Open-mindedness in Philosophy of Religion

Open-mindedness in Philosophy of Religion

Edited by

Gregory E. Trickett and John R. Gilhooly

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PREFACE

In my first decade of teaching introductory philosophy courses, some of the most persistent questions and topics discussed regarded open-mindedness. What is it? How do we apply it? What is our obligation to being open-minded? Is it even possible to be open-minded? In the spring of 2017, I approached the Vice President of Instruction and Student Services at Weatherford College (WC), Mike Endy, asking if he thought the college would be willing to match the funds of a small department grant to which I was applying. After explaining what I had in mind, he enthusiastically encouraged me to continue in my application for the Society of Christian Philosophers' (SCP) small department grant. My proposal involved inviting James S. Spiegel of Taylor University, and using the grant funds and matching funds to host a small conference on the topic of open-mindedness in philosophy of religion. I was ecstatic to learn early that summer that we had been awarded the grant. After much planning and preparation, we hosted the conference on a weekend in April, 2018. The weekend's schedule was simple; we had 8 parallel sessions throughout the weekend with a total of 20 professional, graduate, and undergraduate presentations. There were two keynote addresses by Professor Spiegel, one titled, "Open-Mindedness: When and Why is it a Virtue?" and the other, "Open-Mindedness and Religious Devotion." The conference ended with a Q/A banquet featuring Professor Spiegel.

The conference proved to be an unmitigated success. We had 73 conference registrants with 25 attending the banquet. Including Professor Spiegel, we had 22 presenters travel from institutions across the nation such as the University of Notre Dame, Oklahoma University, Purdue University, and Cornell University to name a few. The conference also provided 4 undergrad students (one of them a student of mine from WC) with the opportunity to present work for the first time in an academic conference setting. This volume is a representation of the work presented at that conference.

I am grateful to the SCP for the many opportunities this grant has afforded me and WC. First, and not surprisingly, organizing and hosting a conference for the first time is a rich (even if stressful!) learning experience. I am truly thankful for this experience and its lessons. Second, this conference gave an opportunity for our students to get a taste of a university academic experience that will encourage and inspire them

toward their future academic pursuits. Third, receiving this grant provided me with the opportunity to raise the profile of academics at a two year institution such as WC. We are one of the oldest community colleges in the state of Texas, with a history that goes back to 1869. It was a privilege to bring a respectable conference, made possible by a prestigious organization to showcase the often overlooked role of academics at two year institutions. As a result, the WC administration has encouraged me to continue with future conferences. This past year, in our sesquicentennial celebration year, we hosted the second annual Weatherford College Philosophy of Religion Conference on the theme "Philosophy of Religion and Art." Thus, the final opportunity this grant has afforded me is the opportunity to continue in this work at WC.

I am grateful to the SCP administration and the anonymous grant proposal referees who recommended my proposal. Also, I am thankful to Weatherford College for matching the SCP grant funds to make this conference a reality. I appreciate the support and encouragement of the Weatherford College community including her faculty, staff, and students. Of particular note are Mike Endy, Vice President of Instruction and Student Services; our facilities manager, Loretta Huddleston; Mr. Endy's administrative assistant, Debbie Alexander; Dana Orban; my colleagues in the Humanities Department and in my office bay (particularly Trey Jansen and Scott Tarnowieckyi); and all of the other support staff from the Business office to Public Relations to Graphic Design (especially Chelsea Cochran who created all the graphics for the conference) . . . you have my heartfelt thanks. When I applied for the SCP small department grant, my hope was to be able to host a respectable conference on a timely topic that would showcase the often overlooked role of academics at a two year institution. The papers in this volume show that not only are such academic endeavors possible at an institution such as Weatherford College, but that a community college has the potential to provide an important role and voice in an academic dialogue that is often the territory of the research university. I would also like to thank my co-editor, J.R. Gilhooly, whose dedication and support were an inspiration. Finally, I'd like to thank my wife, Katherine, and my children, Amelise and Grayson, who put up with an often absent father and husband during the conference organizing and book editing. You are evidence of God's grace in my life. I love you.

Ultimately, I hope this volume is one that encourages open-mindedness in a way that glorifies God, without whom I'd literally be nothing.

—Gregory E. Trickett
Fort Worth, TX, 2019

INTRODUCTION

In a free society, it is common to hear the request that one 'keep an open mind.' In fact, open-mindedness serves as a paradigmatic intellectual virtue in parlance and in the majority of the philosophical literature. But, just what exactly open-mindedness is, how it functions, and how it squares with important personal commitments is less clear. These issues are particularly acute when it comes to matters of religious belief in which open-mindedness can sound to the pious a bit too much like doubt. Certainly, in a discipline whose discourse remains rational dialogue, we need to spend some effort to discern the contours of this virtue, especially in light of its formal role in establishing responsiveness to new inquiries in matters philosophical and religious.

In light of some of these concerns, our book provides a collection of essays intended to promote conversation about open-mindedness, its virtue (or lack thereof), and its role and application to problems in the philosophy of religion in particular. Because wide-scale assessments of open-mindedness are themselves somewhat scarce outside the specialist journals, we focus some attention on the nature of open-mindedness itself – both normative and descriptive issues. In the eleven essays included, two are undergraduate works; one as an appendix from a first year student in philosophy at Weatherford College, and one from an upper-level student majoring in philosophy with a little help from one of the editors. The other selections are from graduate students and professionals in philosophy from all over the country.

