Adversariality, Grandstanding and Gender in Argument

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CHAPTER 1

Adversariality, Grandstanding & Gender in Argument: An Introduction

Philosophy aims at uncovering deeper truths about our lives and world, and, it does so by means of argument. Argument is philosophy's bread and butter.[1] But, access to effective intellectual speech, including argument, is affected by extra-argumentative norms.

This dissertation project is situated in social epistemology, particularly argument theory, and informed by feminist sensibilities. Broadly speaking, it examines two ways in which extra-argumentative norms pollute our intellectual spaces. As I'll show, social-cultural norms, particularly those surrounding gender, distort the neutrality of intellectual speech, including argument. While I'll claim that argument itself is a reliable and fair framework for inquiry, these gender norms create additional barriers to effective intellectual speech for women and feminists therein.

In what follows, I examine three related, but distinct problems. These are the adversariality of argument, moral grandstanding, and intellectual grandstanding. In Chapter 2, I make a novel feminist contribution to the adversariality debate. In Chapter 3, I weigh-in on the nascent moral grandstanding debate. In Chapter 4, driven by insights from Chapter 3, I introduce a new, but parallel concept to moral grandstanding: intellectual grandstanding. And in Chapter 5, I examine the intersection between grandstanding and gender. As I'll argue, intellectual grandstanding disproportionately effects women, and so, is a pressing issue for feminist research.

In Chapter 2, I give an internal feminist critique of the adversariality debate. This critique suggests that, contra the predominant non-adversarial or cooperativist feminist view on the matter, adversariality is actually necessary for the possibility of epistemic justice in argument.[2]

Briefly, the adversariality debate consists of two questions. It asks whether argument is inherently adversarial, and if it is, how philosophers ought best to mitigate its potential negative effects. In the debate, feminists have overwhelmingly advocated for a non-adversarial or cooperativist approach, rather than the paradigmatic adversarial one (Moulton 1983; Hundleby 2010, 2013; Rooney 2009, 2012; Cohen 2002). This dominate feminist stance is based on the following observation:

> Women and men have different politeness norms that bear on them, which creates unequal access to successful argumentation along gender lines. Extra-argumentative norms about how men and women should behave have significant effects on women's ability to argue successfully. Adversarial behaviors, such as speaking confrontationally and assertively, are thought of as suitable for men. But, when women behave in these same ways, they are seen at best as impolite and at worst, as social and moral

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[1] For an extended discussion of argument's role in philosophy, please see Aikin & Vollbrecht's "Argumentation: A Brief Introduction," in *Methods in Analytic Philosophy: A Primer and Guide* (Forthcoming).

[2] It is worth noting that although my view goes against the predominant feminist view on adversariality, there are a few feminists who endorse adversariality, too. These include Trudy Govier (1999) and Tempest Henning (2018; 2020).

> transgressors. While men "take charge", women are "bossy".[3] So, while it is socially acceptable for men to behave aggressively, women are expected to behave non-aggressively, or politely. When entrance into philosophic argumentation requires participants to behave aggressively, women find themselves in a double-bind (Moulton 1983; Frye 1983). In remaining polite, women are silenced. Yet, if they do engage aggressively, they are dismissed as "uppity" and "bitchy".

While these observations ring true to me, and I share the concern about argument's accessibility for women, I attribute the cause of the problem differently. I locate the source of this inequity, not in the structure of argument itself, but in the extra-argumentative gender norms that pervert and distort argument. Beyond being necessary or merely permissible, I argue that, in fact, adversarial argument – insofar as it is characterized by skeptical engagement, which entails critical uptake of the other's view – is critical for epistemic justice.

There are gendered problems in the way the argument manifests practically, but those are not problems with argument, they are problems with us. If we lean into argument's formal structure, it can actually secure everyone's ability to disagree and dissent, and provide a platform through which all voices can be heard. Using the Penaluna-Leiter exchange as a test-piece, I show that the gendered problems we see with argument are often really an abuse of argument itself. Argument carried out correctly can overcome the external social-cultural values that have distorted it, and made it inequitable for women. As I say in Chapter 2, *skepticism is a requirement for epistemic justice.*

In Chapters 3 through 5, I weigh-in on the growing debate regarding the moral status of grandstanding. Through review and critique of the current literature, I lay the foundation to theorize a new problem for feminist deliberation in social epistemology and argument theory: intellectual grandstanding.

I begin in Chapter 3, by attempting to square the differing views about moral grandstanding. To morally grandstand is to perform a moral flex designed to illustrate and elevate an individual's social standing. In Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke's words, moral grandstanding is an abuse of moral talk (2016; 2020). While moral talk should be used to bring morality to bear on practical issues, and thereby solve issues in and improve the quality of life in one's community, the grandstander uses it first and foremost to promote themselves.

In their recent work, Tosi and Warmke (2016; 2020) argue extensively against grandstanding. While Tosi and Warmke argue that moral grandstanding is unethical, Neil Levy (2020) argues that moral grandstanding, or what he calls 'virtue signaling' is necessary for social coordination, and so, must be virtuous.[4]

By examining the philosophical terrain between Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke and Neil Levy, I conclude that while virtue signaling might be necessary, it is still bad. Not everything that's necessary is good. In light of its dual status, I suggest that we theorize moral grandstanding as a kind of moral progressor's temptation. Here's a brief over-view of how it works.

Because we are morally imperfect, we require others to help us monitor our moral progress. However, when others are responsible for evaluating our progress, they are put in the

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[3] Think of the way Hillary Clinton's behavior was slammed in her 2016 presidential campaign. See Kate Manne's *Entitled* (2020) for an extended discussion of the gendered double-standards held against the 2016 presidential candidates.

[4] Following Levy, Evan Westra (2021) makes a comparable kind of move, too.

position to give us praise. And, we like receiving praise. Praise tempts us to reorient ourselves first and foremost toward it, rather than towards being good. Grandstanding is a result of giving in to approval's distraction. We need one another's help to become better, but this very fact opens a door-way to make us just a little worse again.

Inasmuch, moral grandstanding isn't a problem with moral talk, it is just the result of the kind of creatures we are. Grandstanding, like adversariality, doesn't reflect a problem with argument or intellectual life itself. Rather, it reflects a problem with us, as creatures that are imperfect, but striving to improve. Both behaviors are ones that we bring to argument.

Additionally, my analysis in Chapter 3 reveals a particularly important feature of Levy's account, which springboards me into Chapter 4. *Levy evaluates moral grandstanding as if it were an epistemic issue.* As I argue in Chapter 3, Levy's epistemic interpretation of moral grandstanding is in error. There certainly can be downstream epistemic problems that follow from moral grandstanding, but the primary problem with it is still a moral one. Moral grandstanding or virtue signaling is first and foremost a moral bad insofar as it, i. produces negative practical consequences, ii. manipulates others, and iii. given i. and ii., just doesn't look like the kind of behavior a good person would engage in.

However, Levy's observations suggest another philosophical path forward. They instruct us to consider a second kind of grandstanding, for which epistemic justification is the central issue. I'll call this *intellectual grandstanding*. In Chapter 4, I analyze the concept of intellectual grandstanding in argumentative contexts, in three parts. First, I define it as a parallel, but distinct phenomenon to moral grandstanding. Second, I consider how intellectual grandstanding manifests in intellectual spaces. Here I draw up a list of common strategies grandstanders make use of in argument. In the third and final section of Chapter 4, I use a convergence argument, like Tosi and Warmke do with moral grandstanding, to show that on each major theory of argument, intellectual grandstanding produces epistemic bads. These are the rhetorical, pragmatic, and epistemic accounts of argument. In what follows here, I'll briefly preview the fault with each.

The rhetorical account is defined by its unique attention to audience. By the rhetorical approach, arguments are designed to appeal to our shared capacity for reasoning or *logos*, but also to appeal *ethotically*, to each person in particular. On the rhetorical account, then, an argument is good, if it persuades its audience for the right kind of reasons, and respects them as knowers. Rhetorical argument is argument humanized. And, while intellect signaling can be persuasive, it doesn't persuade for the right kind of reasons on the rhetorical model. Insofar as it manipulates and uses an audience, it fails to respect them.

The pragmatic theory of argument suggests that a good argument is one that lawfully resolves disagreement. Grandstanding, however, thrives under conditions of disagreement. Because grandstanding is often comparative, as my guide in Section ii of Chapter 4 shows, it is most effective with a foil. Grandstanders are often inclined to draw out disagreement to highlight themselves in it. At best, intellectual grandstanders aren't primarily focused on resolving disagreement in argument. At worst, they actually steer arguments away from any resolution in order to maintain a stage for their performance.

Lastly, on the epistemic theory of argument, a good argument contributes to the production of justified beliefs. So, for intellectual grandstanding to contribute constructively to argumentation, it should provide strong evidence for the likelihood of whatever view is in question. As Neil Levy points out (2021), grandstanding does look like it adds to the sum quantity of evidence for a view. For, both numbers and confidence count as second-order evidence. However, I'll argue, confidence and numbers are good pieces of evidence, only if they

are endorsed for good reasons. To understand the quality of evidence that each offers up, we need to ask about their respective sources. Confidence on its own isn't a strong piece of evidence. For example, arguments from outrage exemplify lots of confidence, but we characterize that as an informal fallacy. Likewise, just because some sheer numbers of individuals agree to a proposition isn't on its own enough to generate strong evidence. Informal fallacies, including appeal to the people and bandwagoning run off this very logic. Without further qualifications, the evidence produced by confidence and numbers is often subject to defeat, and so, is fallacious. If a claim is endorsed for bad reasons, it is a bad piece of evidence. So, although, intellectual grandstanding can provide additional second-order evidence, the evidence it provides is typically weak, and won't contribute significantly to the epistemic justification of argument.

As Chapter 4 shows, on each of the leading models of argument, intellectual grandstanding produces epistemic vice. This tri-part convergence account suggests that intellectual grandstanding is a significant problem within intellectual speech that requires our attention. In particular, as I'll argue in Chapter 5, it looks like intellectual grandstanding is a problem for women and feminists.

In Chapter 5, I examine the relationship between intellectual grandstanding and gender. As I'll argue, while there isn't anything inherently gendered in the concept of grandstanding, intellectual grandstanding disproportionately, negatively effects women. For, men are more likely to get a pass when it comes to grandstanding as a gendered phenomenon, and women are more likely to be its targets.

These problems, I argue, are twin-facets of philosophy's long association between masculinity and reason, and femininity and emotion. Philosophy's binary gendered hierarchy of concepts depicts men as reasoned, and women as emotional and irrational. By its logic, men are fixed as knowers in the social order. And, women, in contrast, are assigned the position of care-giver. As I'll show in Chapter 5, men's entitlements account for the first gendered manifestation of intellectual grandstanding, and women's corresponding entitlements account for the second.

Most succinctly, men are more likely to get away with intellectual grandstanding, because intellectual grandstanding is the act of laying claim to knowledge, and men are seen as *de facto* entitled to knowledge. Because men's entitlement to knowledge has been naturalized, when men intellectually grandstand it seems normal and acceptable to us.

In contrast, because women are seen as not entitled to knowledge, women are the most obvious foils for intellectual grandstanders. Insofar as women are seen as emotional and irrational, they are easy props through which grandstanders can promote themselves and their intellectual status. What's more, as I'll show via close analysis of Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay's Sokal-style hoax-article "The Conceptual Penis as a Social Construct" (2017), the likelihood that women become targets for grandstanding increases exponentially when they discuss feminist views in intellectual spaces.

In sum, intellectual grandstanding is a common and pervasive epistemic vice that requires our attention. Moreover, it is a problem that is especially prevalent along gender lines. It disproportionately silences women's voices, particularly when women make feminist contributions. This makes intellectual grandstanding a problem of real importance for us, as social epistemologists, argument theorists, and feminist scholars alike.

To conclude, my main project in this dissertation is to examine a series of gendered problems in argument. This first-order work, however, bears an important meta-philosophical observation along with it. *If these problems are distortions of argument, and argument is central*

to philosophy, it looks like there is a gender problem with philosophy. While feminist philosophers have long maintained this critique, the angle from which I approach it is relatively new. My work should prompt us to look carefully at how social-cultural norms produce gender inequity in philosophy by way of gender inequity in argument first. As such, these reflections offer an undertheorized approach to the gender problem in philosophy, and, have stakes far beyond this particular project.

CHAPTER 2

Why We Need Skepticism in Argument: Skeptical Engagement as a Requirement for Epistemic Justice

1. Introduction

The Argumentative Adversariality debate is over the question of whether argument must be adversarial. Cooperativists hold that argument not only isn't intrinsically adversarial but shouldn't be. Adversarialists hold that argument is intrinsically adversarial, and argumentative norms should be framed in light of this fact. A particular locus of this debate is on skeptical challenges in critical dialogue.

The Default Skeptical Stance (DSS) in argument is a practical manifestation of philosophy's adversarial paradigm. Views about the on-the-ground value of the DSS vary. On one hand, in "The Social & Political Limitations of Philosophy" (2012), Phyllis Rooney argues that the DSS can lead to epistemic injustice, especially in situations of social difference. On the other, Allan Hazlett in his recent piece "Critical Injustice" (2020) argues for the virtues of the skeptical stance in terms of epistemic justice.[5] Both Rooney and Hazlett are concerned with the role skeptical engagement plays in argument, but they assign opposite values to it. Rooney thinks skepticism in argument can lead to epistemic injustice, while Hazlett thinks it leads to epistemic justice. What are we to make of this?

In this essay, I will review Rooney and Hazlett's examples and (i) show that the epistemic dysfunction in the two scholar's going cases is one and the same. Both are caused by a lack of critical uptake. And (ii) I'll argue that the critical uptake required for epistemic justice is entailed by proper skeptical engagement. *As such, skeptical engagement is a requirement for epistemic justice.* Together i) and ii) constitute an initial defense of the Adversarialist position against objections regarding the social epistemic risk of the skeptical stance.

2. The Adversariality Debate

The Adversariality Debate consists of two interconnected questions: Q1: is argument intrinsically adversarial?, and Q2: what norms obtain regarding how arguments must be managed in light of the adversariality question?[6] While two sides exist regarding the adversariality thesis, scholars on both share (i) a *formal* concern that argument is theorized correctly, whether that be as inherently adversarial or not, such that it produces the best epistemic results, and (ii) a *practical* concern that all persons receive equal consideration in argumentation as a practice of knowledge production.

The divides in the debate descend from Trudy Govier's Model for Minimal Adversariality. Govier advocates the Adversarialist postion, but presses the formal and pragmatic theses together, via her Model for Minimal Adversariality:

1. I hold that X.
2. I think that X is correct (Follows from (1))

[5] As Hazlett explains, critical uptake indicates respect. It acknowledges the other's equal intellectual status and their role in the intellectual community. It allows individuals to strengthen their position, discard false beliefs and cultivate epistemic virtue. I discuss this in full in Section 4.

[6] Throughout this paper, argument is treated as dialectic, and thus, as commitment-based, rather than belief-based.

3. I think that not-X is not correct (Follows from (2))
4. I think that those who hold not-X are wrong, or are making a mistake. (Follows from (3))
5. Should I need to argue for X, I will thereby be arguing against not – X. (?)
6. Those who hold not-X, are, with regard to the correctness of X and my argument for X, my opponents. (?) (1999: 244).

"Because there is this conflict of belief", she concludes, "this hypothetical person may be regarded as the opponent of the arguer. Thus it would appear, argument is at its very roots adversarial" (1999: 243). The trouble is, as Cooperativist commentators have pointed out, steps 1 -3 of Govier's model reflect a formal concern, while steps 4 – 6 represent a pragmatic one. Cooperativists have held that this shows an error in reasoning for the adversariality thesis, and adversarialists hold that there are two distinct but convergent lines of thought.

The conflation of the two programs opens Govier's model to critique. Cooperativists typically motivate their view from the practical concern (Rooney 2010; Hundleby 2013). And, Adversarialists, such as Scott Aikin (2011; 2017) and John Casey (2019; 2020), defend their stance via the formal concern. They hold that adversariality is a formal necessity, so all pragmatic considerations must be managed in light thereof. Without adversariality argument ceases to be argument *qua* argument. Adversariality in argument can be weaponized, but constitutes a necessary risk.

Because Adversarialists motivate their thesis via the formal concern, they must accept that negative practical consequences are often *not* prevented by the formal program. Their focus on the ideal components of argument comes at the detriment of attending to non-ideal instances. Cooperativists center their argument on the adversarial disconnect between formal and pragmatic concerns. Rooney homes in on this weakness. She holds that what she calls the Default Skeptical Stance (DSS) in philosophy, which functions as the bridge between the formal and pragmatic elements of adversariality in argument, leads to epistemic dysfunction related to Fricker's notion of hermeneutic injustice.

The DSS delineates how dialectical partners orient themselves to one another given the adversariality thesis. If argument is adversarial, then dialectical partners must be skeptically engaged with one another. Of the relationship between adversariality and the DSS, Catherine Hundleby writes:

> "The Adversary Method evaluates an argument by subjecting it "to the strongest or most extreme position" (Moulton 1983, p. 153), in an attempt to get the best of both sides of a dispute. The Method considers two contrasting views beginning with what we may call an "oppositional" position, a contrary view on a particular topic and assumes the goal of defeating another's view" (2010: 284).

Although, she does not name it as such, the behavior Hundleby describes is that of the DSS. The practical means by which the Adversary method function is the DSS. It is the on-the-ground manifestation of adversariality.

The DSS requires Arguer B adopt a critical stance toward A's argument, wherein B generates challenges and objections to A's stance. As Rooney writes, the DSS entails the following behaviors: "A's initial premises may be questioned, for instance, or B might claim that the premises in one of her subarguments do not provide sufficient warrant for the conclusion she

draws from them, or B might provide a counterargument" (2012: 320). Given the adversarial paradigm, common practice is for Arguer A to present her best possible argument for stance A, then Arguer B is to do her best to critique A's stance. It is then Arguer A's role to defend her thesis from B's attacks. This commits the Adversarialist to the DSS, and so, to some kind of defense of it.

3. Rooney's Analysis

Just as the concern regarding adversariality in philosophy is its paradigm status, the concern regarding the DSS is its *default* status. Rooney writes: "According to standard norms of philosophical adversarial argumentation B is *expected* to challenge and question any of A's claims that he finds less than plausible, thus placing the burden of proof on A" (2012: 325, emphasis my own). The Adversarial Paradigm *requires* arguers engage skeptically with one another's reasons. It is not merely an option to be critical, but a necessity. Rooney worries that in cases of social difference, skeptical engagement as an argumentative norm, leads to the misrepresentation and silencing of historically epistemically marginalized arguers.

Rooney's charge is that the DSS ignores facts about arguers and their unequal standing. As the formal framework made manifest, it is unable to adjust to context. Note insofar as Rooney's critique stems from real-world concerns, her objection is in the form of non-ideal argumentative theory. According to Rooney, the DSS precipitates epistemic dysfunction, because of how it distributes the burden of proof in cases where individuals of historically marginalized epistemic populations argue from experience-based claims. She writes: "…I want to draw attention to forms of adversarial argumentation in philosophy that can effectively silence or misrepresent the contributions of those who belong to minority or marginalized subgroups in the discipline, and especially when they seek to address concerns that are of special significance for their subgroup" (2012: 318). On her view, the level of skepticism directed at these individuals' arguments ought to be adjusted in relation to social identity. If we lack our interlocutors basic experience, and the building blocks of their argument come from experience, it will be nearly impossible for them - within the argumentative norms delineated by the DSS - to prove their point to us. In this case, the DSS does not prevent epistemic subordination, but seems to suggest it, by re-enforcing the marginalization of epistemic minorities.

