whose motivations are pro-self. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. I hasten to add that adopting a conciliatory stance might not always be desirable. In addition the ability to hear the other side might also lead people to become less involved in politics (Mutz, 2006). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. This is a personality trait positively associated with high need for cognition (Cacioppo et al., 1996) [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Adversariality is not the same as the motivation to argue to win in so far as the latter is manifested in spinning and point scoring to prevail. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. I would like to thank Jeroen De Ridder, Michael Hannon and an anonymous referee for their helpful comments. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)