The book proceeds in three parts. First, the concept of open-mindedness itself is explored in a set of essays covering analytic to continental conceptions of open-mindedness. This section begins with a survey of open-mindedness by the conference plenary speaker, James Spiegel. In his chapter, Spiegel sets the table for discussion by discussing the relationship open-mindedness has with other virtues, the benefits and problems associated with open-mindedness, and how open-mindedness is related to religious belief.

Greg Trickett and David Williams take up the conversation considering how to understand the relationship between open-mindedness and epistemic disagreement. Central to their concern is whether those in serious religious disagreements about whether or not there is a God can be

truly considered epistemic peers. If, as they suspect, the answer is that they are not, the question becomes whether or not those in such disagreements can and should be open-minded. They conclude that open-mindedness does not necessarily require a willingness to give up one's position, but does require a minimum of being willing to take opposing views seriously.[1]

In chapter three, Brad Palmer argues that the relativism of postmodernity and pragmatism still allow for a realist approach to metaphysics that allows for but does not require open-mindedness in the discourses that result. In this way, the benefits of relativism and pragmatism just are open-mindedness in discourse.

In his chapter, John Lee argues that there is a better framework for thinking about open-mindedness than the typical eudaimonistic framework. He demonstrates how the eudaimonistic framework focuses on the benefits of open-mindedness for the virtue bearer rather than (if not to the exclusion of) the object of open-minded action. Lee thus argues for an "eirenéistic" framework which considers the one being treated open-mindedly as well as the one being open-minded. Thinking about the issue this way, Lee suggests, gives us a more complete and biblical picture of the virtue of open-mindedness than we otherwise would have.

In the second section we move from explications of open-mindedness to criticisms of it. The section begins with a thorough criticism of those who would consider themselves open-minded about God's existence by Ben Arbour. Arbour argues that while many are dogmatic about being open-minded, they are ultimately not willing to be open-minded if doing so leads them to dogmatic conclusions. Utilizing modal ontological arguments and cumulative case arguments for God's existence, Arbour demonstrates how the truly open-minded person must lean heavily toward accepting that God exists.

In chapter six, J.R. Gilhooly takes the contrary stance that close-mindedness is the virtue and open-mindedness the vice. Gilhooly argues that if one knows a claim to be true, he is under no compunction to consider that his claim might be false. In fact, to do so would not be virtuous. Considering responses to the so-called "Dogmatism Paradox," Gilhooly claims that one should be dogmatic concerning what one knows (or thinks she knows) to be true, and thus, should be close-minded on such issues.

Section three includes various applications of open-mindedness beginning with Robert Stewart's argument in favor of God of the gaps

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[1] This paper represents one of the two undergraduate papers included in this volume.

arguments. Stewart argues that there are no inherent logical problem with gap arguments and no less with God of the gap arguments. As such, argues Stewart, the open-minded person will not be concerned about whether God of the gaps arguments are worth employing.

James Elliott continues this section arguing that faith may not be compatible with intellectual humility. This is because faith is a para-doxastic virtue whereas intellectual humility is a dispositional, doxastic virtue. As such, Elliott argues, there are many ways that the aims of faith may weaken or otherwise inhibit one's efforts to be intellectually humble. Because intellectual humility is a virtue at least akin to, if not entailed by, open-mindedness, Elliott's work contributes to thinking about the practical consequences of open-mindedness in the lives of people of faith. Elliott concludes by nodding to various potential ways one may attempt to resolve this conflict.

On the other hand, Steven Chanderbahn suggests that the view that faith and open-mindedness are incompatible sets up a dilemma with the view that there is a "virtuous scope" of open-mindedness and faith. In short, while open-mindedness could be harmful if faith requires that one be more or less firm in the beliefs that one holds in virtue of one's religious faith, it could also be beneficial if religious faith is a kind of relationship with God which requires one to be open to the truth claims revealed by Him. Chanderbahn suggests that a narrative approach to faith offers a way to split the horns of this dilemma and form a better, holistic picture of faith and the place open-mindedness has in that faith.

Finally, Robert Boyd assesses the Divine Hiddenness argument made famous by J. L. Schellenberg and finds that it lacks the kind of open-mindedness prized by most philosophers of religion. This is because the argument rests on assumptions to which the theist is not required to commit. Insisting that such assumptions lead any rational person to atheism shows a lack of open-mindedness on the part of the argument's proponent.

This collection is a result of the proceedings of a conference on open-mindedness in philosophy of religion held at Weatherford College in the Spring of 2018. Weatherford College is a two year, community college focusing mainly on core and workforce education. Such a conference is rare in such settings and the papers in this volume serve to demonstrate the value of the community college in important philosophical dialogues. Thus, this volume demonstrates the importance of open-mindedness in all of academia, from community college to university. To this end, we have included an appendix in which one of the Weatherford College first year philosophy students, Valerie Quindt, relates an experience she and her

husband had while on honeymoon in Sri Lanka and a lesson related to interreligious open-minded discourse that she gleaned from it. Quindt's contribution is an example of the kind of reflection that an academic conference at a two year institution can foster.