On Rooney's view, when the formal adversarial framework meets non-ideal conditions, the DSS does not allow arguers to adjust accordingly. The Cooperativist concern, as expressed by Rooney, is that the DSS leads to unduly severe critique when Arguer A is of minority identity, particularly when she takes her own experience as supporting a premise. Because the burden of proof returns to A, in such cases, she is left without further dialectical resource to counter B. She writes: "…epistemic injustice is likely to be exacerbated in skepticism – informed argumentative exchanges where minority members, whose experiences and claims are likely to be given less credibility, are thereby assigned greater burdens of proof. Such exchanges may, therefore, undermine equity in what we might think of as the discursive space of philosophical argumentation" (2012: 319). Here Rooney reasons, when part of Arguer A's argument is based on social experience as a minority identity, Arguer B is allowed, even required, by the DSS to question and resist Argument A. Without his shouldering the burden of proof too, it is impossible to bridge the gap of experience between different social identities. For B to be persuaded, he'd need to *do* something. Yet by the DSS, Rooney reasons, the burden of proof returns to A, leaving her with no further dialectical resource to persuade B.

To demonstrate how the DSS can lead to hermeneutic injustice, Rooney analyzes Brian Leiter's blogpost in response to Regan Penaluna's article "Wanted: Female Philosophers, in the Classroom and in the Canon". Leiter is an American philosopher most known for his controversial ranking of graduate philosophy programs, and his equally controversial philosophy blog, *Leiter Reports*. He is notorious for supporting big-name analytic departments in the former, and for amplifying views that many think are discriminatory in the latter. Rooney notes that in her article, Penaluna reports the small number of undergraduate female philosophy majors, and enumerates a series of plausible causal factors, including the lack of historical women thinkers in the canon, the misogyny of canonized philosophers, the particular regard philosophy holds for its canon, and as a result, the discipline's resistance to feminist critique (2012: 326).

Of Leiter's response to Penaluna's article, Rooney explains –

> A few days after the publication of Penaluna's article, Brian Leiter initiated a discussion of the article in his popular blog *Leiter Reports*. To his title question, "Why aren't there more women in academic philosophy?", Leiter responds, "Regan Penaluna offers the following explanation…", and he then quotes two paragraphs from her article, one in which she remarks that the study of philosophy is typically the study of the texts of dead white men, and one in which she draws attention to the recurring sexist and misogynist comments by these same dead white men. Leiter then invites discussion: he says, "I wonder how plausible the reader finds this explanation?" with, it seems to me, the clear suggestion that he does not find it plausible (2012: 327).

Leiter's audience follows up with comments, including: "This is implausible", "This is merely anecdotal" (2012: 327 - 329). The result is a dismissal of Penaluna's argument. Leiter and his correspondents leave Penaluna with the duty to respond, but no dialectical resource to do so. While he and his male-colleagues lack Penaluna's experience as a woman in philosophy, the DSS does not allow them to adjust the degree of skepticism in their response to her.[7] They ought to be interested in listening to Penaluna's argument, because she shares an experience new to them. Yet, on Rooney's view, the skeptical stance blocks the accessibility of *not only* this information, but this epistemological attitude. As Rooney's sees it, if what A argues is far beyond the scope of Arguer B's experience, the DSS does not provide B means to engage with A. Instead, it encourages B to dismiss A. In sum, Rooney sees it that the DSS, under conditions of epistemic and institutional asymmetry, is distorting of dialogical arrangements. Consequently, it, along with the adversarial paradigm it represents, should be rejected.

4. Hazlett on Critical Injustices

Like Rooney, in his recent article "Critical Injustice", Allan Hazlett connects the epistemic injustice framework to argument.[8] However, while Rooney designates said epistemic dysfunction

[7] Of course, some of Leiter's supporters are plausibly also women and members of minority groups. But, women's oppression isn't always readily evident to women. It takes epistemic work to understand one's social position. This fact accounts for women who support Leiter. And, it underscores the importance of Penaluna's contributions.

[8] Patrick Bondy (2010) considers argumentative injustice, too. I am sympathetic with Bondy's analysis, but maintain that critical uptake via skeptical norms is more actionable, stable and reliable than his adapted policy of metadistrust. Metadistrust, like norms of cooperativeness, relies on interlocuters' goodwill, which is not guaranteed, especially in cases of social difference, where it counts the most. For a related analysis of the issue, see Sherman (2016).

to the application of the DSS in argument (when individuals from historically epistemically marginalized communities argue), Hazlett designates it *to the failure to apply the DSS (to the arguments of historically epistemically marginalized individuals).* A deficit or lack of critique, Hazlett holds, can constitute an injustice, when motivated by identity prejudice.[9] Critical Injustice is characterized by insufficient critical feedback from one arguer to another, due to negative stereotyping (Hazlett 2020).

But why, given what appears to be Rooney's thesis, is a *deficiency* of criticism bad? To illustrate his thesis, Hazlett provides a series of examples. Each case is characterized by a deficit of appropriate, deserved criticism. The cases are as follows:

a. "Professor A asks all the students in his graduate seminar to submit discussion notes in advance of each meeting, and from these he selects ideas to critically discuss with the group. He has found, however, that his students who are men engage more vocally and earnestly with his criticisms, and so he finds himself giving preference to ideas presented in discussion note written by students who are men. "Women don't seem to get as much out of this part of the course," he says to himself, and so discussion tends to focus disproportionately on ideas purposed by students who are men. (Call this the Seminar Feedback case.)

b. Professor B provides written critical feedback on her students' essays submitted in her philosophy of religion course. However, she tends to give less feedback to her Muslim students, because she has found them to be less open-minded and receptive to criticism than her non-Muslim students. "It's a dogmatic religion", she says to herself, "they are not going to change their minds, no matter what I say". (Call this the Essay Replies case.)

c. Professor C uses the method of 'Socratic dialogue' in her undergraduate courses, periodically engaging in back-and-forth critical discussions with individual students. On account of implicit bias, however, she tends to employ this method disproportionately with white students, rather than with students of color. She calls on white students a disproportionate amount of the time. (The underlying psychological mechanism is something like this: she is more comfortable talking to white people, and unconsciously and unintentionally, allows this to influence her behavior in the classroom.) (Call this the Socratic Method case.) (2020: 1 -2).

In each case, the insufficient feedback harms the arguer. The primary harm of Critical Injustice attaches to the individual's *dialectical capacity*. That is, "…both the capacity to engage with criticism – to understand and reflectively consider challenges and objections – and to respond to it – to articulate replies, counter-arguments, amendments, and so on" (2020: 4). As testimonial injustice impugns its targets credibility as a knower, critical injustice impugns its targets dialectical capacity as an arguer.

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[9] In "Dislocating Cultures" (1997) Uma Narayan makes a related point. She observes that the testimony of Third-World feminist is often treated as different from testimony from expertise. It is seen as mysterious, and so beyond critique, which is ultimately harmful. I owe this connection to an anonymous reviewer.

Critique – that is, providing challenges or objections to another's argument -- entails respect for their intellectual ability and autonomy. Recall that critique is behavior entailed by the DSS. Hazlett writes:

> …acknowledging someone's intellectual status and respecting them as an intellectual agent requires criticizing them – for example, challenging their claims to knowledge, calling out their errors, and pointing out flaws in their reasoning. This is the treatment one may owe, in such contexts, to someone whose dialectical capacity one holds in relatively high regard, in other words, to someone whose dialectical capacity is sufficient to engage with and respond to one's criticism (2020: 5).

Proper critique requires interlocuters engage seriously with one another's reasoning. For dialectical partners to give the best possible feedback, they must listen carefully to interpret one another. Hazlett echoes Govier here. Failing to provide critical feedback to one's interlocutor undermines their status as a peer and contributor to the epistemic community. For, criticism indicates that i. Arguer A has posed a question, which intellectual stimulating and worth pursuing, and ii. that the intellectual community takes Arguer A to be reasonable enough to adapt - either by providing further defense, or conceding her view – her view in light of additional argumentation.

Looking more closely at *lack* of critical engagement illuminates further its merits. Hazlett points out, that the result of Arguer B failing to engage with Arguer A, leads to "a distinctive species of silencing" (2020: 5).[10] Later, to illustrate this phenomenon, he asks his reader to imagine presenting at a conference, and receiving absolutely no feedback during the Q&A. If, in the configuration, of argument as the space of reason, B denies A any critical feedback, A is left with nothing to say. The silence excludes A's view from consideration, and communicates to her that she is *not* a legitimate intellectual peer.

Further harms follow from dialectical impingement. While all of these harms are at play in cases A – C, in the following I have assigned a particularly representative case to each. The secondary harms, or those pragmatic and epistemic wrongs that are consequences of avoidance of uptake, or the non-acknowledge of another's dialectical capacity, are as follows:

1. *Failure to provide due criticism impedes another's ability to jettison, or move beyond false belief, and so, towards truth.* Critique can expose to an arguer their own false beliefs, thus allowing them to correct for them. To make evident to one their misconceptions is the necessary first step to attaining knowledge.

   We can see this most clearly in the Graduate Seminar case. While we do not know the exact content of his student's views, or his objections, we do know that *how* Professor A provides feedback is not functional. His approach does not facilitate his student's calculated reflection upon the worthiness of their beliefs. His student's will not consider

[10] Silence is not *always* silencing. Silence is a varied phenomenon, which can indicate disagreement or agreement, depending on context. My contention is simply that in this context *it is*. For further consideration of the role of silence in argument, see *Voicing Dissent: The Ethics and Epistemology of Making Disagreement Public*, edited by Casey Rebecca Johnson.

their beliefs in light of his critique, potentially jettisoning those which do not pass muster. On the contrary, he shuts down this process entirely.

2. *Likewise, failure to provide due criticism, denies an arguer the opportunity to provide further defense for their position, and thus, re-enforce it.* Hazlett writes: "Criticism seems thus capable of transforming mere belief into knowledge" (2020: 5).

   We can see this most clearly in the Essay Response case. Professor B determines that her Muslim students will be less likely to accept criticism because of their religious identity, and so provides them less feedback than her other students. In so doing, she misses half of the puzzle. Providing critique is not only to the ends of convincing one's interlocuter, but is equally designed to present an interlocuter the opportunity to shore up her beliefs against critique. Critique provides avenues to strengthen and reinforce one's position.

3. *Critique allows one to develop intellectual virtue*:

   a. Critique presents arguers the opportunity to practice the intellectual virtues of "thinking on their feet, being open minded, or engaging with and responding to criticism" (2020: 6).
   b. On the flip side, *unjust deficits of criticism foster damaging self-doubt in arguers*. Such individuals will not only struggle to understand themselves as dialectical contributors in the epistemic community, but as intellectually capable at all.

   We can see this most clearly in the Socratic Method case. The Black students, who are not called-on in class, are unfairly denied the opportunity to practice their argumentative skills (such as replying to and posing new challenges). Their exclusion, while not apparent to Professor C, will be obvious to the students themselves, and might easily lead to them to question their worthiness within the epistemic community. They might think to themselves, "Professor C never calls on me. She must think I'm not keeping up", or "Professor C never calls on me. She must think I don't have anything worthwhile to say".

These secondary harms indicate that practical *and* epistemic success follow from the critical orientation of arguers towards one another. On this model, practical and epistemic goods that had seemed distinct with critical engagement coalesce. To move toward knowledge, and be adept at the process of knowledge production, is not just a formal necessity, but a real-world good. (In fact, *it is a formal requirement, because it is a practical good.*)

In sum, criticism is a requirement for epistemic justice. Critique, insofar as it corresponds to the reasons given and the inductive strength with which the premises imply the conclusion, honors the intellectual autonomy and capacity of an arguer. The interlocuter to whom one offers critique is one's epistemic equal, or partner, together with whom one works to sharpen our arguments, and dispel false beliefs. Engaging with them, we take, will improve their dialectical capacity and our own. Critique should correspond to the force of reasons given by arguers, not to negative prejudicial stereotypes. Critique aligns with justice, or is a requirement of justice, insofar as it corresponds to the strength of reasons and argument given, and so, honors epistemic justice.

5. Expanding on Hazlett's Cases

Hazlett's cases have a wider range than he accounts for. The Seminar Feedback case, stands out as unique. By looking more closely at this case, I will develop Hazlett's notion of Critical Injustice. The Seminar Feedback case differs in two, connected and significant ways, from his other examples. First, it is the only instance where engagement occurs between parties. Arguers A presents their view, and B offers feedback. Second, and inasmuch, it is also the only instance where those experiencing Critical Injustice actually have the designated "opportunity" to speak.

A question follows from these differences. If Professor A *actually* does offer critique to these students, where is the Critical Injustice located in this case? Is it simply when the Professor, after noting the female students don't respond to his subsequent critique, fails to offer up further argumentation? The critical injustice occurs, I hold, not in his subsequent failure to engage the female students, but prior, in his initial engagement with them. Thus, Hazlett's concept of critical injustice can be expanded. *Critical Injustice is not only attributable to a failure to engage, but is attributable to failure to do so properly*.

Although Hazlett's case, understandably, lacks particular detail, we can imagine a number of ways in which the "critique" deployed by Professor A, might not properly engage with his female students' work. Below is a provisional list of possible ingenuine criticism on the part of Professor A. Professor A might have responded with:

i. Loaded Questions -
A loaded question attempts to force B to commit to additional, implicit propositions, with which they actually disagree. Thus, further engagement with A is counter-productive for B. It will only harm their arguments. Walton writes: "The question itself can be argumentative" (2008: 39).

ii. Softball Questions –
Softball questions are those students are already ready to answer. They are designed to imitate or play at real critical engagement and challenge. Softball questions are infantilizing, and pejorative. They do not recognize the correct degree of intellectual autonomy and ability in one's interlocutor.

ii. Ironman Techniques –
To ironman another's argument is to interpret it beyond its charitable, or maximally argumentative, limit. Ironmanning does more than clarify and fill in implicit steps (that is, provide the benefit of the doubt) for another's argument, but transforms it into a totally different (and much stronger) argument.

Ironmanning can also be insulting, insofar as it is infantilizing. When interpretation shifts another's argument to one's own "improved" argument, they take over the voice and thoughts of their interlocutor. Doing so, at a minimum, belittles the intellectual and argumentative ability of A. At its worst, it makes our interlocuter's ideas into our own. This phenomenon has been termed 'toxic charity' (Govier 1987; Stevens 2021).

iii. Weakman Techniques –
In contrast to Ironmanning, Weakmanning, takes the weakest, or least persuasive interpretation of another's argument. This may be done by excluding stronger strands of A's reasoning, or selecting some subproof to represent the whole of A's argument. We will get another look at Weakmanning momentarily.

Evidently, not all critique is created equal. Just because one objects or challenges another is not to say they've done so properly. To think that just disagreeing, and voicing that disagreement is equivalent to critique is misunderstood. Critique is more than mere disagreement. To start, critique identifies reasons that cut against a view. It lays out a case that the support for a view under scrutiny has legitimate challenges. This is not mere nay-saying, but is a contribution of reason-exchange. This is what critical questioning is supposed to be.[11]

6. Critical Uptake Requirements

Critical uptake is a background condition of the skeptical stance. Here, beware of the superficial interpretation of skepticism. To think that being critical, or being skeptically engaged is just "nay-saying" or tireless objectionability, is to maintain a superficial understanding of skepticism. Motivating the skeptical method is the thought that by applying the most stringent criteria to argument -- and equally stringent criteria for the arguments on either side of a debate -- yields the best, insofar as they will be most true or accurate, epistemic results.[12] The proper skeptical method relies on taking up with the best version of an interlocutor's argument, such as to provide the best critique thereof, and thus have the greatest likelihood of moving toward truth or agreement. Thus, the skeptical stance requires deep critical engagement with one another's arguments. It asks dialectical partners to take up with the strongest version of one another's arguments, and thus requires arguers do their best to understand one another. (Fallacious critique, or mere dismissal of one's interlocuter, never comes close to the strongest refutation. While these kinds of moves may convince some audiences - like Leiter's in the P-L case-, ultimately, they are not *really* persuasive. Certainly, an *ad hominem* attack will not convince those who are unsympathetic with the attacked, nor will it convince the arguer being attacked.) Rather, the strongest skeptical pushback, will be in response to the best version of Arguer A's argument. The DSS requires dialectical partners be critically engaged with one another's arguments. Skeptical engagement requires generosity.

The historical antecedent (and model) of this view comes from Sextus Empiricus. The sceptic, he says, is the one still investigating the truth. Sceptism aims at *ataraxia*, or tranquility, in matters of opinion (I.25) *through* the setting out of oppositions among things, which appear and are thought of in any way" (I.8). The sceptic undertakes to produce equipollent – equally convincing from either side - argumentation regarding a given subject. To do so, she employs the 5 Modes, a series of logical rules and strategies, including, for example, circularity and infinite

[11] My view here is in good company. Fernando Leal (2020) holds that critical questions are a necessary part of argumentation. Just as the burden of proof belongs to the protagonist in argument, a *burden of questioning* belongs to the antagonist. And, just as there is a right way to shoulder the burden of proof, there is a right way to question. It is not only the antagonist's duty to ask critical questions, but to do so well (2020: 418). Leal lays out what he takes should be the norms for these questions. On his view, critical questions should be clarifying, precise and persistent. As we will see, Leal's proposed norms for good critical questioning are just the same as the norms prescribed by the skeptical stance.

[12] See Cicero (*Ac*. 2.60) and Sextus Empiricus (*PH* I.8, I.10).

regress, to critique pre-existing argument. Upon encountering equipollence in argumentation and so, intellectual impasse, she suspends her judgment. The skeptics prerogative, then, is to investigate both sides of an argument with equal seriousness, respect and charity. The skeptic is equally oriented to finding the strengths and flaws in both sides of an argument. She is oriented with a critical eye to both. Her aim is to investigate the truth, and by aiming at this epistemic good first and foremost, she maintains the kind of critical engagement that entails generosity to both sides of an argument.

To be clear, this is not to defend adversariality by just doubling down on fallacy theory or identifying weak reasoning. *Adversariality, as characterized by skeptical engagement, is not about catching mistakes after they happen, but preventing interpretative mistakes from happening in the first place.* Skeptical engagement understood from its historical perspective manifests in two practical ways. The first is procedural. Before objecting to one another, dialectical partners must be sure to have engaged with the best version of one another's arguments. This means understanding each other's positions is always the first dialectical pace.[13] Its second practical manifestation is in epistemic attitude. Aikin (2011) identifies a means and ends relationship between cooperative and adversarial ideals. The means to cooperation, given argument's *telos*, is adversariality. If argument aims at getting things right, the only way to sort out the most accurate views is to challenge them as stringently as possible. My point is that to be adversarial too, it turns out one must also be (to some extent) cooperative. Cooperative behaviors are built into adversariality done right. In order to challenge our interlocuters, we have to first hear them out. We have to take care to understand their arguments. This means behaviors like active listening will be included within adversarial argument. We have to be oriented first to the other's argument, in order to make the best case for our own. This attitude of generosity is required by the skeptical stance.

For these reasons, skeptical orientation, as is implicit in Hazlett's work, does manage social identity factors in epistemic scenarios. For, insofar as critical uptake is a background condition of the DSS, the DSS ensures interlocutors engage closely with one another's reasons. That is, the DSS forbids dismissal of one's interlocutor on non-reason guided bases. All dialectical partners deserve response, and this response must be in light of the reasons they have given, or those which are implicit in their argument. What they say will be heard. Thus, the DSS entails, or at least requires, epistemic justice.