It is our hope that the efforts in this volume can spark discussion and interest among students and faculty across academia, but especially in a two year, community college setting. In this way, it can serve as a contribution to work on the concept of open-mindedness, as an example of open-mindedness, and perhaps might foster open-mindedness as well.

SECTION 1:

WHAT IS OPEN-MINDEDNESS?

CHAPTER ONE

OPEN-MINDEDNESS:
AN INTRODUCTION

JAMES S. SPIEGEL

One of the most widely praised intellectual traits is an open mind. Scholars and lay persons alike are typically critical of closed-minded attitudes and express appreciation for those who maintain an openness to new or challenging ideas. Why is this the case? What, exactly, is open-mindedness? Is this intellectual disposition generally appropriate? If so, why? Are there some issues regarding which open-mindedness is inappropriate? And, what does it mean to display open-mindedness in the context of religious belief? These are some of the questions we will explore in what follows.

§1. Moral and Intellectual Virtue

Generally speaking, a virtue is a specific excellence. Even when speaking of inanimate objects, from clocks to cars to coffee cups, we may describe certain commendable traits as virtues, specifically when those traits enable the thing to better fulfill its function or purpose. Similarly, we might say that a given character trait in a human being is virtuous because it helps her to fulfill her function in some realm. Since Aristotle, philosophers have often distinguished between two broad categories of virtue—moral and intellectual.[1] Although this distinction is controversial and difficult to draw, the basic idea is the moral virtues pertain to the whole person, whereas intellectual virtues are specifically related to the mind and the quest for knowledge and understanding. Moral virtues enable a person to function well in a range of contexts and include such traits as patience, courage, temperance, kindness, and generosity. They are

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[1] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book VI.

characteristics that cannot be developed through mere study but must be trained, much like the development of skills in carpentry or the mastery of a musical instrument.

In contrast, intellectual virtues are specific excellences related to cognitive functions such as the formation of beliefs, assessing truth claims, and the acquisition of knowledge. We might say that intellectual virtues are characteristics that improve one's capacity as a knower. Lists of intellectual virtues typically include such traits as intellectual conscientiousness, epistemic humility, intellectual autonomy, imaginativeness, intellectual courage, curiosity, intellectual charity, intellectual generosity, and open-mindedness. Wisdom and the love of knowledge also appear to be intellectual virtues. Virtue epistemologists generally sort into two major camps. One of these is virtue *responsibilism*, which says that intellectual virtues are trained habits of mind, such as those just listed, which essentially constitute character traits.[2] In contrast, virtue *reliabilists* emphasize the truth-tracking capacity of cognitive functions, which also include such processes as perception, memory, and intuition.[3]

There is disagreement among virtue epistemologists as to whether intellectual virtues are a separate category or a sub-category of moral virtue.[4] But, in any case, intellectual virtues are important, and it is universally agreed that they are traits that we should nurture in ourselves and others. Where most of the disagreement emerges regards just what intellectual traits are genuinely virtuous and exactly how they are properly to be characterized. Open-mindedness is widely acknowledged to be an intellectual virtue, but there is dispute about how exactly the trait is to be defined and when or to what extent it is actually virtuous.

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[2] Some leading virtue responsibilists include James Montmarquet and Linda Zagzebski. See James A. Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993) and Linda T. Zagzebski *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry Into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[3] Prominent virtue reliabilists include Ernest Sosa and John Greco. See Ernest Sosa, "The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 5 (1980): 3–25 and John Greco, *Achieving Knowledge: A Virtue-Theoretic Account of Epistemic Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[4] For some recent defenses of the idea that open-mindedness is a moral virtue, see Nomy Arpaly, "Open-mindedness as a Moral Virtue," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 48:1 (2011): 75-85 and Yujia Song, "The Moral Virtue of Open-mindedness," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 48 (2018): 65-84.

§2. Accounts of Open-mindedness

Consider a variety of intellectual attitudes one might have regarding a practical issue, specifically the use of automated strike zones in Major League Baseball through the use of so-called "robo-umpires." First, there is Dan, a long-time fan of the game who has a keen interest in the issue and is firmly opposed to strike zone automation. He openly worries about the possibility that if implemented this technology will ruin an important "human element" of the game. Next, there is Chris, who is also a devoted baseball fan, but he's a strong advocate of the automated strike zone. He has grown weary of in-game disputes over balls and strikes, both because of the distraction this creates but also because bad calls by umpires have often been decisive in important games, which Chris decries as unjust. This warrants the use of robo-umps, in Chris's judgment. Thirdly, there is Ian, also a stalwart baseball fan, who is moderately familiar with the new technology and is also somewhat familiar with the arguments pro and con. However, at this point he is basically undecided on the issue.

Now Dan, Chris, and Ian are neighbors and fans of the same team. At some point the issue comes up in conversation. Dan expresses his firm rejection of automated strike zones, and when challenged about it by Chris, Dan refuses to consider arguments against his view. He shakes his head and waves his hands dismissively at Chris, declaring, "Don't waste your time. You'll never convince me that robo-umps are a good thing." In contrast, when Dan offers his objections to automated strike zones, Chris listens intently and even welcomes suggestions for published commentaries on the issue by robo-ump critics. Meanwhile, Ian grants a certain legitimacy to both Dan's and Chris's arguments but remains neutral on the issue. Consequently, he declares that he has an open mind about it and is eager to learn more. Chris, too, says that his mind is open and is willing to change his position if he encounters better criticisms of strike zone automation than he has thus far heard. Dan, however, happily admits that his mind is closed on the matter.

Which of these three men is open-minded when it comes to the issue of MLB strike zone automation? Clearly, Dan is intellectually foreclosed, a self-confessed dogmatist on the matter and anything but open-minded. But what of Chris and Ian? Some scholars insist that Ian's perspective – essentially that of neutrality – constitutes the essence of open-mindedness. This is the *indifference model* of open-mindedness, and it is defended by, among others, Peter Gardner who says, **"**to be open-minded about an issue is to have entertained thoughts about the issue but not to be committed to

or to hold a particular view about it."[5] Thus, Gardner would say that Ian is the only one in this trio of friends who is truly open-minded, since he currently is not committed to a position on the issue.

William Hare would take strong exception to Gardner's view, insisting that Chris is actually the open-minded man in this scenario. Open-mindedness does not consist in neutrality, according to Hare, but rather a certain readiness to take seriously alternative perspectives on an issue, even when they challenge or conflict with one's own. This is the *contest model* of open-mindedness. As Hare puts it, "to be open-minded is . . . to be critically receptive to alternative possibilities, to be willing to think again despite having formulated a view, and to be concerned to defuse any factors that constrain one's thinking in predetermined ways."[6] Or, as psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman similarly conceive it, open-mindedness is "the willingness to search actively for evidence against one's favored beliefs, plans, or goals, and to weigh such evidence fairly when it is available."[7]

So which view is correct? Is open-mindedness properly considered an attitude of neutrality regarding an issue or a willingness to have one's view evidentially challenged? Perhaps they are both correct in the sense that the indifference and contest accounts of open-mindedness each describe genuine forms that this intellectual virtue takes. Jason Baehr has offered an account of open-mindedness which seems to affirm as much. His proposal is that in all cases of open-mindedness "a person *departs* or *detaches* from, he or she *moves beyond* or *transcends*, a certain default or privileged cognitive standpoint."[8] Given this definition, we can readily affirm that both Chris and Ian exhibit an open–minded attitude toward strike zone automation. Chris transcends his default conviction that robo-umps are a good idea when he seriously entertains Dan's arguments against his view. And Ian transcends his default neutrality when he earnestly considers arguments both for and against automated strike zones. And Dan is clearly closed-minded given Baehr's definition, since he refuses to move beyond

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[5] Peter Gardner, "Should We Teach Children to be Open-minded? Or, is the Pope Open-minded About the Existence of God?" *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *27*, (1993): 39.

[6] William Hare, "The Ideal of Open-Mindedness and Its Place in Education," *Journal of Thought*, *38* (2003): 4-5.

[7] Christopher Peterson and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[8] Jason Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind: On Intellectual Virtues and Virtue Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 148-49. Author's emphases.

his cognitive standpoint to seriously consider counter-arguments to his view. In this way, Baehr's *cognitive transcendence* model of open-mindedness has the merit of revealing a basic unity between the two major contenders in the debate over the essence of open-mindedness.

Although much of the terminology in current debates over open-mindedness is new, advocacy for each of these perspectives—the indifference and contest models—is actually very old.[9] Among historical precedents of the indifference view, there is the ancient skeptic Sextus Empiricus, who characterized indifference as the essence of the skeptical attitude. Sextus prized the skeptical mindset—a "state of mental suspense" which leads to the desirable mental condition of "unperturbedness" or "quietude."[10] As Sextus sees it, when it comes to any truth claims about what lies beyond immediate appearance, the skeptic "announces his own impression in an undogmatic way, without making any positive assertion regarding the external realities."[11] This seems an apt description of Ian's attitude regarding the appropriateness of strike zone automation and matches Gardner's conception of open-mindedness generally.

In the early modern period we find another advocate of this approach in John Locke. According to Locke, the ideal attitude for the rational inquirer is "an equal indifferency for all truth." This, he says, "is the right temper of the mind that preserves it from being imposed on, and disposes it to examine with that indifferency, until it has done its best to find the truth, and this is the only direct and safe way to it."[12] Unlike Sextus, Locke does affirm the possibility of discovering truth, even regarding matters which lie behind appearances. Locke just believes that the attitude of indifference is the most effective approach in enabling us to arrive at truth. Along the way, Locke is careful to note that the quest for the ideal of indifference is fraught with many challenges, including selfish motivation (the desire for power, profit, fame or other personal benefits which can create significant bias), popularity of a view (which can tilt one for *or* against a view, if it happens to be popularly affirmed), chronological bias

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[9] For an extensive "philosophical archaeology" of the contest and indifference models of open-mindedness in the work of the four philosophers I discuss here (Sextus Empiricus, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, and Paul Feyerabend), see James S. Spiegel, "Contest and Indifference: Two Models of Open-minded Inquiry," *Philosophia: Philosophical Quarterly of Israel* 45:2 (2017): 789-810.

[10] Sextus Empiricus. *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 7.

[11] Ibid., 11.

[12] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Understanding and of the Conduct of the Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996): 186.