The takeaway is this: there are good and bad ways to be argumentative adversaries beyond what Govier's model tells us. Adversaries can still cooperate with one another. And, the skeptical stance is the regulative norm that insures that cooperation. Critical uptake is built into skepticism. When critical engagement falls away, but adversarial behaviors remain, that's when argument loses its value, and epistemic justice is threatened. Again, the DSS is what ensures real engagement between party's views and reasons, and so, is a requirement for epistemic justice in argument. There is such a thing as a good adversary. *A good adversary is a skeptical one.*

7. Strawmanning

Now, this conclusion appears to be in diametric opposition to the silencing or epistemic injustice scenario, which Rooney describes. In Rooney's analysis, silencing is the *product* of the DSS in cases of minority identity arguers. However, I will argue that, the epistemic dysfunction in the

[13] While this is what models of argument typically encourage, I flag it here, because the particular concern with the DSS is that it doesn't entail, or even discourages, this kind of critical uptake.

Rooney's going-case, the P-L exchange, can be understood as a deficiency of skepticism, characterized by improperly engaged critique. That is, Rooney's going-case in "The Social & Political Limits of Philosophy", the P-L case, is analogous in kind to Hazlett's Seminar Feedback example. By homing in on just where the injustice occurs in the female graduate student's case, it is evident that deficit of criticism can occur in argumentative exchange itself (not just in the absence of warranted exchange). Even when one responds to another, mere response is not sufficient to constitute critical justice. Response must be oriented by the skeptical stance, such that it ensures critical uptake of the arguer's reasons.

While I agree with Rooney that Leiter's response to Penaluna is a case of epistemic dysfunction, I argue that the site of that injustice is *not* the DSS. Instead, I hold that the problem is a critical lack of properly instituting the DSS. *The DSS does not create the epistemic dysfunction, which characterizes and drives Leiter's behavior, and can, in fact, usefully capture its wrong. What Leiter is up to is really a kind of pseudo-skepticism.*

Let me say this one other way. Rooney is right that there are genuine problems in the P-L case, but those problems are independent of the DSS. Leiter's argumentative problem is a lack of critical uptake. And, a lack of critical uptake is not intrinsically linked to the DSS, because it can also be seen in cases where the DSS isn't the cause of the problem, like in Hazlett's cases. In fact, good skeptical engagement ought to presume appropriate critical uptake beforehand. So the problem Rooney identifies isn't actually a problem with the DSS after all. With a better understanding or strengthened view of the DSS, we start to see that adopting the DSS might actually help us avoid that. [14]

Rooney's concern is with the epistemic dysfunction, which follows from how the DSS distributes the burden of proof, *but*, she clearly states that Leiter strawmans Penaluna (2012: 327). This dual-attribution of epistemic dysfunction is internally incoherent. As we can now see, the DSS, by definition, takes up with the best version of a given argument, such as to contest it most soundly. However, to strawman another's argument is to intentionally misinterpret it, in order to make it weaker. Thus, the two observations are at tension with one another.

A strawman is a dialectical move, in which Arguer B misrepresents Arguer A's argument, to Audience C. For the strawman's effectiveness, Audience C must be either i. ignorant to the material at hand, and thus easily convinced, or ii. already biased in the direction of B's views. This group is B's "preferred or ideal" audience. Leiter strawmans Penaluna insofar as he misinterprets her argument to his chosen, ideal audience. The majority of *Leiter Report*s readers, as his blogposts response indicates, unsurprisingly identify as "identity politics skeptics", and are predisposed to see Leiter as a default authority.

More specifically, Leiter weakmans Penaluna. To weakman an argument is to take up with one strand of proof or evidence in another's argument, and treat it as though it were the argument in its entirety. As Aikin and Casey write in "Straw Men, Iron Men, and Argumentative Virtue": "...the weak man consists in 1) selecting the weakest of an opponent's actual arguments, 2) actually defeating it, and 3) then drawing or implying deeper conclusion the argument or arguer in question" (2015: 3). By refuting just one strand - typically, the weakest strand - of A's argument, B pretends to defeat A's entire argument. While Penaluna is clear there are multiple effecting factors, which work in tandem to discourage women from pursuing philosophy, Leiter lists only two, and neglects to mention the intimate effective connection Penaluna notes between them. By choosing just one strand of Penaluna's critique, specifically that which identifies the causal role of the canon in dissuading women from studying philosophy, and conflating that

[14] I owe this very helpful characterization to an anonymous reviewer.

strand with her entire argument, her argument is easily defeated. As Rooney notes, many responses to Leiter's posting, included counterexamples of other canonized disciplines such as History and English – and historically male -dominated practices, such as law –, which while sharing this structural feature, have much more equitable demographics. While these are good counter-examples to the weakmanned version of Penaluna's argument, they fail to address the full scope of factors she actually considers.

Penaluna's potentially diminished ability to respond to Leiter, is *not* owed to issues with the burden of proof, but is because the weakman is designed to quell all response from her. The format of the Strawman is not to convince one's dialogical partner, nor even to engage with them, but to appeal against them to a sympathetic audience. It shuts down the very possibility of further proof from Arguer A. The third party's overwhelming dogmatic agreement with Arguer B silences A. She is not silenced by some added burden of proof from the DSS. In fact, she is not called upon *at all* to respond in this dialectical configuration. Although he appears to engage skeptically with Penaluna, Leiter challenges only a weak-manned version of her argument. In as much, he challenges her disingenuously. He does not challenge her in order to open up a space of reasons, and proper skeptical exchange between them, but, to roast her in front of an unsympathetic audience. Before the possibility of any skeptically configured exchange, Leiter turns away from the argument, and allows a mob to end the debate.

Ultimately, strawmanning is not an instance of the skeptical stance, but, an abuse of it. The epistemological dysfunction in the P -L case is *actually located in Leiter's refusal to critically engage with Penaluna*. **(**That is, the P – L case, and the epistemic dysfunction Rooney identifies, is really that of critical injustice.**)** Insofar as he misrepresents Penaluna's case, he fails to critically engage with her. As I say above, the skeptical method requires taking up with the best version of an interlocutor's argument. Skeptical engagement means arguers must hear one another's reasons, and respond to those reasons. Clearly, Leiter does not exercise the DSS in a fashion that is appropriate. The issue, then is not with the DSS, but with the fact that Leiter has neglected the argumentative burdens that come along with skeptical critique.

In as much, Rooney's initial concern regarding the distribution of proof in non-ideal circumstances is, in fact, consistent with the DSS and the adversarial structural view. What's at issue in argument are *reasons*. If there are reasons that require, because of the epistemic position of the arguers, that arguers do more work to understand each other, then that work is a necessary part of the adversarial method, too. The DSS prescribes this behavior. So, if as Rooney notes, Penaluna's social position will make particular pieces of evidence more accessibly salient (she'll see connections Leiter and his readers won't), then it's important for arguers to make those things explicit. Epistemological standpoints are relevant considerations and are ones consistent with the DSS and adversarial view. The P-L exchange is a case of epistemic injustice, but not for Rooney's reasons. Rather, it is one, because of a failure of proper critical engagement causally backed by prejudice. Rooney's going case is *actually* a case of critical injustice. It is not the presence of the DSS, which causes epistemic malfunction in the P-L exchange, but, a lack of proper skeptical engagement, which does.

Now, one might worry that while Rooney states that she is primarily concerned with hermeneutic injustice, her (and my) discussion treats the P-L exchange more like a case of testimonial injustice. Clarifying the relationship between the two kind of injustices, and how it plays out in the P-L case, resolves the apparent tension here.

Another way to understand the P-L exchange is to recognize that Penaluna's argument is a cumulative argument. Penaluna's case works, because it brings together a number of different

concepts. When they are all lined up, a pattern emerges. Here context matters. The greater the difference between arguers, the harder it is not to strawman one's interlocuter. The meta-argumentative point is that the beef of the disagreement concerns the culture of philosophy. Leiter is part of a broader academic culture battle. He picks his audience knowing that they're unsympathetic with broader issues in the academy, and so, knows that they're not going to see Penaluna's case as a cumulative one. The two components – the deep disagreement between Penaluna and Leiter regarding the culture of philosophy, plus the kind of argument Penaluna gives – set the perfect stage for his strawmanning her argument. Leiter's treatment of Penaluna's argument is, really, a case in point *for her argument*. His behavior is the kind that she is endeavoring to point out as a problem (that is, it is the kind of behavior that turns women away from philosophy). And this, again, is not a problem with skeptical engagement, but with pseudo-skeptical critical reaction.

To couch this in terms of epistemic injustice, it seems, most, if not all, cases of testimonial injustice follow from upstream hermeneutic injustices. Hermeneutic injustices most often show up in particular instances of testimonial injustice. The strawman in the P-L is a case of testimonial argumentative injustice; the fact that Leiter and his audience are *de facto* uninclined to hear Penaluna is hermeneutic injustice. The way the latter shows up is in terms of the former. I address the exchange, as Rooney does, in terms of its on-the-ground manifestation.

8. Conclusion

Rooney and Hazlett's cases seem on their face to conflict. But, in reality, they don't. Once we see what properly run skeptical criticism looks like, we see their concerns are really the same in kind. As I have argued, the missing link to seeing them as such is a complete understanding of the skeptical stance. If we draw out what proper skeptical engagement is, we see that it must engage with the best version of the others argument, and respond in light thereof. It entails critical uptake, and is characterized by respect for the other's intellectual capability and autonomy. The problem in the P-L case, as in Hazlett's Seminar Feedback example, is that neither opponent engages his interlocuters skeptically. Both fail to critically engage with and hear the arguments of their dialectical partners.

If we understand what good criticism is, it becomes clear that both cases are epistemically unjust insofar as each constitutes a deficit of appropriate criticism. Challenges and objections, which are not motivated by the skeptical stance, will not yield epistemic justice. Skepticism is a requirement for epistemic justice. It's absence, as show-cased in Rooney and Hazlett's work, leads to epistemic dysfunction and injustice.

Finally, refer back to how this bears on the Adversariality debate. How is this a defense of the Adversarialist position? The Cooperativist's primary concern is that beginning with, and allowing the formal to supersede the practical in import, and so, shape real-world epistemic practices, leads to bad social epistemic results. Particularly, they worry about how theoretically driven models might generate epistemic dysfunction related to epistemic injustice, wherein historically epistemically marginalized communities, are silenced in knowledge building practices. Typically, Adversarialists concede this point, too. Adversariality in practice can risk good social epistemic outcome (Aikin explicitly concedes this 2011; 2017). In this piece, I have argued 1) that when properly implemented, the formal requirements of the DSS can and should include encompass practical considerations. Critical uptake is not limited to formal induction. It does not stop when real-world factors are part of argument. Its scope includes these

considerations. And 2) the DSS in its attention to reasons, social or otherwise, is a well-suited tool to serve epistemic injustice. As an argumentative norm, the adversarial ideal gives historically epistemically marginalized communities the best chance at being heard, because it entails critical uptake of interlocutor's arguments, and requires direct response to the reasons that they give.

CHAPTER 3

Grandstanding as a Progressor's Temptation

1. Introduction

Is moral grandstanding actually bad? Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke (2016; 2020) theorize moral grandstanding, and condemn it as immoral across three leading ethical frameworks: consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics. Neil Levy in "Virtue Signaling is Virtuous" (2021) counters their view. He argues that grandstanding, or what he'll call virtue signaling, is *not just morally permissible, but necessary*. In what follows, I'll argue that *grandstanding may be socially necessary, but it is still a moral bad.* Just because something is necessary doesn't make it good. In fact, grandstanding's status as both necessary and bad shows something tragic about our moral development and sociality.

Before we can approach this thesis, however, there are interpretive matters to settle. Levy's account relies on two critical interpretative differences. First, he replaces 'grandstanding' with 'virtue signaling', but the two are non-identical. Second, he thinks of moral talk as consistently deliberative, while Tosi and Warmke do not. These differences lead Levy to think of grandstanding as an *epistemic* problem, while Tosi and Warmke take it to be *moral* one.[15] And, I'll argue, even if it were an epistemic issue, Levy's higher evidence thesis won't help much.

Despite these differences, I'll consider what happens if we let both accounts stand. That is, if Levy is right, and virtue signaling *is* grandstanding, how can we square his observations with Tosi and Warmke's? The way to do so, I take it, is to accept my thesis. Again, *grandstanding may be a social necessity, but it is still a moral bad*. As I'll explain, grandstanding can be thought of as a kind of moral progressor's temptation, a nearly unavoidable pitfall along the path to virtue or reflective endorsement of one's moral life. The absolutely moral person won't grandstand, but the person on her way to being moral will. The progressor confuses the ends and means of her action. The particular actions she takes are for the end of a moral life, but she gets caught up in celebrating her particular successes, as if they were their own end. This is grandstanding, if the grandstander is honest as Levy would have it. So, grandstanding is a bad behavior that comes along with *becoming* a better person. It is necessary, but that doesn't make it good.

2. Tosi & Warmke's View

So, what is grandstanding? And, why might it be immoral? On Tosi and Warmke's view, moral grandstanding is an abuse of moral talk. They write:

[15] In recent literature, Evan Westra (2021) and William Tuckwell (2022) also argue that virtue signaling isn't a significant problem. Their accounts run off the same interpretive differences as Levy's. Tuckwell's account runs off of the first difference, and Westra's takes up with the second. Westra's account explicitly treats virtue signaling as an epistemic problem. Tuckwell sticks with a moral interpretation of virtue signaling, but argues that it bears positive moral consequences. However, his only morally persuasive case is one of virtue signaling in the traditional philosophical sense, not grandstanding. In this way, he makes Levy's mistake of subbing out 'virtue signaling' for 'grandstanding' when the two are non-identical.

> …moral grandstanding is the use of moral talk for self-promotion. To grandstand is to turn your moral talk into a vanity project. Grandstanders are moral showboaters trying to impress others with their moral credentials (2020: 6).

Insofar as it takes advantage of moral talk for personal or individual purposes, grandstanding looks to be a moral bad. What's more, grandstanding doesn't just take advantage of others' good will and deliberative spaces. Often it directly degrades others. For, one particularly expeditious way of elevating one's own social moral status is by downgrading another person. Moral grandstanding is a vanity project at the expense of others. Tosi and Warmke evaluate it as such across three leading ethical frameworks: consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics. On the first, they argue, grandstanding has bad consequences. It leads to group polarization, outrage exhaustion, and general cynicism about moral talk. On the second, grandstanding uses others without due respect for their autonomy and rationality. Grandstanders manipulate. Likewise, grandstanders free ride on systems of larger social cooperation. They make exceptions for themselves, but rely on others following the rules. And on the third and final framing, they argue that the grandstander's motivation undermines their virtuousness. The ethical individual is motivated civically. She does the right thing for the right reasons. On the other hand, the grandstander, wittingly or unwittingly, is motivated primarily egoistically. Her contributions, although they're supposed to be about social justice, say, are really about her (2020: 121). From this convergence argument, Tosi and Warmke conclude that grandstanding is *bad*, and it should be avoided. Identifying and mitigating it will make our social world better.

2.i. Levy's Objection

Tosi and Warmke see two possible ways to push against their view. Either 1) one might argue that grandstanding doesn't actually have the problems that they point out, or 2) one could argue that its benefits outweigh its costs (2020).[16]

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[16] William Tuckwell (2022) takes a third path. Tuckwell maintains that virtue signaling produces a mix of bad *and good* results. Given this mix of results, he argues, we shouldn't maintain a "strong moral presumption against it" (2022: 10). He provides three cases to support his point. Each is designed to be i) an example of (non-philosophical) virtue signaling, and ii) have a good moral outcome. However, as I'll show each case fails i), ii), or both.

In his first case, Tuckwell argues that Marcus Rashford of Manchester United virtue signaled by calling for continued governmental COVID-19 crisis support over Twitter. He writes: "Rashford's virtue signaling had positive consequences. It functioned to signal his trustworthiness, facilitate co-operation and bring about a lot of good" (2022: 3). This case hinges on the difference between 'virtue signaling' and 'grandstanding'. Like Levy, Tuckwell has swapped terms, but the phenomenon they discuss are non-identical. Rashford's actions are best captured by the traditional philosophical concept of 'virtue signaling'. It looks like Rashford is, in fact, in possession of virtue and his action is simply an expression of it. Thus, Case 1 fails i).

In his second case, Tuckwell describes a scenario in which a female co-worker confides in "you" and your male co-workers that your boss has sexually harassed her. Tuckwell suggests that "piling on" and expressing moral outrage towards your boss is i) virtue signaling, and ii) provides a good moral outcome *insofar as it avoids cultivating her distrust of you* (2022: 5-6). I am very reluctant to evaluate this result as *morally good*. The male co-worker's piling on does little to help his female co-worker, or protect her from further harassment. Wouldn't a *moral* outcome look like her co-workers supporting her in real ways, rather than voicing empty platitudes to protect their own reputations? In addition, this looks to be an example of 'grandstanding', rather than 'virtue signaling'. The scenario is told from the 2nd person perspective, which allows us to see into the protagonist's mind. His biggest concern is *his own reputation*, rather than the safety and well-being of his female colleague. He is acutely motivated by *recognition desire*. Case 2 fails i) and ii).

Neil Levy (2021) takes a version of this first route. *On Levy's view, grandstanding is not only morally permissible, but necessary.* He writes: "Virtue signaling is morally appropriate. Virtue signaling neither expresses vices, nor is hypocritical, nor does it degrade the quality of public moral discourse" (2021: 9545). This is because virtue signaling, according to Levy, helps to solve the social coordination problem. The social coordination problem is this. As a highly social species, we rely heavily on one another's cooperation. But, in our highly complex and mobile social world, it is difficult to know first-hand about every person with whom we interact. The trust required to function in this kind of world opens opportunities for free riders. Free riders take advantage of social systems without paying their dues. Not only are free riders annoying, but they can compromise the integrity of an entire system. On Levy's view, virtue signaling is a reliable indicator of trustworthiness, given it is properly epistemic and sincere (2021: 9559). By proving these conditions, he'll argue that virtue signaling helps weed out free riders, and preserves social coordination.

On Levy's interpretation, the Tosi and Warmke concern with grandstanding is that it distorts epistemic processes. Levy writes:

> According to Tosi and Warmke, virtue signaling is epistemically objectionable. While it is capable of changing minds, the mechanism whereby belief change occurs through signaling is ir- or a-rational, and thereby unlikely to produce well justified beliefs. Rational deliberation occurs via the presentation of argument and evidence, and appropriate response to such evidence. Virtue signaling produces belief change through social comparison, they argue, and 'social comparison is not truth-sensitive' (2021: 9550).

On Levy's read, moral grandstanding is motivated by social comparison. Social comparison is an a- or irrational factor, and so is an inappropriate source of belief justification. Grandstanding thus distorts epistemic processes. In light of this specific concern, Levy goes about defending grandstanding, by making a case for its epistemic legitimacy.

Levy argues that the justification produced by grandstanding *is rational*. It provides us with higher order evidence, or evidence about there being evidence, he says. Grandstanding can reflect individual *confidence in a claim.* And grandstanding can reflect the *number of individuals who support a claim,* which in turn should add to our confidence for that claim (2021: 9549). The social epistemology literature shows us that both numbers and confidence are rational factors, and should count in the sum total of our evidence for maintaining beliefs. These are

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In Tuckwell's third case, a minority student named Christopher, who feels he may have been discriminated against attends a University's 93% meeting, wherein he stands up and "reports his experiences (at the university) as morally troubling" (2022: 7). This, Tuckwell, argues is i) virtue signaling, and ii) has a good outcome, because it fosters Christopher's intellectual self-trust. While I agree that Christopher's case has a good moral outcome, I am wary of calling it virtue signaling (or grandstanding). Christopher's speech doesn't seem to express his moral status. Rather in it, he articulates his experience of oppression. This phenomenon seems better captured by concepts from the Epistemic Injustice literature. Likely Chris has had a hermeneutical lacuna over his experiences, and in articulating them to this group of allies, finally gains the tools to understand them. Case 3, thus, fails ii).