(which can tilt one either for *or* against a view, depending on whether it is old or new), disciplinary specialization (which threatens to blind a person to the biases endemic to their own academic field or its methodology), and the noble cause excuse, whereby one rationalizes one's partiality on an issue on the basis of some supposed higher purpose.

Whichever model of open-mindedness one prefers, Locke's cautions are timelessly valuable. It is certainly easy to identify instances of each of these biases in contemporary Western culture. And in our contrived scenario above, we can imagine that Dan's foreclosure against automated strike zones could be due to one or more of these sources of bias, whether chronological bias, popularity, the noble cause excuse or some combination of these.

Precedents for advocacy of the contest view are also to be found in the history of philosophy. Most noteworthy among these is John Stuart Mill, who relentlessly defends open-mindedness in his classic *On Liberty*. He writes, "In the case of any person whose judgment is really deserving of confidence, how has it become so? Because he has kept his mind open to criticism of his opinions and conduct. Because it has been his practice to listen to all that could be said against him; to profit by as much of it as was just."[13] Like Locke, Mill does not regard such openness as valuable in itself but rather as a critical means in the quest for truth. In short, the person who welcomes evidential challenges is more reliable in their judgments. As Mill puts it, ". . . knowing that he has sought for objections and difficulties instead of avoiding them . . . he has a right to think his judgment better than that of any person, or any multitude, who have not gone through a similar process."[14] According to Mill, such challenges are not only effective in helping us discover truth but also in enabling us to more fully appreciate the truths we already have in view, since "he who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side, if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion."[15]

If we apply Mill's insights to the automated strike zone debate, then we see why, other things being equal, we are far more likely to trust Chris's judgment than Dan's. For Dan seems to have avoided objections to his view, rather than seeking them out as Chris has. Consequently, Dan

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[13] John S. Mill, *On Liberty* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), 25.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 45.

really only knows "his own side of the case" and thus, as Mill would say, he "knows little of that."

Finally, as another important advocate of the contest approach, consider the twentieth century philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend, whose endorsement of consideration of diverse and contrary perspectives in science extends to fundamental methodological commitments in the field, even challenging the most cherished assumptions which drive science itself. Feyerabend proposes that:

> The first step in our criticism of commonly-used concepts is to create a measure of criticism, something with which these concepts can be *compared*. . . . But in order for *this* examination to start there must be a measuring-stick in the first place. Therefore, the first step in our criticism of customary concepts and customary reactions is to step outside the circle and either to invent a new conceptual system, for example, a new theory . . . or to import such a system from outside science, from religion, from mythology, from the ideas of incompetents, or the ramblings of madmen. This step is . . . counterinductive.[16]

Here Feyerabend advocates a particularly aggressive form of open-mindedness—one that is not limited to taking seriously or even seeking critiques of one's own views and methods. He promotes the actual *invention* of new perspectives and welcoming such from outside one's discipline (in this case, science) in order to generate insights from different points of view. This degree of openness is threatening and perhaps dangerous, which is why Feyerabend has been a controversial figure in the philosophy of science. But perhaps his thesis that "anything goes" in science was primarily intended as a way to prod more widespread displays of open-mindedness in a field where dogma has been prevalent historically, arguably as much so as in the history of Western theology.[17]

Applying Feyerabend's counsel to the automated strike zone debate, Feyerabend would likely regard the robo-ump concept as controversial just because it constitutes an importing of an idea (or technological application) into the game of baseball which is foreign to that context. So foreign, in fact, that dogmatically negative reactions like Dan's are to be expected. But whether or not this technology is ever actually incorporated into Major League Baseball, Feyerabend would no doubt affirm the importance of seriously considering it as a means by which the game is

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[16] Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*, 4th ed. (London: Verso, 2010), 47-48.
[17] For an account of how and why this happens in the history of science, see Thomas Kuhn's landmark book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

ultimately advanced. If attitudes like Dan's prevail, however, the professional game will stagnate.

§3. Open-mindedness among the Virtues

Open-mindedness is an important intellectual virtue, because it is a trait the display of which improves one's capacity to flourish as a knower. This is so for a variety of reasons. First, an open-minded attitude makes a person with a false belief more likely to surrender it when new facts become known. After all, to be genuinely open-minded about an issue indicates that one is willing to revise one's beliefs as the evidence warrants. Also, since the open-minded person is non-dogmatic and more irenic than the closed-minded person, her friends and acquaintances will be more inclined to share new ideas and perspectives with her which will expand her knowledge base and in some cases serve a corrective function regarding false beliefs she presently holds.

Of course, open-mindedness is just one of many intellectual virtues, and, as in the case of moral virtues, the various intellectual virtues tend to come in clusters and function to enhance one another.[18] It is helpful to reflect on how open-mindedness both enhances and is enhanced by certain other intellectual virtues. The virtue of intellectual courage comes to mind as a trait which is required for the consistent display of open-mindedness. Though it might be difficult to admit, the prospect of our discovering the falsehood of some of our views—especially in the moral, political and religious domains—can be frightening. For these tend to be what Nicholas Wolterstorff has called "control" beliefs, dictating many other beliefs in our noetic structure.[19] Thus, if we are wrong about such beliefs, then this will necessitate the adjustment of many other beliefs and, in all likelihood, some aspects of our conduct as well. So it takes intellectual courage to be open-minded about such issues.