In sum, Tuckwell's cases are designed to carry his thesis -- that virtue signaling has both negative and positive outcomes, so we shouldn't see it as a straightforward moral bad --, but, his cases fail to adequately motivate that view.

inductive evidential reasons that there is evidence that has supported these commitments. So, moral grandstanding is not a problem because of how it distorts epistemic deliberation. Virtue signaling doesn't undermine, he says, but actually supports the "deliberative function of moral discourse" (2021: 9555).

This meta-evidential read puts Levy on the hook for a second claim. For grandstanding to count as second order evidence, it must also always be honest.[17] To defend against the possible "hypocrisy" of grandstanding, Levy builds an analogy with fitness signaling in biology. As the peacock's brilliant plumage indicates its fitness to its mate, virtue signaling indicates an individual's epistemic fitness to a community (2021: 9553). He says, society is too complicated for reputation to track individual's trustworthiness, and virtue signaling is our evolutionary adaptation to signal our trustworthiness to others. Thus, it solves the social coordination problem.[18] Such signals, Levy argues, are 1) "hard to fake", because they are costly, and 2) would fall out of use, or basically would evolve out of use, if they were ineffective (2021: 9554-5).

Together the epistemic character of virtue signaling, plus its sincerity, allow Levy to claim that virtue signaling is not a vice, but rather a virtue. He writes, "Given that a central function of moral discourse is signaling commitment to norms, the claims that virtue signaling represent a perversion of the justifying function of such discourse is on very shaky ground" (9555). And, so he concludes: "…signaling is a function of moral talk, not a perversion of it" (9555) For Levy, these points all hang together. For virtue signaling to be properly evidential, and not a- or ir-rational persuasive, it has to be honest. And, its status as virtuous, rather than vicious, rests on the truth of the first two claims.

2.ii. Responses to Objections

Both Tosi and Warmke and Levy detail philosophically robust accounts. So, how do they get such divergent results? As I'll show, Levy's account is mismatched with Tosi and Warmke's in two critical places, and this leads him to a different outcome. First, Levy replaces 'grandstanding' with 'virtue signaling'. And second, Levy thinks of moral talk as distinctly deliberative, while Tosi and Warmke do not.[19]

First, virtue signaling is non-identical to grandstanding. Levy subs out 'grandstanding' for 'virtue signaling'. But, this exchange is a mistake. The two terms do not deal with the same phenomenon. Subbing out terms here *begs the question* of the moral legitimacy of the phenomena in question. For, on Levy's account, *if* virtue signaling is *honest*, *then* it offers reliable second order evidence, and is virtuous. By subbing out the term 'virtue signaling' for

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[17] Evan Westra (2021) sees virtue signaling as an epistemic issue, too, but his account adds depth to the question of virtue signaler's honesty. Westra agrees that virtue signalers transmit norms that they actually endorse, because if they don't "practice what they preach", they look suspect in the social eye (2021: 169). However, he tells us, virtue signaling is consistent with another kind of hypocrisy. He writes: "Even when virtue signalers' actions are aligned with their moral claims, their underlying attitudes are not, which is its own kind of hypocrisy. Virtue signalers would have others believe that they are motivated by moral beliefs when they are really acting out of reputational concerns" (2021: 169). Here, as I'll expand on in Section 2.iv., the argument for the epistemic reliability of virtue signaling further illustrates what is *morally* wrong about it. Insofar as it is epistemically consistent with conflicted and hypocritical motives, virtue signaling manipulates and takes advantage of others.

[18] Note this is exactly opposite the Tosi and Warmke idea that the grandstander is actually a free-rider.

‘grandstanding’, Levy builds these conditions into his target concept. So yes, honest virtue signaling isn’t done hypocritically or inauthentically. But virtue signaling also isn’t grandstanding.

Let’s take a closer look. Virtue signaling is a concept that comes from biology and psychology, and indicates additional elements, which do not obtain for grandstanding. Tosi and Warmke themselves address this comparison, and its ill-fit (2020). They write:

> ‘Signaling’ as a concept used in biology and psychology, does not necessarily involve *attempts* or *desires* to communicate. Signals are behaviors or features of an organism that either intentionally communicate information, or were selected through evolution because they communicate information that makes the organism more fit (2020: 37).

Whereas signaling is typically unintentional, the central feature of grandstanding is that it is motivated by an intent to appear morally praiseworthy in the social eye. *The thing that makes grandstanding what it is, is precisely desire.* Grandstanding can only be identified first-personally, and the metric for identifying it, is one’s motivation. Ask yourself if you’d be disappointed if no one praised or recognized your behavior. Would I be sad, if no one liked my Tweet? Reflectively recognition desire is what makes grandstanding identifiable and diagnosable.[20] *Virtue signaling is not grandstanding, because the recognition desire is not central to it.*

Furthermore, in biology and in everyday parlance, signaling typically indicates presence. Tosi and Warmke address this difference, too. They write: “Notice that when we say ‘X signals Y’ we often mean that X actually has Y” (2020: 38). On this read, to say someone is virtue signaling implies that they have the virtue in question. And this fact is central to Levy’s account of moral grandstanding’s epistemic legitimacy. But honesty isn’t central to the problem of grandstanding. As Tosi and Warmke tell us, the grandstander can be sincere or insincere about what they say. *A grandstander can believe everything they say, and still grandstand*. Nothing hinges on the sincerity or honesty of the content of their contribution. Nor, as it seems worth mentioning, does the grandstander have to say anything false. A grandstander can be honest, insightful and even, right in their views (2020: 40).

The second difference in the two accounts comes from how each defines moral talk. One way Tosi and Warmke articulate the concept of grandstanding is that it is the *abuse of moral talk*. Insofar as moral talk is the good that is misused in grandstanding, any productive analysis and argument regarding the latter, should agree about what moral talk is. But, it doesn’t look like the parties do agree about what moral talk is. It seems that Levy thinks moral talk is always deliberative, while Tosi and Warmke do not.

Tosi and Warmke give three kinds of definitions of moral talk. These are as follows:

> The Hortatory Definition: “Public moral discourse involves *communication that is intended to bring some moral matter to public consciousness*” (2016: 200).
>
> The Deliberative Definition: “…the aim of public moral discourse is to improve people’s moral beliefs, or to spur moral improvement in the world” (2016: 210).

[20] Grandstanding can be done both wittingly and unwittingly. One doesn’t have to know they’re grandstanding to be doing it. See Tosi and Warmke, p. 26, 2020.

> The Practical Definition: "[Moral talk] is our primary means of bringing morality to bear on practical problems" (2020: 4)

So, on Tosi and Warmke's view, moral talk is hortatory, deliberative, and practical. In contrast, on Levy's view, the moral communication or discourse is exclusively deliberative (2021: 9548). That is, moral talk consists in attempts to rationally persuade one's epistemic peers and community of one's view on a given moral issue. Moral talk is reasoned, persuasive exchange. While this is a plausible idea, it turns out that it is again, ill-fitted with Tosi and Warmke's view. For Tosi and Warmke's moral talk is not exclusively deliberative. Nothing in their definitions require that it be so. Rather, on their view, moral talk consists of making moral assertions. I take it that it is the examples each focus on that lead them to different interpretations of moral talk.

The examples that Tosi and Warmke use are non-deliberative. From Harvey Weinstein to Roy Moore, and Meryl Strep to reactions to "Obama's Disrespectful "Latté Salute" (2020: 55) Tosi and Warmke's examples all consist of reports or assertions. And their first-personal cases do, too. Consider the Twitter post. Or Warmke's claim that he has avoids gluten (2020: 169). While grandstanding can certainly happen in deliberative exchange, nothing about moral grandstanding *requires* that it occur in deliberative contexts. Moral talk is just as much about making moral assertions.

I take it that Levy's deliberative interpretation comes from his focus on one particular example from Tosi and Warmke's Peasoup Symposium. In it, they write:

> By that we mean that what causes people to alter their views or stated positions is predominantly a desire to hold a prized place within the in-group. The relevant incentive, then, is not to cease modifying one's beliefs or stated positions once one arrives at the truth, but to stop once an even more extreme position would no longer impress one's in-group. Our objection, then, is not to radical or "extreme" views, as such, but rather to the process by which group members arrive at them. That process does not reliably track truth, but rather something else. Extreme views arrived at via the process of ramping up, driven by the mechanism of social comparison, are unlikely to be correct (2017).

Levy takes this case to be paradigmatic. But, it is an example of one very specific kind of grandstanding. In citing it, in fact, Levy excludes the last sentence above. The reader isn't meant to think of this phenomenon in connection to ramping up, given Levy's presentation of it. But, this example specifically discusses ramping up. Ramping up occurs when, within a group, individuals make stronger and stronger moral claims to outdo one another, and look like the most morally superior. Obviously, the justification of these claims comes into question, because they're motivated by social comparison, which bears no relevant evidential connection to the issue. In this kind of grandstanding, there is an epistemic issue. But, this is a specific kind of grandstanding, not a basic case. It seems more likely that the epistemic bad here is actually a downstream problem from the primary moral bad of grandstanding.

For, is the epistemic issue really the problem with moral grandstanding? Does saying that beliefs formed as the result of moral grandstanding can be properly justified mean moral grandstanding is not a moral problem? I'll suggest that it isn't and that it doesn't. Epistemic missteps aren't central to what grandstanding is. The grandstander can be right, and justifiably so. He never has to say anything false, or anything that does not transmit justification (2020: 30). A grandstander can still have the right relationship to the evidence. The concept in its basic form

doesn't rely on either of these points. Grandstanding in its base cases still asserts things that can be true, and that grandstanders believe. The bad of moral grandstanding is elsewhere.

2.iii. First Conclusion

Moral grandstanding isn't an epistemological bad, it is a moral one. The problem with grandstanding isn't how it effects belief justification – although in some instances justification is affected --, but in how it treats other people. On the deontological model, moral grandstanding is a problem, because it uses other people. Others listen to the grandstander under the pretense that he is motivated primarily by the issue at hand, but he is actually primarily motivated to speak for the sake of his own self-image. This looks like a species of lying. Note that the free-rider problem still obtains. Here epistemological factors don't bear on the morality of grandstanding.[21] The central issue is that the grandstander's motivation is misplaced. Insofar as this is the case, moral grandstanding continues to be a bad on the virtue ethical and consequentialist accounts. Grandstanding is not civically motivated behavior. And, because it is disrespectful and un-civic, it yields bad practical consequences in the social-political world.

You can disrespect others, or make moral mistakes, without making epistemological errors. A defense of grandstanding's epistemic correctness doesn't make moral grandstanding ethically permissible. In fact, rightly understood, nothing essential rides on the epistemic quality of grandstanding. Moral grandstanding is bad because of how it treats others. It is not bad because leads to false or improperly justified beliefs.

But, maybe this isn't generous enough. In the next section, I'll set aside the issue of the dis-analogy of the two views, and consider Levy's second-order evidence thesis independently. (That is, as if grandstanding were an exclusively epistemic issue.)

3. Second-order Evidence & Epistemic Justification

Although I've argued that grandstanding isn't an epistemic issue, it's worth considering Levy's argument further. Could Levy's second-order evidence argument make a strong case for grandstanding if it were a primarily epistemic issue? So, what about Levy's claim that grandstanding is properly *epistemic*, because it provides second order evidence? I agree with Levy that grandstanding can provide higher order evidence. But given the quality of evidence it provides this fact isn't enough to call grandstanding epistemically justified (and so morally necessary).

Levy argues that individual *confidence* in a claim and the sheer *number* of individuals who assent to a claim are both "evidential" facts that should count as second order evidence (2021: 9548). Second order evidence is evidence of evidence. As Richard Feldman writes: "More carefully, evidence that there is evidence for P is evident for P is evidence for P" (2011: 151). In other words, my believing in X should count as a factor for X's likelihood itself. The mere fact that I maintain X should count as an additional point in favor of it.

[21] Westra's account is subject to this same critique, as I note in Section 2.ii. The fact of the matter is that virtue signaling presents a moral concern. Even if it functions lawfully epistemically, the way in which it does so, inherently fails to respect others. Insofar as it is epistemically consistent with conflicted and hypocritical motives, virtue signaling manipulates and takes advantage of others.

What Levy does with the second-order evidence thesis is straight-forward. When he talks about confidence and about numbers as second order evidence, he i) accepts this initial claim. And ii) the sheer number of people who are confident in some view should add proportionate second order support for it. This is the intuitive extension of Feldman's view. For, each of these individuals has their own confidence in X, such that it should count to the sum total of support for that view.

I am happy to accept this set up. I just don't think it gets Levy as far as he thinks it does. I contend that even if we accept all of Levy's terms, the problem with grandstanding persists. To review, Levy's argues that 1) the problem with grandstanding is epistemic, but 2) grandstanding provides higher order evidence, and 3) it does so reliably, because it is done honestly.

But not all higher order evidence is equal. There can be stronger and weaker evidence at a higher level, too. Sincerity and confidence just look like the minimal standard for having a view. To have a view is to make a bold assertion. So, yes, there is evidence of evidence in grandstanding, but it is very weak evidence. If we take *confidence* and *numbers* to be pieces of evidence, we still need to ask, what is the source of that confidence or the source of the confidence in the sheer number of people who agree? They are possible items of epistemic justification, but in grandstanding, they're still incorrectly motivated.

Consider numbers first. I take it that Levy thinks he defends against the motivation objection by saying virtue signaling is always honest. That is, on Levy's view, the person in question must also believe what they assert. The content of what a person says must match up with what they believe to count as epistemic. But is that really enough? One can believe the earth is flat, because their social circle does.[22] The fact that one believes as a result of what those around them do, won't necessarily change how strongly or authentically they believe. They can fully, whole-heartedly maintain earth's flatness.

Here a view is genuinely endorsed, but for the wrong reasons. Yes, there is a process by which it is endorsed, but is it a process that produces reliable, truth-tracking epistemic results? No. In fact, this case is a fallacy. It is an appeal to the people. We know better than to endorse a claim *simply* because a lot of other people do. Insofar as it is fallacious, the second order evidence provided by sheer numbers looks to be a very weak piece of additional evidence. We need more substantial kinds of reasons.

A similar thing can be said about *confidence*. Take Levy's discussion of moral outrage. He writes: "In the cases of the kind Tosi and Warmke mention, the opinions of agents who are tentative in their support of gun control should be given less weight than others who are more confident. The expression of moral outrage is a particular powerful cue to confidence" (2021: 9551). In this instance, and many others, grandstanding amounts to establishing authority. But, does one's outrage guarantee their authority? When experts assert claims, they're epistemically well-placed. But, regular people having beliefs is just normal evidence. It isn't strong evidence without further qualification. Obviously, the gun-control example is one many of us find amenable. But other examples can be constructed. Consider the anti-mask and anti-vax movement. Individuals in this group are outraged and adamant that mask-wearing and vaccination is an infringement on their personal rights and bodily autonomy. Here moral outrage is present, but it doesn't like it should confer epistemic justification. These arguments are just

[22] Scott Hill and Renaud-Philippe Garner (2021) identify this same issue. For numbers and confidence to count as second order evidence, they tell us, deliberators must be sufficiently independent of one another per the Condorcet Jury Theorem. However, strong empirical evidence suggests that they are not. They conclude, "…testimony is evidence and virtue signaling is a form of evidence, [but] we think that evidence has a defeater" (2021: 14825).

arguments from outrage. It's not clear that these arguers really carry any relevant authority. This, like the former case, constitutes a fallacy.

In sum, grandstanding can make deliberative contributions, but it provides grounds for *weak inductions*. Grandstanding provides second order pieces of evidence, but the particular kinds of evidence that grandstanding provides are bad pieces of evidence. Because, even given all of Levy's stipulations, grandstanding is still socially motivated. Numbers and confidence can be explained by non-evidential causes, too. And, as Tosi and Warmke point out, one could say the same thing without that mismatched motivation. In conclusion, if virtue signaling does contribution to moral change and moral concept building, it must do so very minimally. And, insofar as it is actually possible, it would be far preferable, if moral claims were both honest and motivated by non-social evidential factors.

4. Grandstanding as Progressor's Temptation

Finally, what if we set aside these differences, and allow both accounts to stand? If Levy is right, and virtue signaling *is* grandstanding, how can we square his observations with Tosi and Warmke's? The way to square their accounts, I take it, is to conclude the following. *Grandstanding is a social necessity and a moral bad.* In this section, I'll examine in what sense it is a necessity, and in the next, I'll examine how it is a moral bad.

Grandstanding differs in kind from virtue signaling by degree. Virtue signaling is the appropriate use of the action, while grandstanding is specifically when one overdoes it. The question becomes, then, what is the *appropriate* amount of virtue signaling? As Levy says, given the complexities of our social world and how often we move between communities, it may be true that our moral track record won't always follow us, and we may need additional ways to signal our reliability to new communities (2021: 9554). While I think this need exists, in reality, I think it is minimal. We have defaults set to assume trustworthiness (Coady 1992). And, it seems to me that the best ways to communicate our moral decency is actually doing things like *listening*, asking thoughtful *questions*, and following up on our *commitments*, rather than making statements intended to highlight our own moral awesomeness. I suspect that people who do the former are those that we take most confidence in.[23]

The virtuous person behaves virtuously, and won't need to signal that virtuousness for the sake of social coordination. It will be evident already. In contrast, the person who insists on telling us about their donation to charity, or the last important article that they read, doesn't seem as socially effective or persuasive. As opposed to actually virtuous behaviors, grandstanding often proves alienating and off-putting to others. We find these behaviors uncomfortable, rather than compelling. So, despite the fact that we don't like it, why is grandstanding so common?

Grandstanding, I take it, is a kind of moral progressor's temptation. The progressor, because they are not yet perfect, confuses the means for the ends of their actions. A touchstone case comes from the Stoics. Stoic practitioners must learn logic before they can properly conduct investigations into ethical matters. Logic is studied first, but it is studied explicitly for the sake of ethics. In mastering logic, however, the Stoic student often mistakes logic for its own ends, and

[23] This distinction allows us to accommodate Tuckwell's positive evaluation of Marcus Rashford. Rashford's action is an expression of actual virtue (even if it is also a PR move), and so is exemplary of 'virtue signaling', not 'grandstanding'.

strays away from its rightful application in ethics.[24] Grandstanding represents a parallel problem. Although her end goal is an ethical life, the grandstander gets caught up in the self-congratulatory opportunities of her particular successes, and being seen as virtuous by themselves and by others. A helpful analogy can be found in sports. Learning how to "juke", "meg" or "rainbow" is part of becoming a masterful footballer, but players tend to overdo these moves. Players are *tempted* to implement them, not to improve the game, but to demonstrate their own skillfulness. First and foremost, these "tricks" serve to designate a memorable style of play for a player, and are a distraction from the real game.

Conceptualizing grandstanding as a *progressor's* problem illuminates the sense in which it is socially necessary, too. As progressors, we need feedback on our moral progress. While self-monitoring is helpful, we require others help, too. Those around us can reflect back and affirm our choices, so we know we're headed in the correct direction. However, that same approval distracts us. It introduces a temptation to target gaining praise for our virtues, rather than actually developing them. We feel good when our progress is registered by others. And, for grandstanders, this moment of approbation becomes its own end, detracting from their real goals.[25]

Let me say this another way. To become moral, we require external checks. But this fact creates a temptation. The checks give us an occasion for personal and external approval or praise. This feedback tells us whether we are on the right track. And when we learn whether we are or are not, we adjust our behavior accordingly. That is, the praise should serve first and foremost as feedback directed toward our moral development. But, we like praise. And we easily get caught up in seeking that praise primarily, rather than for the sake of moral progress. This is the grandstander's error. Their target in moral talk is themselves. They want to be identified as the person identifying the moral issue at hand, and receive attention and praise for doing so.

Inasmuch, the very process of becoming moral introduces the occasion to grandstand. The basic action of checking-in with others as to our moral progress requires that we do so. As such, *grandstanding looks to be a necessary step in our moral progress.*[26] Here I disagree with Levy. Levy thinks it is necessary insofar as it solves the social coordination problem. Grandstanding, on his account, is primarily to indicate one's reliability to others in their community. It is to show others one's moral reliability. In contrast, I am arguing that it primarily serves to inform the grandstander of her own status in a given community. It allows her to test

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[24] For an in-depth discussion of the progressor's problem in Stoicism, see Scott Aikin 2020.

[26] To be clear, I take it that moral grandstanding is necessary, because of how we learn. We learn norms from breaking them. That is, as we learn a rule, we both over and under correct ourselves until we get it just right. This is evident in the classroom. For example, I begin each of my courses with a discussion of the Principle of Charity. Although the rule itself isn't complicated, it always takes a few gentle nudges and reminders for students to actually apply the rule correctly themselves.

When and how we ought to talk about ourselves is no exception. We can't help but talk about ourselves sometimes. And, when we do so, we get information back about whether or not the way we did so was appropriate. One way to overdo it is to moral grandstand. And, while some folks will learn their lesson quickly, it looks like one won't be able to find the mean, without making each mistake at least once. We don't know what is too little or too much until we make that error.

We don't simply do the norm correctly by having it told to us. We have to attempt to apply it ourselves in real life, first. Learning is a process of trial and error, and so, grandstanding is a necessary pitfall on the path to becoming virtuous.

her moral progress by others reactions. And, in as much, it indicates something less than total reliability from her. Really, it shows she isn't totally virtuous yet.

Consider moral outrage. Moral outrage is in the service of protecting what's right. But it's easy to get caught up in the moral outrage itself, rather than directing that outrage toward the issue at hand. The perfectly ethical person experiences that outrage and then passes on to the next issue or moment.[27] In contrast, the progressor gets caught up in the moral outrage, and forgets or subverts what it's ultimately for, to the outrage itself.

This is how we get, for example, *performative wokeness*. We speak out in moral outrage in service of what is right. We do it, because we want to be good people. But, the moment or expression of moral outrage is addicting and we are easily caught up in and distracted by it, and forget about the larger goal of improving the world. We focus in on "moral outrage" as its own end, rather than moral outrage for the sake of some bigger cause, the thing that is being done wrongly that causes the rage. Consider the following cases:

> 1) How do you know if someone's a vegan? They'll tell you.
>
> Veganism comes from a series of moral commitments. It might be motivated by concern for animal rights, climate justice, health, or a combination of all three. The vegan makes a difficult choice for a good reason. But, the point of being vegan isn't to get to spray about your morality, right? Being vegan is – for example -- for the sake of animal rights, or for the sake of the environment, more generally. If we become obsessed with our own veganism – that is, our praiseworthy dietary and lifestyle choices --, we lose sight of the reason we made them in the first place. The point is working towards some greater kind of justice.
>
> This, to note, looks like establishing moral superiority, rather than decency.
>
> 2) Blackout Tuesday/ The Black Square:
>
> In response to the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, social media users took to 'blacking out' or 'interrupting' their daily stream of content by posting a single black square to their Facebook or Instagram. Posting the black square demonstrated that the poster recognized the racial injustice in the United States, and supported the Black Lives Matter Movement.
>
> However, posting black squares to social media subverts the ultimate cause of racial justice to the individual's private cause of establishing moral decency. This is particularly clear when we consider that these posts are subject to 'Likes' and 'Shares'. When the issue itself should be most important, what is made more important is the poster's act of pointing out the issue. They see racial injustice as a problem, which is a step in the

[27] Think here of Martha Nussbaum's account of Transitional Anger (2015). She writes: "…when anger makes sense, it is normatively problematic (focused on status); when it is normatively reasonable (focused on the injury), it doesn't make good sense, and is normatively problematic in a different way. In a rational person, anger, realizing that, soon laughs at itself and goes away" (2015: 52-3). It should "segue into forward-looking thoughts of welfare and, accordingly, from anger into compassionate hope, *the Transition*" (2015: 53).

direction of what's moral, but get more caught up in identifying themselves as someone who sees the problem for what it is, rather then actually doing something about it.[28]

This, in contrast to the first case, looks like establishing moral decency through grandstanding.

3) 'This is what a feminist looks like' T-shirts:

Like veganism and racial justice, feminism is a moral end. Being a feminist is about fighting for gender equality, and working to dismantle patriarchy. The guy who wears the 'This is what a feminist looks like' T-shirt is a moral progressor. He recognizes the need for feminism and supports its aims. But, just like the individual who posts the black square, his wearing the shirt looks a lot more like a show of establishing his own moral decency, rather than advocating for women's rights. With it, he declares his moral status via the feminist platform. Again, this looks like someone who is on the path to virtuousness, but is distracted by the trappings along the way.

I take it that this case could be one of establishing moral decency or superiority.

In all these cases, the gist is that on our way to becoming moral, we are tempted to flex our morality. This is true whether we are new progressors, or further along the path. We just can't help ourselves. But, this kind of flex is actually a failure of being a good person for its own sake. It distracts us. And, it pulls us away from achieving that end overall.

5. Grandstanding Culture

In this section, I will consider grandstander's narcistic motivation and how narcissistically motivated behavior effects deliberative communities. This analysis constitutes one case for why grandstanding is a moral bad.

First, let's look to motivation. Tosi and Warmke say that individuals can grandstand to establish moral decency, or moral superiority. Is the person trying to establish moral decency importantly different from the person trying to establish moral superiority? Folks who grandstand, and honestly believe in the views they put forth, are all instances of progressor's temptation. *They're all progressors. The difference is just that the person working to establish moral decency is less progressed, or less far along in the path to virtue, than the individual working to establish moral superiority.*

Even though moral decency cases might appear defensive, they actually share the same kind of motivation. Consider again the black square, or, the old guy who says something constructive about LGBTQ+ rights. In these cases, grandstanding can look like an attempt to cover oneself from later accusations. But, I think, that's not generous enough. In such cases, the grandstander has finally come to see x as an issue, so they're pointing out that they support x. They wouldn't try to establish their moral decency through a claim or view that they think didn't actually indicate said decency.

[28] Now, and at the time, there were many more productive things that could have been done for racial justice. Posting the black square was an almost empty action. And, as it turned out, rather than interrupt the stream of regular social media posts, it clogged media streams and drowned out black voices.

So, both kinds of cases have a narcissistic motivation. They make the problem or issue about themselves. They think the view they're using is strong enough to make themselves look good. Both people have to think what they're doing displays morality. They have to genuinely think its effective. So, they've recognized a moral truth, and endorse it, but are doing so for the wrong reasons. They've begun along the moral path, but are idling on the way.

This leads me to my final point. The progressors' problem isn't just about the individual's temptation to grandstand. It is about how a culture of grandstanding can develop from it, too. And this showcases its moral badness. While grandstanding should be a progressor's temptation that individuals move beyond, if it has the useful payout in a community, it is kept as capital. *Grandstanding is borne from a culture of falling prey to the progressor's temptation.* With grandstanding, it isn't necessarily that the individual falls prey to the progressor's temptation – although of course this can happen --, it is equally possible that a progressor's trap has been set by those who have preceded us. If grandstanding behavior is one that others before us have fallen prey to, and moreover, behavior that has served others previously in that community, it can become a general cultural norm in a community.

Grandstanding inculcates more grandstanding. It communicates itself that grandstanding is okay. When newcomers to a community see others, who are well-established in that community, grandstand and be successful or accepted, it's read as passable behavior.

But, and here's the irony. Nobody likes it. When others grandstand, as I've said, we feel alienated by it. A practical analysis of grandstanding can be found in *Spectrum,* the magazine of Australian Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy. As its authors Andrew Murphy and Thomas Steffens observe, grandstanding appears to be toxic both for individuals, and deliberative groups as a whole (2017). Ironically, it seems that the only one who enjoys the behavior, may be the grandstander himself.[29] When an individual grandstands, he feels good. But, when he grandstands, those in his shared moral community find it, at best, off-putting and irritating, rather than compelling. At worst, when we suspect someone else of grandstanding, it becomes difficult to continue to engage with them. We see that they have a mixed motivation in their contributions. They have effectively made the moral issue at hand about themselves.

And, so grandstanding culture bears a larger problem. We have deliberative groups, and grandstanding is alienating for these groups. Yet, by hypotheses under the deliberative model, we need these same groups to make moral progress. Grandstanding looks like it impedes healthy deliberation. It looks to be group deliberative poison. And so, I argue contra Levy, it seriously threatens social coordination, and is a definite moral bad.

Enter the tragic. The progressor needs his deliberative community to develop morally, but his own imperfection, -- that is, his status as a moral progressor --, risks the integrity of that same community. To review, progressors require external feedback to make moral progress. External feedback creates distraction. Acted upon, the progressor's temptation, proves toxic for the community that the progressor relies on. Put most mildly, the process of personal moral growth may impede the community's moral deliberation. On this reading, grandstanding is something like a "necessary evil" along the path to virtue. But, the issue can be put more strongly. It is possible that grandstanding is virtue destructive on a larger scale. The behavior that is required to build virtuous individuals can threaten the moral community itself.

6. Conclusion

[29] It's worth noting that this presents a case for how and why identifying grandstanding first-personally is good enough.

Tosi and Warmke see grandstanding as an undeniable moral bad. In contrast to Tosi and Warmke, Levy sees grandstanding, or what he calls virtue signaling, as necessary to solve the social coordination problem. This, he argues, makes it moral. In this paper, I've sought a line through their differing accounts.

Ultimately, I've argued that grandstanding might be socially necessary, but it is still a moral bad. I take it that grandstanding is not necessary insofar as it solves the social coordination problem. Rather, I've argued that it is socially necessary in the sense of a moral progressor's temptation. On the path to become better, we need others help. But, we are easily distracted by our particular successes and the praise we accrue from them. The grandstander mistakes these means for the ends of moral action. Grandstanding is something like a "necessary evil" on the path to moral betterment. But, this doesn't make grandstanding moral itself. Grandstanding when understood as a kind of progressor's temptation is both *bad and necessary*. Its dual status reflects a tragic truth about our moral and social lives. To become moral individuals, we risk the moral community which we rely upon. So, while we can't eliminate grandstanding, we do need to manage it.

CHAPTER 4

Intellectual Grandstanding: An Epistemic Bad in Argument

1. Introduction

In their earlier work, Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke identify an epistemic fault in moral grandstanding (2017). Moral grandstanding is motivated by social comparison, which is non-epistemic, and thus isn't rational, they argue. Drawing on literature from social epistemology, Neil Levy counters Tosi and Warmke about what he'll call 'virtue signaling' (2021). Confidence and numbers are items of second-order evidence for the view signaled, he argues. They are epistemic and virtuous. Thus, he concludes moral grandstanding is not an epistemic error.

However, the fault or problem with moral grandstanding is *moral*, not epistemic. The wrong on each major ethical account is as follows. On a consequentialist account, grandstanding is bad insofar as it produces negative consequences. It increases polarization, it causes moderates to bow out, and it leads to general cynicism about moral talk. On a deontological reading, grandstanding is bad, because it manipulates and uses others, thereby failing to respect their personhood. And, on a virtue ethical reading, grandstanding is bad, because given all of the previous points, it just doesn't look like the kind of behavior a good citizen would exhibit. This means, that even if Levy's account is feasible, it won't defend against Tosi and Warmke's moral account. It can't save moral grandstanding.

There is, however, another kind of grandstanding for which evidential justification is the primary issue. Call this *intellectual grandstanding*. Grandstanding can occur in intellectual talk, just like it can in moral talk. And, in intellectual contexts the primary error is epistemic, insofar as intellectual talk aims at epistemic goods.

In this paper, I will develop the concept of *intellectual* grandstanding, as it occurs in argumentative contexts. In Section II, I'll sketch an outline of intellectual grandstanding as a parallel concept to moral grandstanding. In Section III, I'll enumerate a field guide for identifying intellectual grandstanding in the wild. And, in Section IV, I'll show that on each major contemporary account of argument, intellectual grandstanding is an intellectual bad or vice.

2. Intellectual Grandstanding

Intellectual grandstanding is a parallel phenomenon to moral grandstanding. The basic thought is that just as there is grandstanding in the realm of moral and practical talk, there is grandstanding in realm of theoretical and cognitive talk. Tosi and Warmke define moral grandstanding as follows.

> ...moral grandstanding is the use of moral talk for self-promotion. To grandstand is to turn your moral talk into a vanity project. Grandstanders are moral showboaters trying to impress others with their moral credentials (2020: 6).

There are three important elements to grandstanding: 1. moral talk, 2. the appropriate use of moral talk, and alternately, 3. the abuse of moral talk for self-promotion. Moral talk is communication about moral matters and questions. We talk about these moral issues, so we can

come up with practical solutions to them. Discussions about climate policy, immigration, abortion, public education and unionizing are all examples of moral talk. We deliberate about these things together to try and build consensus about what the right thing to do is (in each case). In other words, the point or the *telos* of moral talk is to make ethical decisions and improve our real-world conditions. Moral talk is about bringing morality to bear on practical problems.[30] It's about trying to make the world better, and people, too (2020: 6).

When people morally grandstand, they subvert the aims of moral talk. Instead of trying to communicate and problem solve with others, grandstanders use moral talk to make themselves look good. So, rather than using moral talk for everyone's shared benefit as it's supposed to be used, *grandstanders use moral talk for their own benefit at the cost of accomplishing the community's shared goals*. Ironically, this looks like a pretty immoral thing to do. Even though the moral grandstander often makes her or himself out to be a moral saint, grandstanding seems far from saintly. Again, as Tosi and Warmke go on to show, by all of the leading ethical theories moral grandstanding looks indisputably immoral. It has bad consequences for public deliberation, it fails to recognize other's basic dignity, and it doesn't look to be a virtue.

So, what of intellectual grandstanding? Tosi and Warmke actually use a case of intellectual grandstanding to motivate their discussion of moral grandstanding. They write:

> Many of us have friends or colleagues who engage in intellectual grandstanding by taking advantage of conversations to display a sharp intellect or great depth of knowledge (2020: 13).

They provide us with the following humorous examples:

> One way of doing this is to correct other people's statements. Your friend remarks that K2 is the second-tallest mountain on earth. You interject: "Yes, but only by elevation. By prominence, it isn't even in the top 20 (2020: 43).
>
> Others burst into their dissertation defense exclaiming, "I'm sorry I'm late, but Stravinsky was playing on NPR and I simply had to finish listening! (2020: 43)

Although they use these cases to introduce their own project, they don't develop the notion beyond the passing familiarity we all seem to have with it. Below are two more in-depth examples of what I'll call intellectual grandstanding:

> i. *The Onion* article "Guy in Philosophy Class Needs to Shut the Fuck Up":
>
> This satirical article from the *Onion* opens with the following: "According to students enrolled in professor Michael Rosenthal's Philosophy 101 course at Dartmouth College,

[30] Moral talk is sometimes done in full knowledge that it will *not* bring about practical improvements. Sometimes we use moral talk, not to convince, but simply to be on the record as a dissenting voice. For example, dissenting supreme court decisions - they aren't out to convince the winning majority, but are to be proper expressions of disagreement with the decision. They are parallel with the telos of moral talk, but are explicitly not on the same path – they lament the failure to convince.

that guy, Darrin Floen, the one who sits at the back of the class and acts like he's Aristotle, seriously needs to shut the fuck up" (2005).

While he isn't wrong about what he says, Floen's behavior wears on his classmates and his professor. As the *Onion* continues: "His fellow students describe Floen's frequent comments as eager, interested, and incredibly annoying". Floen, also described in the article as a "know-it-all little shit", seems to like the sound of his own voice just a little too much (2005). Floen, as we'll see, is likely an intellectual grandstander.

ii. Dr. Glaucomflecken's "The Audience at an Academic Meeting" TikTok:

Here (https://bit.ly/2WJ8VgL) "Dr. Glaucomflecken" plays an audience member during an academic conference Q&A. In it, he provides an entertaining parody of bad conference behaviors, including the following: "That was a fantastic talk. Thank you. I just have a few points about why everything you said is wrong". And, "I know we're running out of time, so I'll make this quick. I have three – wait no, four – points I'd like to make". The clip ends with him saying: "I have a question. I do the same thing you do, but better….*Thank you*" (2021).

These behaviors, like Floen's, are likely instances of intellectual grandstanding.

Some other familiar examples include academic namedropping, soapboxing, and shifting the conversation to one's own area of expertise. Think about the professor who gives never-ending lectures, or the front-row student, not dissimilar to Floen, who asks excessive questions. Another example might be excessive self-reference in an author's work, or even rejecting work that fails to cite their own.

So, what is it that sorts these behaviors under one concept? How can we capture just what goes on in these cases? As I've said, what's distinctive about moral grandstanding is that it subverts the ends of moral talk for one's own benefit. If the concepts have a parallel construction, then intellectual talk will also involve the individual taking advantage of the point of intellectual talk and subverting its aims.[31]

So, what is the goal or the point of intellectual talk? Like with moral talk, there are a constellation of goals for intellectual talk. It is about developing *understanding, knowledge, awareness, and skill*. Intellectual talk should help us determine what is right or correct about a given topic, and reduce our confidence in under-supported beliefs about it along the way. As moral talk brings morality to bear on practical questions, intellectual talk brings reason to bear on both practical and theoretic ones (2020: 4).[32] Intellectual talk ranges from scientific inquiry, to philosophical argumentation, to the process of determining diagnoses and appropriate treatments

[31] For another development of the concept of intellectual grandstanding, see Jack Warman's essay "Reflections on intellectual grandstanding" (2020) in *Southwest Philosophy Review*.

[32] Of course, intellectual questions have moral payout, too. It's just that the order of operations in intellectual talk is reversed from that of moral talk. In intellectual talk, evidence and argumentation should lead to the correct solution. In moral talk, we often argue for what we see as the morally correct thing already. One might further observe that intellectual talk is behind moral talk, or prior to it. After all, it is rational deliberation that leads to the construction of our ethical systems.

in medicine.[33] Intellectual talk, of course, is also what goes on in the classroom. It can take the form of lecture, argument, and comment or question. We *discuss* intellectual questions, because, *we need others to help us gain understanding*. Our shared pool of knowledge and experience, plus the uniqueness of each individual's reasoning process is what brings us closer and closer to getting things right.

Like the moral grandstander, the intellectual grandstander takes advantage of group deliberation to make himself appear intellectually impressive. Argumentative grandstanding is one species of intellectual grandstanding. In what follows, I'll more closely at grandstanding in argument. Rather than engaging with others in deliberation in order to improve his community's and his own understanding of some topic, he hijacks the intellectual exchange. He uses the argument as an opportunity to showcase his own knowledge and wit. He is more concerned with appearing smart, than he is with actually learning and understanding more about what he's talking about.

In this way, intellectual grandstanders fail to take the opportunity presented by intellectual talk to exchange ideas, views, and arguments. They remain erroneously closed to the possibility of learning from their peers. They refuse the "student" role, and, instead they insist upon seeing themselves (or, at least, that others see them as) as the one true expert. *The point of intellectual talk for the intellectual grandstander isn't to better their own understanding, but to show everyone how smart they are, at the cost of everyone else's epistemic and practical benefit*.