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[18] This is to affirm at least a soft version of the thesis of the unity of the virtues. Some have defended a much stronger version of this thesis, such as Raymond Devettere, who asserts, "If you have one virtue, you have them all . . .. Virtues cannot be separated—a person lacking the virtue of temperance also lacks the virtues of justice, love, and so forth" (from his *Introduction to Virtue Ethics* [Georgetown University Press, 2002]). For a more qualified defense of the thesis, see Susan Wolf, "Moral Psychology and the Unity of the Virtues," *Ratio* 20:2 (2007): 145-167.

[19] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

Another requisite virtue for open-mindedness is intellectual autonomy, which is self-trust or the willingness to think for oneself when it comes to the formation of beliefs. Now to suggest that this is necessary for open-mindedness could appear ironic or even paradoxical, since intellectual autonomy might seem to imply complete self-reliance or epistemic egoism. However, this is not the case, as Linda Zagzebski has recently argued. Given that (1) I basically trust my own perceptual abilities, cognitive faculties, and other belief-forming mechanisms and (2) I also generally believe in the parity of cognitive abilities among human beings (i.e., other people are generally as reliable and responsible as I am when it comes to belief formation), it follows that "I cannot consistently trust my own faculties but not those of others."[20] That is to say, if I am epistemically self-trusting, then I should extend that trust to others or, as Zagzebski puts it, "the fact that another person has a certain belief always gives me *prima facie* reason to believe it."[21] This, in turn, is a strong inducement to open-mindedness, since recognizing another's belief to be grounds for holding that belief as well is *ipso facto* to take their belief seriously and to regard it as potential reason to adopt that view.

Perhaps the most important intellectual virtue vis-à-vis open-mindedness is intellectual humility. To be intellectually humble is to recognize one's fallibility as a knower.[22] It is precisely because we recognize our fallibility as knowers that it is epistemically wise to have an open mind on many issues. And why need we recognize our noetic fallibility? Several reasons. First, there is a statistical argument to be made for this. Consider the fact that you hold beliefs about thousands of issues in multiple domains, including science, history, ethics, religion, politics, economics, art, business, sports, and your personal relationships. And regarding most of those issues there are intelligent, well-informed people whose views differ from yours. The odds are, then, that you are wrong about some, if not very many of those issues, notwithstanding the fact that you, too, are intelligent and generally well-informed.

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[20] Linda Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy in Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 56.
[21] Ibid., 58.
[22] Jonathan Adler mistakenly defines open-mindedness in this way (as a recognition of one's fallibility as a knower) and thus confuses open-mindedness with intellectual humility. See his "Reconciling Open-mindedness and Belief," *Theory and Research in Education* 2:2 (2004): 127-142. For a critique of his position see James S. Spiegel, "Open-mindedness and Intellectual Humility" in *Theory and Research in Education* 10:1 (2012): 27-38.

Also, there is the argument from experience. Throughout history many popularly accepted empirical claims, ranging from flat-earth theory and geocentrism to the pseudo-sciences of phrenology and physiognomy, have proven to be false. And in the moral and religious spheres, racial superiority theories, myths about the gods, and animistic theories have been popular in various places but are now roundly rejected. Our age is certainly not immune to similar errors, so it seems likely that some currently popular views are mistaken as well.

Furthermore, there is the impact that social context has on worldview formation. A person raised in India is more likely to be a Hindu than a Muslim or Christian. A person who grows up in Turkey is more likely to be a Muslim than a Christian or Buddhist. Or, more locally, if you are raised by Muslim parents, you are much more likely to become a Muslim than a Christian or Marxist. And, of course, these tendencies are not limited to religious beliefs but extend to our beliefs in the moral and political spheres. So how many of our current beliefs do we hold not because of careful inquiry but because we've embraced them via a kind of intergenerational worldview inertia?

Finally, there is the problem of personal bias, which is a ubiquitous challenge for human beings. Even if not in the form of full-fledged self-deception, our individual emotions, interests, and personal concerns tend to have a significant causal influence on belief formation.[23] Just to take the matter of personal concerns, Nomy Arpaly has powerfully highlighted several ways in which our concerns influence our emotions, attention, ability to learn, and our tendencies to draw conclusions and the degree of confidence we have in the conclusions we draw. All of these things have a significant impact on the beliefs we form and how steadfastly we cling to them.[24] And neither these factors nor the personal concerns which influence them are necessarily reliable, much less infallible, when it comes to belief formation.

All of these considerations are grounds for emphasizing our fallibility as knowers and thus reinforce the epistemic appropriateness of intellectual humility. In turn, this underscores the general appropriateness of open-mindedness. So intellectual courage, intellectual autonomy, and intellectual humility are all virtues which are relevant to the display of open-mindedness. We could go on to discuss other epistemic traits which

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[23] For some excellent discussions of this point, see A. Lazar, "Self-Deception: Deceiving Oneself or Self-Deceived?: On the Formation of Beliefs 'Under the Influence,'" *Mind* 108 (1999): 265-290 and Jason Stanley, *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[24] See Arpaly, "Open-mindedness as a Moral Virtue," 76-79.

are similarly relevant, including intellectual conscientiousness, candor, diligence, generosity, and charity. But the general point should be clear: open-mindedness is not a stand-alone intellectual virtue but depends upon and enhances other such virtues in the flourishing knower.