Given that grandstanding, so described, is a widespread and tempting form of argumentative misfire, fallacy theory may be a useful theoretical approach to explain it. Typically when something goes wrong in argument that wrong is captured by a fallacy. A fallacy is a common argumentative pitfall or misstep. This misstep will likely seem valid, but actually is not. Examples include begging the question, strawmanning, and ad hominem attack. As Scott Aikin and John Casey note: "It is now common in argumentation theory to maintain that fallacious arguments are deviations from otherwise legitimate argument schemes (See Walton 1998; Tindale 2007; Walton et al. 2008)" (2015: 432). So, the idea is that a fallacy captures some error in at least one arguer's reasoning. Their argumentative moves are either not valid or not sound. So their reasoning has gone off the rails. Identifying the particular kind of mistake they've made (that is, what fallacy they've committed), lets arguers return to their course.

Intellectual argumentative grandstanding works a little differently though. *Some forms of non-fallacious argument seem themselves to be grandstanding.* Intellectual grandstanding doesn't involve any error in reasoning. Nor does it involve saying anything false (most of the time). Falsity, as should become clear, is only one problem with arguments. Grandstanding arguments can be legitimate as stand-alone arguments. What makes them bad is the argumentative context in which they occur and the purposes to which they are put. Because the primary focus of a grandstander's argumentative contributions is bolstering his self-image, his contributions often lead away from argument's epistemic and practical goals.

In its most basic form, intellectual grandstanding is actually right and insightful. Consider the "Hegel-bro" trope. His contributions might be relevant; it is just that his motivation is off. In other words, what he contributes is designed, not first-and-foremost to contribute dialectically,

[33] Some particularly sinister examples of medical grandstanding have come out of the COVID-19 pandemic. One is Dr. Joseph Mercola, who is considered the number one spreader of COVID-19 disinformation, including vaccine and mask skepticism. Another is Dr. Judy Mikovitz, who produced the conspiracy-theory documentary 'Plandemic', suggesting that COVID-19 had been manufactured intentionally as a weapon. What's more, as these cases indicate, intellectual grandstanding can have significant mis-informational consequences, too.

but to promote or buoy himself up. His pointing out of issues is intended to underscore that *he* is doing that pointing out. It is a reflexive act. Performative wokeness is another example. As Jenna M. Gray writes for the *Harvard Crimson*, performative wokeness is "signaling that you've got the 'social justice know-how' for the sake of your own self-image" (2018). Here the issues and concepts deployed are indeed important (for example, intersectionality, code switching, toxic masculinity, gender performativity), but the grandstander instrumentalizes them. Her primary motive to engage in discussions about social justice is to make herself look good. Even though she might say something true, and even something she believes, it is said as performance or display for an end of self-promotion. So, despite the fact that many of us are inclined to agree with what she says, her contributions are still poisonous. Her orientation to intellectual talk is off, and so, her behavior makes her epistemic environment worse.[34]

Problems of relevance follow closely downstream from intellectual grandstanding. Grandstanding seems often to bear out this second issue, too. In these cases, the thing a grandstander says may be true, but it is likely not relevant to the exchange. As a general rule, it will not be particularly helpful in getting to the bottom of the question at issue. So, unlike argumentative fallacies, the problem with grandstanding isn't the validity or soundness of the arguer's contribution. Really the problem is more general. It comes from the *motivation, and problems of relevance often follow.* Think back to my introductory examples. When the front-row student asks repeatedly how the material from the class - say it's Critical Theory - connects to say – Plato's theory of the forms, of which he seems to know a significant amount -, what is to be gained? Everything the student says might be true, but his contributions still seem misplaced. Likewise, consider when a professor or conference presenter lectures *ad infinitum* without connecting to his or her audience. Everything they say can be true, but their lecturing still seems inappropriate.

Grandstanding is a case of larger cultural norms shaping our intellectual practices. Intellectual grandstanding comes from the deep desire to be seen as intelligent, well-respected and knowledgeable. More specifically, it comes from the fact that culturally we've equated intelligence with *always having something to say* (and with being combative). This is a toxic way to understand intelligence, because it blocks the fruitfulness of intellectual talk, and more specifically, argumentative exchange. If you have to be right all the time to be smart, you'll be erroneously closed to new ideas and ways of thinking. You'll be a roadblock to your own learning, and to the learning of everyone involved in a given exchange. You'll see yourself as having nothing left to gain from intellectual exchange. Following this ideal of intelligence, unsurprisingly, motivates us to behave badly. Just like moral grandstanding, as Tosi and Warmke note, cheapens moral talk, intellectual grandstanding cheapens intellectual talk (2020: 80). Instead of hearing those we deliberate with, we will argue our own points to death, even if new persuasive evidence comes to light.

The point is this -- cultural, not just epistemic norms, coordinate our behavior in intellectual contexts. (The adversariality paradigm in argument is another such example.) We have to recognize how social norms external to argument lead us away from optimal behaviors and practices in argumentation. Grandstanding pollutes epistemic environments with its tone and method. In the language of vice epistemologists, it looks like grandstanding very well might be an intellectual vice that corrupts the Academy. As Ian James-Kidd points out, institutions can

[34] It is instructive that in Michael Schur's popular ethics-informed TV series *The Good Place* there is a special division of Hell dedicated to punishing people for performative-wokeness.

suffer epistemic corruption, just like individual agents can. Epistemic corruption occurs when an institution or agent's ethos or character "is damaged by conditions, events, or processes that tend to facilitate the development and exercise of epistemic *vices*" (2021, p. 353). And, these vices come to bear through "culpable lapses in the collective epistemic motivations and goals of an institution and/or in their performative implementation" (2021, p. 351). That is, the fault in these kinds of arguments comes not in their forms, but the ways we use them. These bear a question about the morality of argument, beyond the scope of argumentative fallacies. To see just how this works, in the following section, I'll take a look at intellectual grandstanding in the wild.

3. A Field Guide to Intellectual Grandstanding

While Section 2 develops a concept of intellectual grandstanding, that concept doesn't provide a diagnostic. What identifies grandstanding is *motivation*. Grandstanding can only be correctly identified first personally. That is, grandstanding can only be identified by the grandstander herself. What makes an argumentative contribution grandstanding is the speaker's personal agenda. And, we simply cannot know anyone else's true from the outside. All we have is her report of that agenda. Just like lying, as Tosi and Warmke point out (2020: 56), the only one who knows if a lie is told is the liar themselves.[35]

This set up may seem frustrating, because it limits the use of the conceptual tool, but it has two advantages. First, it is accurate to the situation. *It is simply the case* that grandstanding, insofar as it is defined by motivation, cannot be identified in the third person. And, second, this makes 'grandstanding' into a less weaponizable piece of meta-language. If only the speaker knows when she is grandstanding, others will be less likely -- because it will be less effective -- to take up and turn the concept against her to silence her.

The diagnosability of grandstanding is important to understanding the following field guide. The following behaviors although they can be vicious, *can* also be important and intellectually virtuous checks on argument. What makes the difference is the individual speaker's motivation.

So, how does grandstanding work in intellectual talk? What does it look like? The basic common feature of intellectual grandstanding is *redirection*. All kinds of intellectual grandstanding center around talking about something, not for dialecticality's sake, but in order to show off one's expertise. The grandstander may be right, and even insightful, but because her primary *motive* is to make herself look good, her behavior pollutes her epistemic environment.

The following strategies are the means by which an intellectual grander might pile on, or ramp up, for example.[36] Recall intellectual grandstanding occurs in argument, as I've focused on so far, but it is common in lecture and commentary, too. In intellectual environments, argumentative or not, we tend to have basic speaker or protagonist, and respondent or antagonist roles. As these examples illustrate, both speaker and respondent can grandstand.

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[35] This quandary prompts Tosi and Warmke to give a second definition of moral grandstanding, which can work as a diagnostic. On this diagnostic definition, grandstanding is characterized by what they call *recognition desire*. More specifically, grandstanding is composed of a desire to be recognized, and some expression of that desire in moral talk (or in our case intellectual talk) (2020: 15).

[36] Tosi and Warmke (2017; 2020) identify five different kinds of moral grandstanding: piling on, ramping up, trumping up, display of strong emotions, and dismissiveness. I take it that there are parallel intellectual versions of each of the above. What I want to fill in here is *how* those general strategies get enacted in intellectual environments specifically.

1. Questioning Motivation: An intellectual grandstander might ask about how a speaker's thesis is really an important or ethical contribution to the field. He or she might ask directly: "Why are you writing this piece?", or "What motivates you to pursue this idea?". This kind of statement implicitly denies, and will likely lead others in the audience to question, the ethical legitimacy of the speaker's work. It implicates, too, that the content given by the speaker is insufficient to motivate it. The issue just isn't interesting enough. Or at least, the speaker hasn't shown that the content is really interesting. This is a dominating tactic. It establishes moral and intellectual high ground for the grandstander. By reducing the apparent intellectual status of the speaker, comparatively she appears more intellectually and morally savvy.

2. Calling Out: The first strategy can take a more explicit turn, too. A responding grandstander might simply say, "If you're *really* worried about race in the United States, you're asking the wrong questions." Or, "If you're really a feminist, you wouldn't be thinking what you're thinking." This can be thought of as the weaponization of a meta-language. By flipping a feminist piece of vocabulary against a feminist project, the grandstander can shut it down. This is an occasion for the grandstander to redirect the audience's attention to his or her own projects (as morally and intellectually superior). Even if this tactic doesn't result in a complete redirection of the discussion, it scores the grandstander's research program a morality point.

3. Minimization: Another intellectual grandstanding strategy is to ask questions to minimize the impact or significance of the project. In pushing this strategy, grandstanders will try to show how the scope of a paper is too narrow to make it important. Think of the way analytic and continental philosophers tend to view – and describe -- one another's projects. Statements like "They're just nit-picking", "They never get anywhere" come to mind. Their goal is to make it clear to the audience that the speaker's research is navel-gazing. Questions like, "So, how will this bear on some *insert some unrelated field or problem*?" and "What about the implications of *insert another far afield issue* debate?" exemplify this strategy.

4. Going Meta: Another way intellectual grandstanding can occur is through strategic reframing. Different sub-disciplines in philosophy start from different guiding questions and use different procedural methods to answer them. By asking a speaker, for example, whether her project can answer the core tenets of critical theory, when it is situated in an entirely different sub-field, the grandstander implies that the research in question is faulty or deficient. He or she indicates to the audience that *real* philosophy could answer these questions or meet these criteria. Because the speaker's differently oriented work cannot do so, it must be bad. From this display, the audience should conclude that really, the right way to do philosophical work is how the grandstander does it.

5. Fallacy of Many Questions: Lecture can be a vehicle for intellectual grandstanding, too. Consider when a speaker goes on and on, without letting anyone else get a word in edgewise. This can happen by relying heavily on jargon, or by jumping around between issues. By making their work difficult to follow, they conjure an image of intelligence. No one else in the room is even smart enough to track their ideas! And, because the

argument is so muddled, dodge objections is easy. They can fault the respondent's poor understanding of the material, or they can deny the significance of the aspect of the issue that the critique centers on.

Now, behaviors 1 – 3 correspond generally to the respondent, or antagonist's role, while 4 and 5 correspond to the speaker or protagonist's role. However, in argument individuals move between roles. As an argument progresses, roles flip-flop. Argument is dialectical. Given this complexity, the following is another way to classify these behaviors. Behaviors 1-4 are common to voicing an objection, but can occur in answering one, too. In contrast, behavior 4 and 5 are most common in asserting one's own position, but one can assert their own position from either role. In the wild, multiple strategies can run together.

Often times the above are also combined with, and emphasized by the grandstander's tone of voice and physical comportment, too. A grandstander might speak in high agitated tones, or heavily sarcastic ones. He might lower his voice to a level that everyone in the room has to lean in to hear him. Whispering like this signals that the grandstander is doing everyone else a service. He doesn't need to project loudly for others to hear, rather others should make the effort to hear him.[37] Similarly, the grandstander might choose to sit far in the back of the venue. That way when she speaks, she *literally* redirects attention away from the speaker. Alternately, she might stand up while everyone else in the audience remains seated to make her comments. Or, she might position herself in the front of the room, so that the rest of audience can read her reactions as the speaker is speaking. Using body language, she can provide a running commentary to indicate her disapproval.

As is likely becoming clear, grandstanding is about being perceived. Its aim is to bring about a certain perception of the grandstander in the audience's eyes. Each of the above strategies involve redirecting attention from the presenter's work to the respondent's or grandstander's area of expertise. In the audience's eyes, the only way to legitimately switch contexts is to "show" that the speaker's current context or framing is immoral. There are two ways to do so. The first is to show that the research does wrong by some relevant group. For example, if a project is situated in feminist theory, the grandstander might object that its thesis doesn't serve women. Or, if a project is in critical race theory, the grandstander might challenge that it does wrong by persons of color, or that it does not do enough for, say, the Latina community. The second is to show that the project does wrong by the aims of philosophy itself. In taking this angle, a grandstander will try to show that the kind of project in question cheapens philosophy. They'll argue, that the project at hand isn't properly philosophical, and so does harm to the discipline. What's more, these two strategies can co-exist. Grandstanders often run both kinds of challenges at once. But, again, in all these cases, the women, persons of color, or the philosophical program in question are just show-pieces for the grandstander's own display of who they are.

Of course, challenges like the ones above can be perfectly legitimate, and are important for the integrity of intellectual deliberation. Recall, however, that central to the definition of grandstanding is its misaligned motivation. What's particularly divisive or vicious about this technique is *why* one pursues it. The grandstander does so, not necessarily to promote the good of some marginalized community, but to promote his own brand. At best, his contributions are right, and the harm of grandstanding comes just in its instrumentalizing of the epistemic

[37] For a related account of how tone can shift argument non-dialectically, see Scott Aikin and Robert Talisse's "Modus Tonens" (2008) in *Argumentation*.

environment in question. At worst, he is wrong, or his contributions are irrelevant. This can come at the cost of actual improvements for that group. And, so, cases like this are particularly noxious.

Here we begin to see something important. The key to intellectual grandstanding is about *looking* like you're always right, and that you always know the most. This is simply not possible, of course. So, either, the grandstander suffers the illusion of truly always being right or knowing best, or, he recognizes their shortcoming is comfortable concealing it. In the latter position, grandstanders learn to *behave*, in ways that indicate their competency without actually having to display it. In the speaker's role, they will tend to lecture on and on without regard for the audience. Their lengthy and muddled orations prohibit the audience from getting a word in edge-wise. In the responding role, grandstanders will ask questions from within their field, or about the overall moral quality of the intellectual contribution at hand, but they typically won't be able to ask questions within the field or project actually being discussed. In this way, they can belittle another's work without actually having to engaging with it. All these strategies work by closing off the possibility for intellectual *exchange*. While they feign to aim at understanding or deliberation, they are just displays of epistemic dominance curated for social payout. Although nothing about grandstanding relies on a grandstander's claim being wrong, one especially pernicious effect of grandstanding is that it allows one to maintain the appearance of smartest in the room, while knowing the least.

4. A Convergence Argument Against Intellectual Grandstanding

The three going models of argument are the rhetorical, the pragmatic, and the epistemic. Each of these theories is distinguished by what it identifies as the goal or aim of argument.[38] Each has a different idea of what argument is for, and by this, what a good argument is. If argument should do x, then a good argument is one that does x successfully. As I'll demonstrate in the following sections, intellectual grandstanding won't build good arguments on any of the three major accounts.[39] Grandstanding makes argument worse on each of the major contemporary theories of argument, and so, we ought to consider it an intellectual bad.

4.i. The Rhetorical Theory

According to the rhetorical theory, the goal of argument is to persuade its audience. Thus, a good argument is one that succeeds at persuading. Consider the following definitions from Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, and Christopher Tindale.

> Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca: "The goal of all argumentation…is to create or increase adherence of minds to theses presented for their assent" (1969: 45)
>
> Tindale: "[A]rguments are judged successful and evaluated not directly in terms of their internal logical support, but in terms of their impact on the audience. The aim of argumentation is the adherence to its theses. It will be judged strong or weak according to the degree to which this is accomplished" (1999: 85-6).

[38] Christoph Lumer (2005) calls this the "teleological approach".
[39] This evaluative approach parallels Tosi and Warmke's convergence argument against moral grandstanding (2016; 2020).

The rhetorical model indexes an argument's meaning and its success to its audience. It places the audience at its "heart" (1999: 84).

Inasmuch, on the rhetorical model, a successful argument is one that persuades its audience, but, more specifically, it is one that persuade its audience for the *right kind of reasons*. While "…the traditional sense of rhetorical persuasion can be read as treating the audience as an object, something malleable, to be beaten with discourse and converted to the speaker's point of view", the rhetorical theorists see the rhetorical model as characterized by *respect* for its audiences (1999: 189). As Tindale writes:

> The audience is invited into the argumentation to become a part of it, where argumentation is an act of *reciprocal involvement*. This is a view of argumentation that sees it create an environment in which the "self-persuasion" of the audience, as it were, can take place. Rather than being exploited, or aggressively persuaded, the audience is given the opportunity to complete the argumentation and to evaluate arguments in terms of the reasoning involved (1999: 17, italics my own).

On Tindale's view, this creates a sense of autonomy for the audience and minimizes adversariality between arguers. And, it is this way of seeing and treating the argumentative audience that shapes rhetorical theory.

Rhetorical argumentation centers the singularity of the human person. On the rhetorical model, arguments are designed to connect *particularly* with one's audience. That is, rhetorical reasons are not just designed to appeal to our shared *logos*, but to appeal *ethotically* to entire persons as the individuals that they are. In other words, what is unique about the rhetorical view is that it is about really reaching out to and connecting with one's audience. *Rhetorical argumentation is argument humanized.* Attention to and appreciation for the other is the core tenet of the rhetorical theory, and this attention and appreciation is critical for successful argumentation in its purview.

If, on the rhetorical model, grandstanding contributes to or constitutes good argument, then grandstanding should persuade its audience. And, it should do so for the right kind of reasons. So, does grandstanding persuade its audience? And if so, does it persuade them by centering their autonomy and humanity? In short, does grandstanding *respect* its audience?

On one hand, grandstanding *can* be persuasive. Intellectual grandstanders are often very impressive and as a result, can make effective arguers. Think, for example, of the expertise an intellectual grandstander might display in minimizing or calling out another's work. This kind of performance is sure to sway some. On the other hand, even if grandstanding is effective, it cannot be effective for the *right kind of reasons* on the rhetorical model.

For, grandstanders make everything about themselves. Grandstanding is actually a talking past one's audience, insofar as the grandstander's contributions are primarily about underscoring their own intellectual status.[40] The grandstander, in argumentative contexts, instrumentalizes their audience (and often the topic of deliberation, too). Grandstanders *use* audiences as props to elevate their own status. They engage in near direct contrast to the ethical interlocutor that the rhetorical model envisions. Rather than striving to engage in argumentation with particular attention to the other, the grandstander directs all their attention towards themselves. This is a

[40] This might explain why grandstanding isn't always effective, too. The fact that grandstanding is a talking past makes it unpersuasive to anyone who suspects it as such. Ingenuine engagement is a turnoff in deliberation.

definitive failing to see and respect the other, much less to meet them ethotically, as rhetorical theory suggests.

This makes the intellectual grandstander a kind of free-rider. Tosi and Warmke discuss the free-rider problem at length in moral grandstanding. Moral talk, they tell us, is supposed to be for "bringing morality to bear on practical problems" (2020: 114), but the grandstander uses it for her own benefit. Intellectual talk, like moral talk, is a "valuable resource" (2020: 114), and can be abused for the grandstander's gain, at the expense of their community. Like moral talk, in intellectual talk, the possibility of good argumentation is preserved by its participant's genuine engagement. When we argue, we ought to do so to improve our understanding and move toward what is true. When someone engages first and foremost for their own benefit instead, they rely on everyone else's continued adherence to the rules, but make an exception for themselves. This cheapens intellectual talk, and it *uses* those around them. As Tosi and Warmke write: "By making herself the exception to the rule, yet relying on everyone else to continue to maintain or live by that same rule, the grandstander *uses* her peers. She "fails to respect her fellow cooperators as equals" (2020: 117).

In sum, while grandstanding may be convincing, it is never convincing for the right kind of reasons. Grandstanding uses people. And, insofar as it uses people, it runs against the motivating principle and insight of the rhetorical theory. The rhetorical theory is born out of placing respect for the audience first, while grandstanding uses audiences, and so, is fundamentally disrespectful to them. So, not only is grandstanding only occasionally persuasive on the rhetorical theory, moreover, it looks like the kind of behavior that a rhetorical theorist would disavow on principle.

4. ii. The Pragmatic Theory

On the pragmatic theory, the goal of argument is to systematically facilitate agreement and resolve dispute. So, a good argument lawfully facilitates agreement and resolves disputes. Below is a selection of definitions from Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grotendoorst.

> Argument is "an attempt to overcome doubt regarding the acceptability of a standpoint or criticism of one" (2004: 53)
>
> "Argumentation is a verbal, social and rational activity aimed at convincing a *reasonable critic* of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the proposition expressed in the standpoint" (2004: 1, italics my own).
>
> "A critical discussion can be described as an exchange of views in which the parties involved in a difference of opinion systematically try to determine whether the standpoint or standpoints at issue are defensible in light of critical doubt or objections" (2004: 52).

On their account, argument begins in disagreement, but is designed to systematically reach agreement by weighing views against one another. The reasonable critic, van Eemeren and Grotendoorst say, facilitates and is responsive to this process. This means that *the possibility of good argument relies on the reasonable critic.*

So, what makes one a *reasonable critic?* According to van Eemern and Grootendorst, something is reasonable given the "[p]ossibility x creates to resolve difference of opinion (problem validity) in combination with its acceptability to discussants (conventional validity)" (2004: 132). Their view is that the internal and external structure of argument -- its criteria --, are a function of what argument is for, that is, for resolving difference of opinion by removing doubt (2004: 53). The pragmatic theory sees the rules of logical analysis and procedural rules in light of their pragmatic end. We have these rules to serve the purpose of argument, which is resolution of disagreement. Something is "reasonable", on the pragmatic model, insofar as it resolves difference of opinion, and facilitates resolution of disagreement. To this end, the reasonable critic should be open to hearing the other side of an argument, and be open to the possibility of being convinced. Their overall motivation and specific contributions to argument should be intended, ultimately, to resolve dispute.

If, on the pragmatic model, grandstanding constitutes or contributes to good argument, then grandstanding should facilitate lawful agreement in order to resolve disputes. *This requires that the grandstander be a reasonable critic.* But, is the grandstander a reasonable critic? Is she or he appropriately reason responsive and oriented toward resolution of disagreement? Is his primary motivation or intent as an arguer to resolve differences and reach agreement?

The short answer is "No". Grandstanding thrives under conditions of disagreement. Grandstanders have their own agenda that doesn't correspond with the pragmatic aim of agreement. Their agendas come apart.

At best, the grandstander isn't *principally* oriented toward resolving disagreement. They're not positioned to first and foremost resolve disagreement. As I've said, their primary motive is to establish their own intellectual status. The argument or dispute at hand is always secondary for them. Their number one focus is to make themselves look good.

At worst, the grandstander has an incentive *against* resolving disagreement. This seems especially true in cases of establishing intellectual *superiority*. For, one's ability to build their own intellectual status may be best served by continued disagreement between themselves and their interlocuter. The grandstander may draw out disagreement to highlight themselves in it. After all, if they don't have a foil, then their stance isn't special anymore. Recall that grandstanding is a contrastive move. It paints the speaker as better *than* their interlocutor or their intellectual community. A simple way to elevate one's status is to take down those around you. When one's interlocuter concedes, or adopts and offers additional reasons for a view, one become less distinctive in the eyes of onlookers. When one's priority in argument is to establish social status, there is significant incentive to avoid resolving the dispute in question. Given all of this, the grandstander just doesn't look like he can be a *reasonable critic.*

There is a general point to be made here, too. Given the above, the pragmatic model appears to instruct us against engaging with grandstanders. van Eemeren and Grootendorst establish criteria for each phase of argument. The opening stage, they tell us, is designed for parties try to find out if "their procedural and substantive 'zone of agreement' is sufficiently broad to conduct a fruitful discussion" (2004: 60). For, "[t]here is no point in venturing to resolve a difference of opinion through an argumentative exchange of views, if there is no mutual commitment to a common starting point, which may include procedural commitments as well as substantive agreement" (2004: 60). Given the grandstander's alternate agenda, it doesn't look like she shares the necessary *procedural* commitments to open a deliberative dialogue. It's possible that the grandstander cannot develop or engage in a "meaningful exchange" on the pragma-dialectical view at all (2004: 60). For, here "meaningful" indicates the possibility that

parties are oriented toward resolving their difference by systematically testing their views against one another! Her contributions won't be aimed at facilitating agreement, or "resolving difference of opinion", so it's likely she won't share enough in common with her interlocuter to even open up the space of argument (2004: 57).

In sum, on the pragma-dialectical model, there is no good argument without a good arguer. The good arguer is a reasonable critic. The reasonable critic is reason-responsive and oriented toward conflict resolution. Unfortunately, the grandstander, given his alternate agenda, just doesn't look like he is a reasonable critic. His contributions are designed to make himself look good, which *at best* separates from the goal of argument resolution, and *at worst*, incentivizes the maintenance or even deepening of disagreement. Because of this motivation, it looks like others may not be required to enter into argumentative space with him. On the pragmatic account ultimately, grandstanding can be severely condemned. Not only does it fail to contribute to argument positively, it is sufficient to destroy the possibility of argumentation.

4. iii. The Epistemic Theory

The epistemic theory of argument is that argument aims at knowledge. On it, good argument attends to evidence, dispels false beliefs, and moves us toward knowledge. As Christoph Lumer writes: "Epistemological argumentation theories are based on epistemological criteria for truth or acceptability of propositions and thus are bound to truth" (2005: 190). That is, good argument produces well-justified belief. And, if, on the epistemic model, grandstanding constitutes good argument, then grandstanding will contribute to belief justification, and ultimately, knowledge. So, is grandstanding oriented toward the truth? Is it beholden to and evidence of the facts at issue in argument? Is grandstanding properly epistemic?

Tosi and Warmke debate *moral* grandstanding's epistemic status with Neil Levy. The problem here -- as Tosi and Warmke's initial treatment points out – is that grandstanding persuades via social factors. They consider these to be "non-epistemic" (2017). Levy (2021), however, objects by drawing on literature from social epistemology. Confidence and numbers, he reminds us, count as second-order evidence. The confidence with which one voices a view indicates additional evidence for its likelihood. Likewise, the number of individuals who endorse a view gives that view additional epistemic traction or credibility (2021: 9548). While epistemic issues, as I explained at the opening of this paper, aren't actually the concern or problem with moral grandstanding, they are the primary concern for intellectual grandstanding, especially under the epistemic theory of argument. Thus, the exchange between Tosi and Warmke, and Levy can helpfully inform our evaluation of intellectual grandstanding.

I take it that one can accept, as Levy would have us do, that grandstanding produces evidence, but that won't necessarily mean that grandstanding produces *good* evidence. If we take *confidence* and *numbers* to be pieces of evidence, we still need to ask about their respective sources. Without understanding the source of an individual's confidence in their claim, or the reasons for a group's adherence to a claim, we cannot fully evaluate the quality of either. For, without proper motivation, both confidence and numbers indicate informal fallacies in argument. So, just why is a grandstander confident in their view? And, why is that a certain number of people endorse some claim? While confidence and numbers are items that *can* contribute to epistemic justification, in grandstanding, they're still incorrectly or badly motivated, (and so likely won't make a significant epistemic contribution.)

Second-order evidence, just like first-order evidence, comes in different degrees. Not all evidence is equally good. First, consider *confidence* as a piece of second-order evidence. Confidence can come from different sources. When one's confidence is a result of their qualifications, it is epistemically significant. But, arguments from outrage, for example, run off of, or exhibit confidence too. Outrage and epistemic authority come apart. And, this divergence is what gives us the fallacy of argument from outrage. Moral outrage alone isn't enough to confer epistemic justification. We need additional factors in check to ensure that one's confidence is epistemically well-placed. So, while confidence might provide some second-order evidence for a view, it is not without qualifications. On its own, it is often subject to defeaters.

Like confidence, the epistemic authority of *numbers* requires qualification. If many people maintain some view without proper evidence to back it up, is that really a strong piece of second order evidence?[41] We know better than to endorse a claim *just* because other people do. Believing based on others' views en plein is a fallacy, too. It is an appeal to the people. Numbers confer additional evidence only under special conditions. The number of people who maintain a position should add to its credibility *only if* those people maintain the view for *the right kinds of reasons*. Thus, the second-order evidence that sheer numbers provides is also readily subject to defeaters.

Ultimately, both confidence and numbers do provide second-order evidence, as Levy argues, but the evidence they provide is very weak. Without further qualifications, the evidence produced by confidence and numbers is often fallacious and, so subject to defeat. If grandstanding were to contribute to good argument, then it would contribute to building strong and reliable epistemic justification for the views under scrutiny. But, it cannot. While it can provide some evidence -- despite Tosi and Warmke's 2017 objection -- it provides only a weak deliberative contribution to argument.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I've developed the concept of intellectual grandstanding as it occurs in argumentative contexts. Specifically, I've endeavored to show that intellectual grandstanding poses a serious epistemic problem for argumentative exchange. For, on each major contemporary account of argument, intellectual grandstanding looks like it is an intellectual bad or vice. On the rhetorical account, intellectual grandstanding is bad, because it uses and manipulates its audience. Respect for one's audience is the guiding principle of the rhetorical theory, and grandstanding directly violates that. On the pragma-dialectical account, intellectual grandstanding discourages conflict resolution, and so, won't be unacceptable behavior for a reasonable critic. And, on the epistemic account, intellectual grandstanding yields weak and often fallacious second-order evidence, which is easily subject to defeaters. It cannot make a strong or reliable evidential contribution to argument. As each of these accounts suggests, intellectual grandstanding impedes successful argumentation. And, insofar as it is a barrier to healthy deliberation, intellectual grandstanding pollutes our epistemic environments and deserves our immediate attention.

[41] Prominent contemporary examples include anti-vaxxers and flat earthers.

CHAPTER 5

Gender & Intellectual Grandstanding

1. Introduction

While grandstanding is a gender-neutral concept, it presents a practical level of difficulty for women and feminist thinkers. This is the case on at least two fronts. First men often get a pass for grandstanding, while women do not. Think again of the *Onion* article, Guy in Philosophy Class Needs to Shut the Fuck Up" (2005). While his fellow peers do find him insufferable, the philosophy bro here is still getting away with his bad behavior. His grandstanding is a routine part of their class. The *Reductress* article "How to Gaslight Your Boyfriend into Thinking He Already Has a Podcast" (2022) points to a related fact. Like the *Onion*, *Reductress* is a satirical publication, but its headlines tend to underscore something true from a feminist perspective. Podcasting does run along gender lines. In 2017, of Apple's top 100 podcasts, only about one third were hosted or co-hosted by women (NIH, 2020). General estimates suggest that this gender disparity is consistent in podcasting as a whole. Men produce about two-thirds of podcasts, while women produce just one-third. We expect men to podcast, and, men, by-and-large, are the ones who believe they should. Not all podcasting, of course, is intellectual or moral grandstanding, but it is a venue ripe for it. Podcasting places a speaker in a place of authority, which is often motivated by recognition desire. Podcasters see themselves as having something *really* important to say that the rest of us ought to *hear from their mouths.*

Second, women are more often the target of grandstanders. Because grandstanding is often comparative, and women are seen as less rational than men from the get-go, they are easier foils to use as stepping stones to build one's own intellectual status. Seeing women as emotional and irrational occasions men to use them as props for intellectual grandstanding. And, when women have unwelcome things to say, accusing them of being overly emotional is a quick way to silence them.

These phenomena, I'll argue, are two sides of the same coin. The conceptual background that makes men more likely to grandstand is the same one that makes women easier targets for grandstanders. Both are a result of the gendering of reason in the Western intellectual tradition. In what follows, I'll look at just how this works. In Section I, I'll examine the association of masculinity and reason, and how this association bears upon intellectual grandstanding. In Section II, I'll examine the association of femininity and emotion, and how, in turn, that relationship bears on intellectual grandstanding. As my analysis will show, while nothing about grandstanding is inherently gendered, extra-argumentative norms make it such that intellectual grandstanding shows up frequently along gender lines, and this poses a significant problem for women.[42]

[42] In this way, grandstanding is a comparable phenomenon to gaslighting. For, while nothing about gaslighting is inherently gendered, our social-cultural norms make it such that men are largely the perpetrators of gaslighting, and women are disproportionately its victims. For an extended discussion of gaslighting, see Abramson (2014).

2. Intellectual Grandstanding

To review, as I explain in Chapter 2, intellectual grandstanding is the abuse of intellectual talk to promote one's own status. While intellectual talk ought to be used to facilitate inquiry, and bring reason to bear on contemporary problems, grandstanders use it, first and foremost, as an opportunity to showcase their own intelligence. In everyday language, we might think of it as intellectual showboating or intellectual flexing.

One way intellectual grandstanding get airtime in argumentation is by abusing the roles and respective norms arguers take within argumentation. In the protagonist's role, the grandstander speaks with the intention of not letting others respond. He might say things like "Let me finish!" to prolong his airtime. This is an abuse of the protagonist's role, because the point of argument is to 1) improve our epistemic positions, and 2) reach resolution together. As I explain in Chapter 2, this can look like just going on and on about one's subject. It can also look like intentionally making one's talk difficult to follow – perhaps adding in lots of jargon, or by jumping around between issues. Freud's infamous cocaine story is exemplary here. In a letter to his fiancée, Freud writes:

> So I gave my lecture yesterday. Despite lack of preparation, I spoke quite well and without hesitation, which I ascribe to the cocaine I had taken beforehand. I told my discoveries in brain anatomy, all very difficult things that the audience didn't understand, but all that matters is that they get the impression that I understand it (Letter to Fiancée, 1884).

Here Freud talks over his audience, and seems quite pleased with the outcome. By intentionally obfuscating one's argument, like Freud, the grandstander's stance can be harder to home in on, and so, harder to object to. This behavior closes off the space for intellectual exchange. There can't be dialogue about the topic, if no one can follow its presentation.

In the responding role, the intellectual grandstander bets on the tables not being turned against him. Picture the grandstander here as a person asking a question at a conference session. In a conference format, typically dialogues are asymmetric. An asymmetric dialogue is one in which one individual advocates for some view, while those in the audience maintain an agnostic position in regards to it (Walton 2004). In these kinds of setups, there will be one protagonist and many possible antagonists. As an antagonist in an asymmetric dialogue, the grandstander only has the burden of questioning. He won't have the burden of proof. He can ask all the unhelpful, self-flattering questions he wants, and the presenter, based on her assigned argumentative role, is to deal with him. Unless she can figure out he's grandstanding and catch him at his game, she'll get caught up in trying to respond. The trouble is grandstanding, like lying as Tosi and Warmke observe, is hard to detect (2020: 19-20). And, even if you can detect it, it's hard to manage productively. The protagonist, will have to make some sort of non-standard move to shift the burden of proof back to the suspected grandstanding antagonist. This is liable to backfire on the speaker, and provide a further occasion for her to be smeared as immoral (and unwise). What's more, by shifting the burden back to the grandstander, he or she is given a lot more room to do their thing.

The grandstander's moves work to re-describe the epistemic exchange. In a conference environment, individuals are assumed to be epistemic peers. There is a cognitive symmetry between a presenter and the members of her audience. While individuals do have plenty to learn

from one another, everyone is basically on a level intellectual playing field. As Scott Aikin and Robert Talisse observe in their piece on *Modus Tonens*, "To be sure, in contexts of cognitive parity, one speaker may have a good deal to teach the other, but nevertheless, neither belongs in the other's tutelage, and neither is entitled to claim the role of the other's teacher" (2008: 524). But, (one way) grandstanding works by making oneself appear smarter than everyone else. The intellectual grandstander makes a point of being *more* wise, or *more* savvy than those around him. Intellectual grandstanding is contrastive. With it one elevates his epistemic status by depreciating her's. Grandstanding strategy can imply cognitive deficiency, and so, epistemic asymmetry between individuals. That is, the grandstander places themselves in an authority position, above others.

3. Rationality and Masculinity

So, if grandstanding is about drawing cognitive asymmetry, why is it that men can get away with it and women often cannot?[43] The fault, I'll argue, lies with the Western intellectual tradition's association between masculinity and reason, in contrast to its association of femininity and emotion.

As Genevieve Lloyd explains in "The Man of Reason", Western thought has "long associated masculinity and reason" (1979: 18). The Western philosophical tradition has particularized and reified the dichotomy between masculinity and femininity, and the corresponding roles that are thereby assigned to women and men. The Pythagorean Table of opposites, which as Sarah Tyson points out in *"Where are the Women?"* (2018), underlies the Platonic dialogues and much of the following Western philosophical tradition, illustrates this. Tyson draws up the table as follows:

Limit; Unlimited
Odd; Even
One; Many
Right; Left
Male; Female
Rest; Motion
Straight; Curved
Light; Dark
Good; Bad
Square; Oblong (2018: 71).

In Tyson's reading of Lloyd, she notes that we can easily add "Conceptual; Material" to this list. The "Emotion; Reason" distinction follows. As a result, masculinity becomes associated with 'Reason' and 'Concepts', while the feminine becomes associated with 'Emotion' and 'Materiality'.

What's more, as Lloyd and Tyson both note, the Pythagorean Table doesn't just illustrate opposites, it illustrates what elsewhere I've called *a hierarchical gendered conceptual binary* (2020). That is, these pairings of concepts are seen as opposite and distinct, and those on the left-

[43] Of course, grandstanding is a bad thing, and we don't actually want anyone to do it. The point isn't that women deserve better access to be able to grandstand themselves, but rather, that guys should have less access to it. When guys grandstand it, it just doesn't show up so clearly to us.

hand side of the column are seen as inherently superior to those of the left. This rendering of values leaves no room for relationship or overlap between concepts. The divide between them is stark and totalizing.

The deeply divided and fixed relationship between concepts in the Pythagorean Table contributes to the construction of rigid gender roles, particularly in relation to knowledge. Insofar as 'maleness' has come to be associated with the rational and conceptual, men are seen as knowers. In contrast, the values associated with femininity, and thus assigned to women, are the emotional and the material. This positions women specifically as nurturers and care-givers, in direct contrast to, being knowers.

3.i. Gendered Reason & Intellectual Grandstanding: Why Men Get a Pass

This conceptual backdrop naturalizes men's entitlement to knowledge. And, one way to understand intellectual grandstanding is as an act of laying claim to knowledge. Mansplaining, as Kate Manne argues in *Down Girl* (2017) and *Entitled* (2020), is paradigmatic of men's entitlement to knowledge. Rebecca Solnit's analysis in *Men Explain Things to Me* (2014) to illustrates her point. Consider the following excerpt, in which Solnit describes her exchange with "Mr. Very Important".

> …[he] said to me, "So? I hear you've written a couple of books." I replied, "Several, actually." He said, in the way you encourage your friend's seventeen-year-old to describe flute practice, "And what are they about?" They were actually about quite a few different things, the six or seven out by then, but I began to speak only of the most recent on that summer day in 2003, *Rivers of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological West*, my book on the annihilation of time and space and the industrialization of everyday life. He cut me off soon after I mentioned Muybridge. "And have you heard about the very important Muybridge book that came out this year? (2014: 2).