§4. Benefits, Risks, and Limits of Open-mindedness

So what does it mean for open-mindedness to help one to flourish as a knower? In other words, what are the epistemic benefits of open-mindedness? One obvious benefit consists in how keeping an open mind enhances one's ability to discover truth. The more willing one is to transcend her default cognitive standpoint, the more likely she will be sensitive to be favorably impressed by strong evidence and the logical force of good arguments in favor of different perspectives. Of course, this also creates a certain risk that the open-minded person will be more likely to be misled by fraudulent data or deceptive arguments, but here it is important to keep in mind the point just made—that open-mindedness is not a stand-alone intellectual virtue but properly works in concert with other virtues. A related further epistemic benefit of open-mindedness is the purging of false beliefs. This can be more demanding on the knower because, as opposed to the simple acquisition of new beliefs, the purging of false beliefs entails an admission that one was wrong in what one formerly believed. This, of course, also requires intellectual humility even as the process of giving up a false belief helps to *develop* this virtue in the knower, not to mention self-control (if only to resist any impulse toward self-deception which might arise in order to avoid having to admit one's error).

In addition to these fundamental epistemic benefits, open-mindedness has community benefits. For one thing, this trait has a socially unifying effect insofar as its display within a social group will naturally discourage dogmatic attitudes which tend to cause division. So where open-mindedness is a prevalent virtue, tolerance of diverse perspectives will also be more common. As Wayne Riggs observes,

> Tolerance is an important civic good in modern pluralist democracies. It depends upon the conviction that everyone has the right to pursue the good as she sees fit, so long as this does not violate certain side constraints (harming others, for example). This conviction is hard to maintain if too many citizens begin to lose sight of their fallibility. Open-mindedness is an important personal virtue for such societies.[25]

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[25] Wayne Riggs, "Open-Mindedness," *Metaphilosophy* 41:1-2 (2010): 187.

So, in this way, there is a connection between open-mindedness and public civility. And this is true not just because open-mindedness leads to adjustments of belief. Even where minds do not change, open-mindedness improves civility for at least two reasons. First, open-minded people tend to make us less defensive. When people show a genuine inquisitiveness about what we believe, this naturally makes us feel less threatened even when they disagree with us. Secondly, and as a consequence, this enhances our capacity for calm and patient dialogue, as an open-minded person's genuine interest in our perspective naturally inspires a similar genuine interest in their perspective. Thus, as the saying goes, one good turn deserves another. Kant noted that "when a man has done a good deed to another, he knows that the other loves him, and so he loves him in return, knowing that he himself is loved."[26] This reciprocal effect seems true of many other virtues, including kindness, generosity, and wit. It is likely also true of open-mindedness.

There are also risks involved with open-mindedness which are often expressed in the form of objections to the trait even being virtuous. One objection is that open-mindedness undermines belief commitment, and this is especially problematic when it comes to moral beliefs and lifestyle choices. After all, if one is willing to transcend one's default cognitive standpoint on, say, human rights, then how committed can one be to this value? A willingness to seriously entertain counter-evidence regarding this belief seems more dangerous than potentially beneficial. So how could open-mindedness in this case be virtuous? This is an important point, as any epistemic trait or practice which might undermine one's fundamental moral values must be regarded as dangerous and potential grounds for rejecting it. Proponents of open-mindedness typically deal with this objection by pointing out, as I have above, that this virtue is one of many epistemic virtues which properly work in concert with one another in the life of the knowing subject. If we assume that the open-minded person is *also* intellectually conscientious, diligent, patient, well-informed, and respectful, we can be confident that no clever new argument will succeed in overturning her commitment to human rights. And if she did decide to grant the legitimacy of, say, infanticide, racism, or slavery, then we could be confident the culprit was not her open-mindedness but other epistemic vices which corrupted her cognitive processes.

Another common criticism of open-mindedness is that exhibiting this trait renders a person vulnerable to global skepticism. The worry is that if I routinely transcend my own beliefs on issues under consideration I will be

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[26] Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Louis Infield (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1963), 223.

more likely to embrace a default posture of suspense of judgment. In response, I would note that if this is a risk at all, it is only true of the indifference form of open-mindedness. Recall that on the contest account open-mindedness is consistent with firm belief. Thus, I may be fully convinced that automated strike zones would be good for baseball while at the same time open to seriously considering counter-arguments which could potentially change my mind. Such openness, even as a general epistemic attitude, doesn't seem to be a serious threat to turn someone into a global skeptic.

However, we should recognize that open-mindedness has its limits. Foreclosure does seem appropriate regarding some issues. In fact, in many cases, a genuine open-mindedness would be unhealthy. I am thinking of such examples as the following: being open to the idea that my wife might actually be an extra-terrestrial or being open to the idea that rape and pedophilia are morally appropriate. Genuine openness to the possibility that these things might be true is not a sign of proper epistemic function but rather an indicator that something has gone awry. We should be foreclosed about these and many other things. But what are the criteria for determining what sorts of beliefs it is appropriate to be foreclosed about? That is an excellent question and one regarding which I doubt there is an easy answer. We can give clear, paradigm cases, such as those just mentioned, where foreclosure is obviously appropriate. And we can identify many more instances where open-mindedness seems appropriate. But establishing criteria for clearly and reliably distinguishing where one or the other is appropriate would be very difficult, if it is feasible at all.