The book in question is actually hers, although it takes her several attempts to interrupt Mr. Very Important to tell him so. As it turns out, he hasn't read it. Mansplaining is a paradigm example of how men's perceived entitlement to knowledge leads to, or facilitates grandstanding. Mansplainers positions themselves as "teachers", but their "teaching" is really just an occasion to assert intellectual dominance. The women being "taught" either know equally as much, or more about the subject in question. Explaining is supposed to be helpful. The point of it is to share knowledge. So, when explanation is given to someone who doesn't need it, it is just patronizing and self-aggrandizing. *It uses the other as an opportunity to show-off one's intelligence. It's just grandstanding.*

And, Solnit's case isn't exceptional. Mansplaining is particularly prevalent in the Academy. In it, men's position as knower is especially sacrosanct.[44] In the wake of Solnit's article, a Tumblr appeared dedicated specifically to Academic Mansplaining. The site, "Academic Men Explain Things to Me" (2014: 12) quickly filled with hundreds of submissions.

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[44] There is a long and troubling history of gender inequity in education. Women have been historically and systematically excluded from the Academy. And, as feminist thinkers continue to point out, male philosophers from Aristotle to today, have gone to great lengths to relegate women to a separate and inferior intellectual status. For an extended consideration of philosophy's misogynistic history, see Regan Penaluna's *How to Think Like a Woman* (2023).

In recent years, Twitter has been helpful for documenting these cases. Consider the following examples:

i. Jessica McCarty from Twitter:

"At a NASA Earth meeting 10 years ago, a white male post-doc interrupted me to tell me that I didn't understand human drivers of fire, that I def needed to read McCarty et al.

Looked him in the eye, pulled my long hair back so he could read my name tag.

"I'm McCarty et al." @jmccarty_geo. February 15, 2021

ii. Emma Dahl on Twitter:

Dr. Emma Dahl: "For dessert I'm working on the Crème Brulee model of Jupiter's atmosphere."

Dr. Shawn Brueshaber: "Did you catch his DPS presentation a few years ago on the GRS? He used a Crème Burlee analogy."

Dr. Emma Dahl: "LMAO I literally work with him on it." @dahlek88 February 28, 2020

Not only is this experience one of public record; for me, it is personal. Like these women, I've had my own run-ins with mansplainers. I'll include just one additional example here. A few weeks into teaching General Logic, a male student approached me after class. He suggested to me that I could improve my lesson plan, if I taught the day's material using Venn Diagrams. I asked him to explain what he meant using the board. He couldn't. As it turned out, he didn't know actually what Venn diagrams were, or how they worked. Notably, the class was on Propositional Logic. Venn Diagrams are used to represent Categorical Logic. Even though he was completely wrong, he was not embarrassed, and he did not apologize.

In each of these cases, women, who are experts in their fields, are told by men, who are distinctly non-experts, what they already know, or in some cases what they know is false. In fact, in the cases of Solnit, McCarty, and Dahl, what's told to them isn't just what they already know, but the research they themselves pioneered. In my own example, the long history of gendered entitlements and gender roles trumps the real roles, in which myself and my student were placed. The *student,* taking his first ever logic course felt he knew more than I did, as the course *instructor*. He felt entitled to explain to me how to teach my own class, in which he was enrolled.

As these preceding cases suggest, while men are seen as, and feel, entitled to knowledge, women, are seen as *not* so entitled. Given the way in which the Pythagorean Table relates concepts along a hierarchical gendered binary – women, in contrast to men, are seen as particularly *un*-entitled to knowledge. The Western intellectual tradition suggests that women ought to be the mere recipients of men's wisdom. We are seen simply, in Solnit's words, as "vessels" to be filled (2014: 12). In intellectual spheres, we are fixed in the student role, but not even as true students. We are placed in the student role, not so that we may learn, but so that men might be placed in the role of teaching us. For, as mansplaining signals to us, we are not seen as

actual or at least equal candidates for knowledge.[45] The mansplainer's "teaching" is just pretense. It is merely a postured teaching, or a teaching in total bad faith. Really women, insofar as we're understood as lacking an equal right to knowledge, in intellectual spaces are seen most naturally as an audience. As nurturers transported to the sphere of knowledge, our role is to be "taught", wherein, the goal isn't for us to actually learn, but to fill a role for men, in which we applaud, support and encourage them. As Regan Penaluna points out, even Plato, who famously offered a glimpse of opportunity for women in philosophy, thought women might be best in supporting roles as men's intellectual "companions and colleagues" (2023: 18).

4. First Conclusion

So, why is it that men get a pass at intellectual grandstanding more often than women? Most succinctly, the Western philosophical tradition places men in the default position of knower. As knowers, men are deemed entitled to knowledge. *And, intellectual grandstanding is the performance of an entitlement to knowledge.* When someone intellectually grandstands, they lay claim to knowledge, and depict themselves -- in contrast to their interlocutor or audience -- as the true knower. So, when men do grandstand, their behavior doesn't necessarily stand out to us as problematic. In fact, it doesn't stand out to us at all. It is camouflaged against our social-cultural-intellectual backdrop. Insofar as our social-cultural intellectual inheritance already associates masculinity and reason, and men are seen as entitled to knowledge, and intellectual grandstanding is an assertion of that status and corresponding entitlement, this behavior seems normal, and so acceptable, to us.

5. Femininity and Emotion

Men's entitlement to knowledge, and the corresponding pass for grandstanding that it tends to entail, is only the first half of the problem when it comes to gender and intellectual grandstanding. The way that the Pythagorean Table's distribution of values advantages men, also bears a complimentary and direct disadvantage to women. Because women are seen as emotional, rather than as rational, grandstanders can use them more easily as foils. When grandstanding takes the form of an attack or hostile display, women are more often its targets. In this section, I'll look more closely at femininity's association with emotion, and how that relationship bears on intellectual grandstanding.

5.i. Emotion & Intellectual Grandstanding: Why Women are Targets

While the Pythagorean Table of Opposites constructs and depicts masculinity as rational, it simultaneously depicts women as emotional. To be emotional is not itself a bad thing, but as I note in Section I.ii, our intellectual inheritance positions reason and emotion as diametrically opposed forces, with no inter-relation between them. This means that to be a woman is to be emotional and, precisely *not* rational. So, not only are women seen as care-givers or nurterers across social venues, including in intellectual spheres, while men are seen as knowers, but

[45] To accommodate undeniable exceptions, women in the history of philosophy, who were seen as knowledgeable have been painted as *actually* masculine. As Regan Penaluna notes Ludwig Wittgenstein famously nicknamed G.E.M (Elizabeth) Anscombe "old man" (2023: 31).

women are seen as distinctly less rational at best, and at worst, as completely irrational. To be a woman is to be unreasoned, and in need of reason being brought to them.

The gendered assignment of emotion makes women and feminists the targets of intellectual grandstanding, more broadly. Seeing women as emotional and irrational occasions men to use them as props for intellectual grandstanding. Women are easier targets for grandstanders, because grandstanding is often comparative, and women are seen as less rational than men from the get-go. And, when women have unwelcome things to say, accusing them of being overly emotional is an easy way to silence them.[46]

What's more, the likelihood of successful grandstanding attacks is compounded when women discuss feminist views. What has been canonized reads to many of us as what is rational or logical. As a result, views that critique or go against the canon and the deeply engrained social-cultural norms that it demonstrates and perpetuates, tend to appear irrational. For example, any view that gives weight to emotion as a first-order worthy consideration faces this problem. And, considering the role emotion plays has been a common feminist contribution.[47] Across cases, when women, who are already read as emotional and therefore, irrational, do feminist philosophy, they are often doubly dismissed. For, doing feminist work -- insofar as it is counter-hegemonic, and is often read as women's research -- is seen as irrational, too. Here the problem goes exponential. As a result, it is comparatively easy for intellectual grandstanders to make women and in particular, women doing feminist research, a foil for their intellectual brags. And, insofar as the reification of contingent gendering of concepts maintains the current distribution of gender entitlements and roles, it is proportionately desirable to silence this kind work.

Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay's Sokal-style hoax article "The Conceptual Penis as a Social Construct" (2017) illustrates this problem. The article is an intellectual flex, designed to discredit feminist research, particularly post-modern approaches to feminist projects. With it, Boghossian and Lindsay accuse not only women, but the entire field of Women and Gender Studies, of inappropriate use of emotion. Below is their abstract:

> Anatomical penises may exist, but as pre-operative transgendered women also have anatomical penises, the penis vis-à-vis maleness is an incoherent construct. We argue that the conceptual penis is better understood not as an anatomical organ but as a social

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[46] This kind of labeling, and the corresponding silencing it aims to produce, can be seen in the responses to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, in which Carson predicts the dangers of pesticide use. In reviewing the case, Solnit writes:

> Carson had put together a book whose research was meticulously footnoted and whose argument is now considered prophetic. But the chemical companies were not happy, and being female was, so to speak, her Achilles' heel. On October 14, 1962, the Arizona Star reviewed her book with the headline "Silent Spring Makes Protest Too Hysterical." The preceding month – in an article that assured readers that DDT was harmless to humans – Time magazine had called Carson's book "unfair, one-sided, and hysterically overemphatic." "Many scientists sympathize with Miss Carson's…mystical attachment to the balance of nature," the review allowed. "But they fear that her emotional and inaccurate outburst…may do harm." Carson *was* a scientist, incidentally (2014: 104 – 105).

Here Carson is *accused* of emotional grandstanding. The responses to her illustrate how women get shutdown based on gender stereotypes, even if they have followed non-gendered accepted intellectual norms. And, even if they are actually in the right.

[47] I don't mean to say that all such feminist views are right, I just mean to indicate that they should be given consideration, like any other kind of view, and that intellectual grandstanding is one way they're stifled.

> construct isomorphic to *performative toxic masculinity*. Through detailed poststructuralist discursive criticism and the example of climate change, this paper will challenge the prevailing and damaging social trope that penises are best understood as the male sexual organ and reassign it a more fitting role as a type of masculine performance (2017, italics my own).
>
> Keywords: penis; feminism; *machismo braggadocio*; masculinity; climate change (2017).

In their reveal statement in *Skeptic*, Boghossian and Lindsay explain that they intentionally tried to load the paper with jargon, and make it as sense-less as possible. The only thing that they wanted to be distillable from it was that it blames and attacks men. In the author's eyes, publishing an article designed specifically *not to make sense*, but clearly exemplifying anger toward men, isolates and so illuminates that anger as the one and only criteria for work in women and gender studies.

In their own words, Boghossian and Lindsay report that they designed the article to test a pressing hypothesis. The two "hypothesize" that feminist research is dogmatically "man-hating". In *Skeptic*, they write: "We suspected that gender studies is crippled academically by an overriding almost-religious belief that maleness is the root of all evil" (2017). And, as they see it, the fact that they were able to publish "The Conceptual Penis" shows that their "suspicion" was correct. They write: "On the evidence, our suspicion was justified" (2017).

This amounts to the following charge. *Women and Gender Studies isn't credible, because it is driven by emotion, not reason*. With their reveal, Boghossian and Lindsay claim to have proven that the field is defined by a fundamental and unfounded hate for men. Women and Gender studies, they conclude, is inappropriately emotionally-charged, negligent and anti-intellectual. If a hoax article like "The Conceptual Penis" can make publication, they argue, the quality and credibility of Feminist research überhuapt is null. Its publication is proof that feminist research is just angry and irrational.

The deep irony, of course, is the actual short-coming of Boghossian and Lindsay's paper. It simply doesn't measure up, so to speak, to Sokal's own hoax. And, even Sokal himself notes this. As it turns out, the authors first submitted "The Conceptual Penis" to *NORMA: The International Journal for Masculinity Studies,* where it was quickly rejected. In rejecting it, *NORMA's* editors specifically noted that the paper seemed to be "sheer nonsense" (2017). Insistent, the authors turned to the "vanity journal", *Cogent Social Sciences,* where they paid to publish it.

And, most importantly, as much as the publication of "The Conceptual Penis" is supposed to discredit feminist projects, it is designed to promote and amplify Boghossian and Lindsay's respective intellectual statuses. Specifically, it is designed to showcase the authors intellectual superiority by undermining the authority of Women and Gender Studies as a field. Consider the following excerpt from Skeptic's editor, Michael Shermer, which prefaces their reveal:

> Every once in a while, it is necessary and desirable to expose extreme ideologies for what they are by carrying out their arguments and rhetoric to their logical and absurd conclusion, which is why we are proud to publish this expose of a hoaxed article published in a peer-reviewed journal today. Its ramifications are unknown but one hopes it will rein in extremism in this and related areas (2017).

As Shermer suggests, Boghossian and Lindsay depict themselves as knights of reason, reigning in "extremism". In publishing the hoax article, they position themselves as the ones that are uniquely clever enough to see through and expose feminist work for what it really is.

The logic of this intellectual grandstanding display is itself gendered. Boghossian and Lindsay's performance runs directly off of the gendering of emotion versus reason. The authors paint themselves as the paradigm of rationality, by contrasting themselves with feminist scholars, who they paint as the embodiment of excessive emotion and irrationality. It is not coincidental that the two think the take-down of so many women and feminist thinkers should be best executed by accusations of emotion. Because of the extra-argumentative norms in the background that inform and shape our intellectual behavior, the most intuitive and most effective accusation against Women and Gender Studies is that it is too emotional. "The Conceptual Penis" is an example of intellect signaling, which is facilitated by attacking, not only women, but feminist projects more generally, for being emotional, rather than rational. And, although, we can't prove it, my own suspicion is that Boghossian and Lindsay might actually be the angry and irrational party themselves. From publication to reveal Boghossian and Lindsay's behavior smells of self-righteous indignation and a higher-than-thou kind of scholarly disgust.

So, why is it that women are more likely to be the targets of intellectual grandstanding? Just as our social-cultural intellectual backdrop entitles men to rationality, it relegates women to the realm of the emotional and material. Many, if not most, members of intellectual spheres, arrive with a cognitive bias against women. Women, as a result of their gender alone, are seen as unreasoned. And, this makes women obvious targets for intellectual grandstanding attacks, especially when women advocate for feminist matters. As natural as it seems for men to lay claim to knowledge, it is equally natural for women to be told to return to their place in the audience, where they can play their appropriate emotional, supportive roles.

6. Conclusion

The Pythagorean Table's assignment of additional conceptual qualities to genders adds particular difficulties in identifying intellect signaling. It often leads us to fail to see things as they actually are. As its inheritors, we tend to read women as emotional, despite or even against, the rationality they may display. And, we tend to excuse men from being distinctly irrational and emotionally-charged, because of the idea that masculinity is *de facto* rational.

Ultimately, intellectual grandstanding presents a definite problem for women for the pair of reasons above. First, men get away with grandstanding more, and, second, women are easier targets for grandstanders. Put these insights together. Women will be more often targeted by grandstanding, and men, who most often do this kind of targeting, will be more likely to get away with it. This is a bad recipe. Socially speaking, it leads to a lot silencing. Epistemically speaking, as a result of that silencing, entire intellectual communities lose out on important insights and ideas.

CHAPTER 6

Adversariality, Grandstanding & Gender in Argument: A Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have examined a series of problems that arise in philosophy by way of argument. These are the adversariality of argument, moral grandstanding and intellectual grandstanding. I have maintained that these problems are not ones with argument itself, but with the extra-argumentative social norms, which distort it. In what follows, I'll offer a brief summary of each chapter, and conclude with a final defense of argument.

In Chapter 2, I provide an internal feminist critique of the adversariality debate. While feminists in the adversariality debate have typically advocated for a non-adversarial or cooperativist model of argument, rather than the paradigmatic adversarial one, I maintain that adversariality is actually necessary for epistemic justice. For, adversariality is characterized by skeptical engagement, and skeptical engagement entails critical uptake. In order to offer the strongest refutation of another's view, interlocutors must take great pains to think through their opponent's arguments. Attention and care, then paradoxically, are at the heart of adversariality. Adversariality, then, not only preserves the possibility to articulate disagreement, but does so in a way that gives the best shot at actually changing people's minds.

In Chapters 3 through 5, I pivot to analyze the nascent debate regarding grandstanding. In Chapter 3, I survey the current literature on grandstanding, and identify an important interpretive divergence among scholarship therein. The divergence is this. Those who see moral grandstanding as bad, theorize it as a moral problem. In contrast, those who argue in favor of moral grandstanding interpret it as an epistemic issue. I side with the former view, but argue that there is another kind of grandstanding, for which epistemic justification is the central issue. I call this intellectual grandstanding.

In Chapter 4, I theorize intellectual grandstanding as a parallel but distinct behavior to moral grandstanding, and evaluate it as an epistemic bad. Finally, in Chapter 5, I examine the relationship between intellectual grandstanding and gender. While nothing about the concept of grandstanding is inherently gendered, grandstanding seems to disproportionately affects women. As I show, men are more likely to get away with grandstanding, and, women are more likely to be accused of it, regardless of whether or not they actually are doing it.

Now, one temptation, when viewing this series of problems, might be to say: If these are all problems with argument, shouldn't we just get rid of argument? If we get rid of argument, won't all the problems go away with it? This is the kind of answer many feminists have given in the adversariality debate, and which feminists might be tempted to give in regards to grandstanding.

What I have endeavored to show here is the following. Although these appear to be problems with argument, really, they are abuses of it. Argument, in fact, because of the skeptical engagement it entails, is uniquely positioned to intervene and provide a social critique of these issues. This is for two reasons. First, a lack of proper skeptical engagement can explain what goes wrong in both perceived adversariality cases and cases of grandstanding in argument. Second, the strongest way to make this very claim, and to theorize these problems, particularly in terms of their gendered valence, is by means of argument itself.

On a first-order, when we understand what the skepticism at the heart of argument really means, we see that argument conducted correctly can actually catch the gender problems that show up in it. For, both what has been understood as adversarial behavior by feminists within the

adversariality debate, and intellectual grandstanding can be theorized as failures of proper skeptical engagement. Chapter 2 is largely devoted to making a case for the former. Here I'll make a brief case for the latter.

The problem with grandstanding can be captured as a failure to engage skeptically in argument, too. Most simply, grandstanding is a kind of moral or intellectual showboating. Grandstanders engage in either moral or intellectual talk, first and foremost, to elevate their own social status, rather than to contribute constructively to deliberation. In as much, their motivation is narcissistic. Their primary goal is to promote their own self-image.

In contrast, the skeptic must be oriented first toward understanding their interlocutor's view. Their primary motivation is to understand what their interlocuter has to say. They approach argument with attention to the other. The grandstander, who arrives in argumentative spaces with the primary agenda of promoting themselves, is directly opposed to the skeptic. The grandstander cannot give the kind of critical uptake required by skepticism. That is to say, by grandstanding, they fail precisely to engage skeptically.

On the second order, insofar as it is characterized by skeptical engagement, which necessarily entails critical uptake, argument requires that interlocutors engage deeply with the evidence it provides. In the argumentative context, then, those who disagree with x, must actually attend to closely to reasons and reasoning for x. Argument requires we confront and seriously think through that with which we disagree. It forces engagement with views with which one might otherwise never consider. This includes the very ideas laid out in this project.

To conclude, although adversariality and grandstanding look like problems with argument, they are actually problems with us. They are the result of our misusing, and often weaponizing, argument. Paradoxically, if we double down on its skeptical roots and formal structure, argument is the tool best positioned to help us express and mitigate these very issues. Argument is uniquely positioned to actually right the kind of wrongs that these issues point out.

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