Still, it is worth considering possible criteria for identifying those beliefs regarding which one is entitled to epistemic foreclosure. I would recommend beginning with considerations based in actual epistemic practice. That is, what sorts of considerations *ordinarily* prompt people to foreclose in favor of a belief? We may begin with the widely used criterion of experts or established authorities on various subjects. But since even the experts in a given field are sometimes mistaken, further qualifications are necessary to warrant foreclosure. One possibility here is *consensus* among the experts. And since such consensus may be synchronic (time-slice) or diachronic (across time), this suggests two distinct but related criteria for warranted belief foreclosure:

(1) *historical consensus* among established authorities
(2) *contemporary global consensus* among established authorities

Examples of views where there is historical consensus include, say, the belief that Plato was Socrates' pupil and the belief that Shakespeare is one of the most important writers in the English language. One would be hard pressed to find a reputable history or literary scholar in the last two hundred years who would not affirm these claims. Examples of views where there is current global consensus include the belief that the inverse square law of gravitation is true and the belief that regular exercise is good for one's physical and mental health. Again, the opinions of experts in the fields of physics and health science would likely be unanimous in both cases. Countless ordinary, even mundane beliefs satisfy one or both of these criteria (e.g., that Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth President of the United States, that the World Trade Center buildings were destroyed by terrorist hijackers on September 11, 2001, etc.).

Now I should emphasize that these criteria appear to provide *sufficient* conditions for warranted belief foreclosure. I do not propose them as necessary conditions. Indeed, we can think of countless more beliefs that do not satisfy one of these criteria but about which foreclosure seems appropriate (e.g., sensory states such as that I have a headache, immediate perceptions such as that there is a computer in front of me, the belief that my wife is not an extra-terrestrial, etc.). These ordinary cases suggest a further criterion, namely *direct personal experience*. Of course, the fact that all of our experiences are, to some degree, interpreted creates difficulties here. But something in this territory might nonetheless be useful in developing an account of warranted belief foreclosure.

Notice that in our illustration regarding automated strike zones Dan's foreclosure against robo-umpires does not satisfy any of the criteria just proposed. There is neither historical nor contemporary global consensus among established authorities in any domain that Dan's view is correct, nor could he know his view to be true simply on the basis of direct personal experience. Perhaps other instances of belief foreclosure that we ordinarily deem inappropriate would similarly fail to meet these criteria. There is obviously no way to systematically review all truth claims to see how the criteria fare in matching our intuitions and everyday practice, but I suppose that at least rough alignment in this regard would be necessary for any such criteria to be satisfactory.

§4. Open-mindedness and Religious Beliefs

Since this is a volume dedicated to open-mindedness and religious belief, a bit of focus on issues related to religion is appropriate. First, we should note that religious beliefs such as that God exists, that there is an

afterlife, and that God will judge humanity are common around the world, but there is not a historical consensus about these things among philosophers nor even among theologians and biblical scholars. While there appears to be a majority of biblical scholars and theologians who are theists, there is nothing like the consensus or near unanimity of opinion among experts that we find in the cases noted above. Nor does it seem reasonable to suppose that all such religious beliefs are matters of direct personal experience, since few people claim to have seen or heard God, no one has directly experienced the Final Judgment, and only a small fraction of people have had Near Death Experiences (assuming some of these are veridical).

It appears to follow, then, that no one should be foreclosed regarding their religious beliefs. The believer should keep her mind open with regard to the reality of God, the afterlife, and Judgment Day. But this creates something of a dilemma for the religiously devout person. For while she presumably has an epistemic duty to be intellectually virtuous, including displaying the virtue of open-mindedness, according to most religious traditions the religiously devout person also must be unwavering in her commitment to God. And *this faith commitment includes her beliefs*. So for the ideal religiously devout person it would appear impossible for her theological beliefs to be overturned through the review of further evidences. And this entails that the devout theist should be *foreclosed* about her faith convictions. Christian philosophers in particular, from Descartes to Kierkegaard have agreed about this.[27] So the dilemma for the religiously devout person seems to be this: she must either (1) compromise her religious commitment by opening her mind to the possibility that some of her fundamental faith convictions are false or (2) violate her epistemic duty to be fully intellectually virtuous by refusing to practice open-

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[27] While Descartes and Kierkegaard would agree that the ideal epistemic orientation toward theistic belief is one of doxastic foreclosure, their grounds for maintaining this are diametrically opposed. Descartes maintains that such foreclosure is properly based in rational, evidentially grounded certitude, while Kierkegaard insists that religious foreclosure is a matter of volitional commitment which may contradict or transcend reason itself. So these two modern philosophers lie at polar extremes when it comes to the relationship between faith and reason, with Descartes being the archetypal rationalist and Kierkegaard as an equally extreme form of fideism. Yet, despite these radically divergent orientations on the epistemics of faith, they are united in the conviction that religious belief foreclosure is appropriate. For an extensive discussion of this and the broader matter of open-mindedness and religious devotion, see James S. Spiegel "Open-mindedness and Religious Devotion," *Sophia: International Journal of Philosophy and Traditions* 52:1 (2012): 143-158.